

Building a better environment



Our role in development and how we can help

May 2013

We are the **Environment Agency**. We protect and improve the environment and make it a better place for people and wildlife.

We operate at the place where environmental change has its greatest impact on people's lives. We reduce the risks to people and properties from flooding; make sure there is enough water for people and wildlife; protect and improve air, land and water quality and apply the environmental standards within which industry can operate.

Acting to reduce climate change and helping people and wildlife adapt to its consequences are at the heart of all that we do.

We cannot do this alone. We work closely with a wide range of partners including government, business, local authorities, other agencies, civil society groups and the communities we serve.

Forestry Commission England's role is protecting, improving and expanding England's woodlands to increase their value to society, the environment and the economy.

Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

To do this, we support individuals and organisations in actions that will benefit the natural environment and increase opportunities to make it an enriching part of people's everyday lives. We promote sustainable solutions to environmental problems to increase the social and economic value of the natural environment, and bring together those who influence and shape our environmental future to improve its long-term security.

Published by:

Environment Agency
Horizon House, Deanery Road,
Bristol BS1 5AH
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Further copies of this report are available from our publications catalogue: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk> or our National Customer Contact Centre: T: 03708 506506

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

© Environment Agency 2013

All rights reserved. This document may be reproduced with prior permission of the Environment Agency.

Foreword

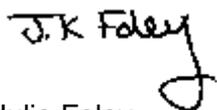
Well-located, planned and designed development can significantly improve the local environment and provide a better place for people to live.

At the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission we put the protection and enhancement of the environment, and people's enjoyment of it, at the heart of everything we do. Combining our knowledge and expertise, we have produced this document *Building a Better Environment* that explains, for the first time in one place, our roles in new developments. In it, we share with developers how we can work together to achieve growth that our environment can sustain both now and in the future.

We want to encourage you to speak with us as early as possible when planning a new development. That way you will understand the environmental issues you need to consider from the outset, and how we can help you make the whole process run as smoothly as possible.

We have designed this document as a 'first stop' for information to help you make the most of your development for people and the environment. We also signpost you to more detailed technical information, including consents and permits you might need.

We believe this approach will help further improve our planning service, reducing the costs and time spent on development proposals and consultations. This, in turn, will help make sure planning applications are processed swiftly and efficiently, with clear long-term benefits for people and the environment.



Julie Foley
Head of Sustainable Places
Environment Agency



Rob Cooke
Director of Land Use
Natural England



Richard Britton
Head of Forest Services Delivery
Forestry Commission

Contents

Foreword	3
1. Who this document is for and how it can help.....	5
2. Working with us	6
3. Contact us early	8
4. Environmental issues and opportunities for development.....	10
5. Providing green infrastructure.....	12
6. Sustainable construction and design.....	13
7. Managing the risk of flooding	15
8. Managing surface water	16
9. Using water wisely	18
10. Land affected by contamination	19
11. Preventing pollution	21
12. Managing waste	22
13. Woodlands and trees.....	24
14. Protected sites, biodiversity and geodiversity.....	26
15. Protected species, wildlife management and licensing	28
16. Agricultural land and sustainably managing soils	29
17. Access, recreation and leisure.....	31
18. Landscape character	32
19. Consents and permits you may need	34
20. How to contact us	35

1. Who this document is for and how it can help

'Building a better environment' is primarily for developers across England.

It will also be of interest to those involved in the wider development process, for example architects, town planners, surveyors, engineers, landscape architects and consultants.

As part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), we, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission have important roles in protecting and enhancing the environment. We have combined our advice in one comprehensive document that explains our roles throughout the development process. It's mainly aimed at developments permitted under the Town and Country Planning Act.



We want to offer you the best possible support, from providing early pre-application advice on your development and the consents and permits you might need from us, through to advice on completion. Speaking to us early on will mean that your application is approved as quickly and efficiently as possible and the environment is both protected and enhanced.

This document provides you with:

- **an overview of our role in development and when you should contact us.**
- **initial advice on how to manage the environmental impact and opportunities of your development.**
- **signposting to further information to help you with your development.**
- **links to the consents and permits you might need from us.**

Within this document, we set out **when and why you need to talk to us**, and provide information on the **opportunities and benefits the environment** can offer to help **achieve more sustainable development**.

This document primarily covers development on land. Although similar principles apply in the intertidal and marine environment, the consenting and advising organisations will also then include the Marine Management Organisation (issuing consents in the marine environment) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) who provide advice on marine contaminants and fisheries. Land based developments which include a

marine or intertidal element (for example slipways, jetties and dredging) will also need to consider the marine licensing regime. Further information is available from www.marinemangement.org.uk

2. Working with us

Local planning authorities consult the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission on Local Plans and certain types of planning applications to help make sure that all new developments protect and enhance the environment.

This document brings our advice together for the first time in one place, explaining the roles of each organisation in the development process.



We encourage developers and local authorities to involve us as early as possible when planning a new development. We provide technical advice and evidence to help you make informed decisions. We share with you examples of good practice to show what can be achieved when environmental opportunities are considered early in the design process.

Each organisation has different technical and regulatory expertise in planning and development. The table below gives a summary of our areas of expertise and the types of planning applications where we need to be consulted. This should help you decide if and when you need to contact us.

Our areas of expertise

Environment Agency	Natural England	Forestry Commission
<p>Advice, regulation and permitting on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - managing the risk of flooding and coastal erosion - improving water environments (rivers, lakes, estuaries and wetlands) - improving water underground (groundwater) and contaminated land - managing water and waste efficiently - adapting new developments to a changing climate. 	<p>Advice on protected sites (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and protected landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks).</p> <p>Handle and determine applications for protected species licences.</p> <p>Provide evidence and advice on green infrastructure, access to the natural environment and managing soil and land.</p>	<p>Protecting, expanding and promoting England's woodlands</p> <p>Encouraging people to manage woodlands in a sustainable way</p> <p>Increasing the value of woodlands to society and the environment.</p>
<p>For further information on when to consult us on planning applications, see: Planning and development consultation list (England).</p> <p>Our guidelines for developments requiring planning permission and an environmental permit provide information on how we will advise development which needs both planning permission and a permit.</p>	<p>For further information on when to consult us, see: Planning & development consultations.</p>	<p>We are a statutory consultee for major infrastructure that could affect protecting or expanding forests and woodlands. Conditions on the after-use of minerals sites for forestry.</p>

3. Contact us early

Working together as early as possible means everyone benefits by making the whole planning process more efficient and effective. Early engagement makes it possible for us to identify any serious concerns we have that need to be addressed and to work with you to find solutions and identify options for environmental enhancements.

Contacting us before you make your planning application will help you find out all the information we need from the very start. It will save you time and money, and make sure your development is better for the environment and more likely to gain planning permission.

- The Environment Agency encourages you to make pre-planning enquiries by completing the [pre application enquiry form](#) on its website.
- Please send any pre-application enquiries for Natural England to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk Natural England is implementing new services to increase the availability of discretionary pre-application advice in the planning and licensing process, supported by the introduction of charges for certain areas of work. Please click [here](#) for further information.
- Send any pre-planning enquiries in relation to woodland to the [Forestry Commission area office](#).

If your development is large or complex, you may have your own team of environmental experts. If so, it would be useful if you could nominate one main point of contact to liaise with us. Whatever the size of the project, we understand it's vital that we all maintain good communication links at each stage of the development.

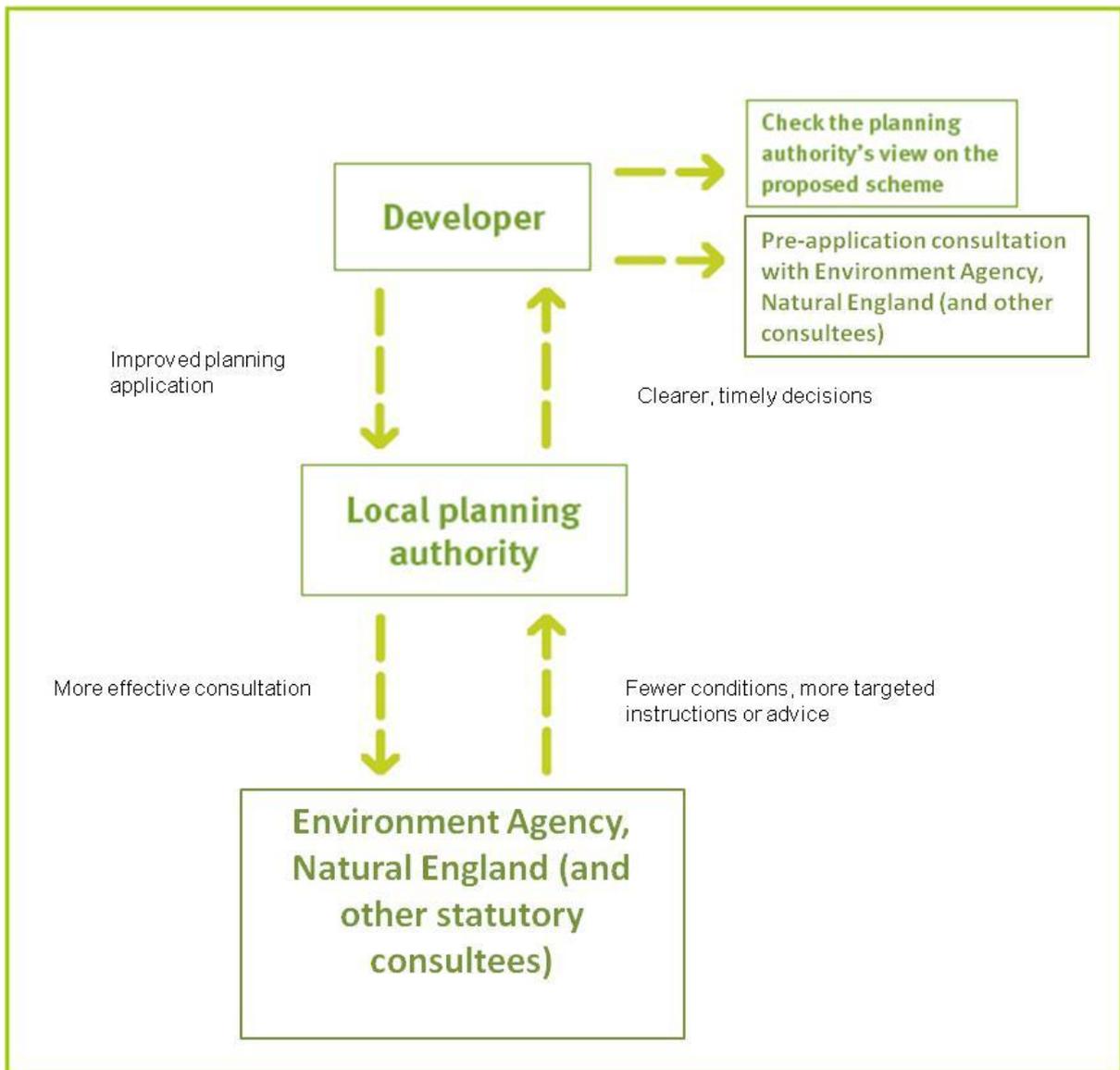
Where we can help

We work in partnership with local authorities and developers and are consulted on:

- **Certain types of development applications, as well as nationally significant infrastructure projects.**
- **Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and local and neighbourhood development orders.**
- **Environmental assessment, including strategic environmental assessment (SEA), habitats regulations assessment (HRA) and environmental impact assessment (EIA).**
- **Regulating activities that need environmental consents and permits, such as managing waste, licensing wildlife and felling trees.**

Working with us

This figure shows you at a glance how working with us can help you in the planning process.

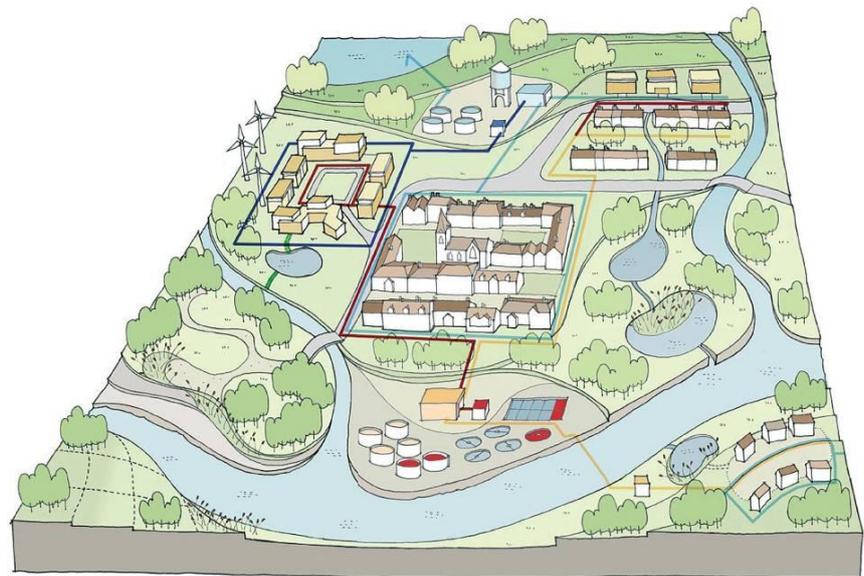


4. Environmental issues and opportunities for development

The natural environment plays a fundamental role in creating sustainable communities. It can help us adapt to the effects of climate change, and improve people's health and quality of life. So, it's essential that developers consider the health of the environment when planning, designing and managing developments.

To help you plan your development sustainably and focus on what is most relevant to you and your development we have provided information under **14 environmental themes**:

- providing green infrastructure
- sustainable construction and design
- managing the risk of flooding
- managing surface water
- using water wisely
- land affected by contamination
- preventing pollution
- managing waste
- woodlands and trees
- protected sites, biodiversity and geodiversity
- protected species, wildlife management and licensing
- agricultural land and sustainably managing soil
- access, recreation and leisure
- landscape character



Each theme describes the **key environmental issues and opportunities for your development**, and **how we can work with you**.

Under each theme, we tell you which of our three organisations has a lead role. The other two organisations may also be able to give you information and advice. And in every theme, local and national groups and organisations outside of the Defra network have an essential role to play in helping to build a better environment.

When using this information to help plan the overall design of your development, it's important that you are aware of two very important topics that are relevant to all 14 themes. These are **climate change** and **ecosystem services (the benefits we get from nature)**.

Climate change

We expect the risk from natural hazards, such as flooding, heat waves, wildfires and drought to increase in the future due to a changing climate. Our houses, towns, cities, people and wildlife will need to cope with more flooding and coastal erosion, increased subsidence and greater competition for water. We will also need to find ways to keep our buildings cooler and more comfortable in hot summers, without using lots of energy to power air conditioners. New developments need to be designed and built with this in mind.

Many of the themes in this document suggest ways in which developments can adapt to the effects of climate change, as well as helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Government has given the Environment Agency a new role to provide [advice and support to help businesses adapt to a changing climate](#).

Ecosystem services (the benefits we get from nature)

[Ecosystem services](#) are the 'life support' benefits that people get from the natural environment; from the food we eat and the water we drink, the reduction in flood risk and regulation of climate, to breathing cleaner air and enjoying more places to relax and unwind. The natural environment needs to be able to function effectively so we can get these benefits.

Most of the themes in this document, particularly providing green infrastructure, will help ensure this range of benefits are achieved as an integral part of any development.



5. Providing green infrastructure

Green infrastructure is the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both towns and the countryside. It plays a vital part in promoting economic growth and regeneration, improving wellbeing and quality of life, and supporting the health of the natural environment.

Defra network lead: Natural England



Our role

- Natural England can provide you with specialist advice on landscapes, geodiversity, species and habitats, and green space for people to access the natural environment, as well as advice on planning and providing green infrastructure in a cost effective way.
- We can give guidance on any site assessments needed, such as an ecological impact assessment (Natural England), or flood risk assessments (Environment Agency).
- We can help with information on improving access to a range of green spaces and the natural environment, which can support leisure, recreation and sustainable transport, including cycling and walking.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- Think early on about **opportunities to improve existing green infrastructure** (such as landscape, geology, habitats and species, recreational green space and features such as mature trees and hedgerows, rivers and ponds) and **design your development around what's already there**.
- Think about **functions as well as features**. By planning green infrastructure early, it can bring a wide range of benefits for people and the environment.
- Think about the **surroundings**. Reflect key habitats and features in the local area and improve connections for people and wildlife into the wider landscape.
- **Carry out site assessments early**. This will help you understand the environmental qualities and opportunities of your site. Use the results to inform the design of your site, reduce the possibility of damage and maximise its potential.
- **Talk to your local authority as soon as possible**. It may have useful information on the local environment, open spaces, public rights of way, sustainable transport, flooding, climate change and green infrastructure, for example within its Local Plan or as part of a green infrastructure strategy.
- Plan to **protect existing wildlife** and **create and improve areas where wildlife can thrive** (including grasslands, woodlands, wetlands and ponds, green roofs and sustainable drainage systems). Provide links between important habitats on and off-site and allow space around them to act as a buffer.

- **Avoid damaging internationally, nationally and locally protected sites and species** (see Protected sites, biodiversity and geodiversity).
- Make sure you have a plan that shows **how you will maintain and pay for any new and improved green infrastructure**. Raise awareness and encourage people to get involved, where possible, in designing and maintaining sites.
- **Encourage access to green space**, rivers and wetlands, and to surrounding countryside (for example by creating new footpaths) to give people more places to enjoy the environment while not disturbing wildlife.
- Include **green transport routes** (such as cycle paths) as part of a **sustainable transport plan** for your development.
- **Link well-connected green infrastructure with schools and community buildings**, making the most of educational opportunities for nature trails and other informal routes.

Further opportunities and information

- Including green infrastructure in your development can help to improve its economic, social and environmental value. Providing access to attractive green space can **increase the value** of your development.
- The Defra network agencies are all members of the Green Infrastructure Partnership – looking at ways green infrastructure can improve the environment and people's health and quality of life, help drive local investment and growth, and make better places for people and wildlife. The partnership is for anyone involved in redesigning and building places for people and the environment.
- '[Planning for a healthy environment – good practice for green infrastructure and biodiversity](#)', published by the Town and Country Planning Association and the Wildlife Trusts, provides further information on planning for and providing green infrastructure.
- You can find out more about green infrastructure on Natural England's [website](#).
- [National Character Area profiles](#) can help developers identify the key environmental assets and opportunities within a given area.

6. Sustainable construction and design

It makes economic and environmental sense to design and construct buildings by using resources efficiently and considering the effects of a changing climate.

Defra network lead: Environment Agency



Our role

- The Environment Agency can discuss major developments with you early in the planning process to help make sure your site is designed and constructed to a good standard, and is the best it can be for those who will be living in, visiting or working in your new building.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- Design your development to take account of and **adapt to the effects of climate change**. Damage to property caused by flooding and coastal erosion, having enough water available, overheating and subsidence are all challenges you need to consider for future developments. Our [Climate Ready](#) service can help you understand and tackle these challenges.
- Design your development to **minimise the amount of energy and water used and waste produced**, for example by using the [Code for Sustainable Homes](#) for residential development, or [BREEAM](#) for non-residential schemes.
- Consider **reducing the lifetime carbon costs** of the development by **using renewable energy technologies**. We can [advise you](#) on small-scale hydropower and biomass schemes, and ground source heating and cooling.
- Look at **reducing the development's carbon footprint** by using sustainable construction materials. The Environment Agency's [Construction Carbon Calculator](#) can help you identify carbon savings during the design and construction of your development.
- Our construction waste [webpage](#) provides advice to help you **minimise the amount of waste produced during construction** and make sure you are using resources efficiently. Consider if an alternative design may produce less waste and its relative impact on the environment. Think about using materials that can be recycled and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- Consider your **site and the opportunities offered by its unique location**. Use green infrastructure as part of sustainable design and construction, for example green roofs (see the [Green Roof Code](#)) and sustainable drainage systems (SuDs).

Further opportunities

- The Home Builders' Federation together with WRAP have published '[A blueprint for reducing waste and cutting costs](#)'. It includes 10 quick wins home builders take to reduce the cost of waste.
- Visit the [Town and Country Planning Association](#) website for an example of good practice in sustainable design and construction.
- Provide the people who will be using your new building with guidance on how to make the most of its environmental features and improve efficiency.

7. Managing the risk of flooding

Flooding can cause serious damage and have devastating effects. One in six properties in England currently face the threat of flooding and the risk is set to increase with climate change. It's vital that we do all we can to avoid and reduce further impacts through careful planning and development.



Defra network lead: **Environment Agency**

Our role

- Local planning authorities consult the Environment Agency for specialist advice on the risk of flooding for development. We work in partnership to reduce the likelihood and consequences of flooding, protecting people and business. We warn people about flooding, build and maintain defences, and work with other organisations to manage the risks.
- We will help you get your [flood risk assessments](#) right. Site-specific flood risk assessments are required for all development proposals in [flood zones 2 and 3](#), and [those in flood zone 1](#) over one hectare in area, or in a location that has critical drainage problems.
- We work closely with local authorities and internal drainage boards who have powers to manage flood risk from ordinary watercourses, surface water and groundwater. The Environment Agency has powers and responsibilities to maintain and improve main rivers, and responsibility to manage flood risk from main rivers and the sea. Main rivers are generally larger rivers and streams, defined on [main river maps](#) held by the Environment Agency.
- Work in or near to main rivers needs our consent (as well as the landowner's) before it can go ahead. The exact distance varies depending on local bylaws, so check with your local Environment Agency office for details. We will make sure the work doesn't adversely affect our work in managing flooding, increase the risk of flooding or damage the environment. Talk to us to find out what controls you might need and why (for example, seasonal restrictions to protect fisheries).

Making it work for you and how we can help

- **Check the Environment Agency [website](#)** to see if your proposed development is in an area at risk of river or tidal flooding. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided. Where the development is necessary, it must be safe and resilient to the effects of flooding, without increasing the risks elsewhere. If there is a risk of flooding at your site, consider how those using the development in the future will remain safe, and how they will avoid flood water during a flood.

- **Think about location** before designing your development. Keep any vulnerable development out of harm's way as much as you can, then consider how to make it less vulnerable by using [resilience and resistance measures](#).
- **Contact your local planning authority and lead local flood authority** as early as possible. They will have useful information, for example in their Local Plan and strategic flood risk assessment. They can tell you whether your development is likely to be acceptable and the options you can consider to respond to the risk.
- If you own land or property alongside a river or other watercourse, see our guide '[Living on the Edge](#)'. It explains your **rights and responsibilities as a riverside landowner**.
- **Assess how climate change will affect the site** during the lifetime of the development, and how you can make your development resilient to future impacts. The [technical guidance](#) to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides information on how to do this.
- **Incorporate green infrastructure** to reduce the risk of flooding, for example by designing green space that serves as both a flood plain and a recreational area for the local community.

Further opportunities

- By thinking about flood risk early on, you may be able to avoid it, manage it more cheaply, or manage it in a way that adds value by, for example, creating open water habitats as part of sustainable drainage systems.
- In some cases, we may be able to work together on a flood defence scheme, so that between us we can produce a better solution and share the costs.
- Talk to utility companies to make sure local infrastructure is resilient to climate change. For example, gas mains, electricity cables, water supply and sewage treatment works in areas at risk of flooding may need a higher standard of protection.
- Speak early on with other organisations that have expertise in flooding. For example, contact your [local water company](#) to discuss sewer capacity and flooding, and [internal drainage boards](#) in areas of special drainage need, who grant consents relating to development affecting ordinary watercourses.

8. Managing surface water

Developments create hard surfaces from which rainwater runs off more quickly than from natural land. This can lead to flooding and pollution, damaging wildlife and habitats. With a changing climate and more intense storms, it's essential that all new developments plan to deal with surface water runoff. Incorporating sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) is an effective way of reducing the rate of runoff and its impact.



Defra network lead: Environment Agency

Our role

- The Environment Agency works closely with lead local flood authorities. They are responsible for developing local flood risk management strategies that show the extent of flood risk in the area and how it will be managed in partnership with others. These local strategies include identifying the risks and actions needed to reduce flooding from surface water.
- We are the competent authority responsible for carrying out the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The WFD requires us to prevent rivers, lakes, estuaries and groundwater deteriorating, and to improve or maintain them to achieve 'good status'. River basin management plans summarise the main issues for the water environment and the actions we all need to take to deal with them.
- We monitor and advise on the quantity and the quality of water in the ground and in watercourses. We will help you to protect water through our regulation of water abstraction and discharge points.
- Local planning authorities consult us for advice on the environmental impacts of development proposals. In future, SuDS approval bodies will have new responsibilities for approving, adopting and maintaining SuDS schemes.
- Many developments will need a detailed assessment of the risks and consequences of flooding from all sources. We will help you to get that right.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- Planning policy says **your development must not increase the risk of flooding** for other people. That might mean designing the site so that the rate of runoff is the same as (or lower than) it was before the development.
- The National Planning Policy Framework and the Building Regulations approved documents encourage the SuDS approach, and **legislation is being developed to encourage SuDS** to be used and to make maintenance easier.
- **Use SuDS that mimic natural processes** (for example, allowing rainwater to soak away through permeable surfaces, slowing it down so it can run away gradually, or storing it to support wildlife). [CIRIA's SuDS guidance](#) and the [British Geological Survey](#) have more details on this approach.
- **Consider SuDS in your assessment of the risks and consequences of flooding.**
- Think about **how SuDS will be maintained in the long term.**
- We have published [river basin management plans](#) that **summarise the condition of the water environment** across England (and Wales), and the work that needs to take place to improve it. You can find out about the condition of your local environment on our website at '[What's in my backyard?](#)'.
- Consider the **impacts on the quality of water underground** (groundwater) when designing your development. Not all SuDS systems are suitable for brownfield sites.

Further opportunities

- By thinking about surface water and sustainable drainage early on, you may be able to manage it more cheaply, for example by not having to construct large piped drains. Use green infrastructure and trees to help you do this.
- You can manage surface water in a way that adds value, for example by creating attractive areas, such as ponds and wetlands.

9. Using water wisely

Although our country is often considered to have a wet climate, there is increasing pressure on water supplies from a growing population and climate change. It's the Environment Agency's job is to make sure there is enough water available for everyone without damaging the environment.

Defra network lead: [Environment Agency](#)



Our role

- The Environment Agency works with developers, local authorities and water companies to encourage water efficiency in new developments.
- We also work with these organisations to help make sure the right infrastructure is available at the right time for new developments, while protecting the environment.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- **Contact the Environment Agency for advice on any consents** you might need before you start work on the site, and for **information on water resources and efficiency**. We have worked with WRAP to support the construction industry in coming up with good practice to [reduce water consumption](#).
- **Talk to your local planning authority and water company** to make sure they can provide the water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure for the lifetime of your development. For large developments, discuss with us, the local authority and water company whether a [water cycle study](#) might be needed (or has already been carried out) to inform your understanding of environmental capacity and decisions on infrastructure.
- Under Building Regulations (Part G) the potential **amount of water used must be 125 litres or less per person per day**, as calculated in the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) publication '[The Water Efficiency Calculator for New Dwellings](#)'.

- You can **design your development to achieve an even higher water efficiency standard**, for example by applying the Government's [Code for Sustainable Homes](#). Check with your local planning authority, as some already specify higher standards of water efficiency in new homes within their Local Plan. The London Plan, for example, states that residential developments should meet water consumption targets of 105 litres/head/day.
- If your development is large, **consider leak detection, rainwater harvesting and greywater re-use systems**. However, you must also consider how they will be managed and maintained, as well as the carbon produced and ongoing costs of reuse systems.
- Provide **water butts and use drought-resistant landscaping** to keep your development looking good without increasing the amount of water it uses.
- Use **sustainable drainage to support landscaping features** that may otherwise need mains water supply.

Further opportunities

- Incorporating water saving measures into your development can do a lot to reduce overall demand for water. Check with your [local water company](#) for advice.
- Explore and develop the potential for using green infrastructure to help use water wisely, for example using storage ponds to hold water for watering green spaces rather than relying on the mains water supply.

10. Land affected by contamination

Thousands of sites have been contaminated in the past through industry or mining, waste disposal, chemical leaks and spills. The Environment Agency wants contaminated land to be properly assessed and managed. Managing contamination issues during development is key to addressing past contamination and preventing further impacts during the development process.

Defra network lead: Environment Agency



Our role

- Planning authorities must consider contamination, including the risks to the water environment, when they prepare Local Plans or consider individual applications for planning permission. The Environment Agency works closely with developers and local planning authorities so that our views are reflected in Local Plans and planning decisions.
- We help local authorities to identify and manage contaminated land sites. We also administer a Government fund that helps pay for the management of the worst sites.

- Natural England provides advice on ecological assessments and licensing of protected species.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- Follow our [Guiding principles for land contamination](#) (GPLC). They provide detailed advice and the answers to common questions on land contamination. **Identify as early as possible if there is contamination on your site** and **what the risks are** to people and the environment. You may need to carry out a desk study and site investigations as part of this risk assessment.
- Carry out **more detailed ground investigation** if appropriate. Assess whether contamination extends beyond your site, or could move onto it from outside.
- Use our [Model procedures for the management of land contamination](#) to **prepare a remediation strategy**, if you need to, giving details on the measures you will take to tackle contamination. Check that you have all the permits needed to do this. Prepare a validation plan to show that the remediation strategy is complete and to show if longer term monitoring is needed. Say when and how you will act on the results of any ongoing monitoring.
- Make sure you **consider the whole environment** when you design a remediation strategy, so that you don't cause other problems while tackling a specific issue. Think about the effect your development may have on the existing condition of the land, and how you deal with contamination or prevent your construction from making it worse.

Further opportunities

- If you use the GPLC guidance and [Model procedures for the management of land contamination](#), you are more likely to manage a project successfully, reduce your risks and meet your legal responsibilities.
- Assess the ecological value of the site early on so that you can avoid damaging important wildlife and habitats and stay within the law. Natural England can give you advice on ecological assessments and licensing protected species.
- Local authorities are in charge of land contamination issues that affect people's health. It's important to involve them as early as possible.
- Planting trees, woodland or reed beds can help remove contaminated material in the soil such as metals, and help reduce the pollution entering water on and below the ground.
- The Forestry Commission has published best practice notes about successfully developing [greenspace on contaminated and brownfield land](#).

11. Preventing pollution

There are several hundred pollution incidents from construction and demolition sites every year that damage the environment, yet most are easily preventable. It's vital to manage your activities properly on site to protect the environment, wildlife and people's health.

Defra network lead: **Environment Agency**



Our role

- The Environment Agency helps to make sure that new developments don't pollute waters.
- Local planning authorities consult us on developments that may be a higher risk to the water environment.
- We are the competent authority responsible for carrying out the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The WFD requires us to prevent rivers, lakes, estuaries and groundwater deteriorating, and to improve or maintain them to achieve 'good status'. River basin management plans summarise the main issues for the water environment and the actions we all need to take to deal with them.
- We can provide advice to reduce the risk of pollution to land, water and air. For example, developments on or near vulnerable water resources may need tighter controls.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- **Consider the risk of pollution**, both during and after construction.
- **Don't ignore pollution, report it.** To report an incident, please call our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 (24 hour service).
- Please refer to the Environment Agency guide on [Working at Construction and Demolition Sites \(PPG6\)](#). This provides **practical advice to help you prevent pollution**, including what you have to do by law, and good practice measures to reduce the risks of pollution occurring. It also provides advice on managing waste, options for recovering resources and the permits you may need.
- Focus on **reducing the risk of pollution** from all aspects of your development, including machinery, deliveries, fuel and material, storage, drainage and disposal of waste.
- Groundwater can be vulnerable to pollution, as well as rivers and streams. Identify and protect areas next to rivers and streams or around features to be retained. Our document [Groundwater Protection: Principles and Practice \(GP3\)](#) offers **advice on how to protect groundwater**.
- **Consider using waste as a resource.** Removing and disposing of it's not necessarily the most efficient approach. Your waste may also be useful to others, for example top-soil or sub-soil.

- [River basin management plans](#) aim to protect and improve the water environment. They highlight the main issues for the water environment and the actions we all need to take to deal with them. You can find out about the **condition of your local environment** on our website at '[What's in my backyard?](#)'.
- **See if you are in an area with special requirements** and contact us to discuss. For example, contact the Environment Agency in relation to groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs); contact Natural England in relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Local Nature Reserves.
- **Check with us if you need any permits** as well as planning permission. By thinking what you need early on, you can send applications to different authorities at the same time, saving time and money. Our [guidelines for developments requiring planning permission and an environmental permit](#) provide more information.
- **For sustainable foul drainage disposal, contact your local sewerage provider** (normally your water company) to check on the location and capacity of sewerage systems and treatment works, to ensure that adequate waste water infrastructure is available to support your development.

Further opportunities

- By building in measures to prevent pollution from the start, you can reduce costly retrofit, emergencies and avoid prosecution.
- Good site drainage is fundamental in preventing water pollution. Making sure foul and surface water drainage is correctly connected, and controlling surface water through sustainable drainage systems, will improve water quality, while reducing the risk of flooding and improving the environment.

12. Managing waste

Waste from the construction and demolition industry forms a significant proportion of the amount of solid waste sent for disposal every year. Development that uses resources more efficiently, produces less waste and maximises the re-use and recovery of materials reduces the overall cost of development and impacts on the environment.

Defra network lead: Environment Agency



Our role

- The Environment Agency makes sure waste is managed safely by issuing permits and monitoring compliance. We want to talk with you early in your planning process so that you understand what you need to do to manage waste effectively, and which permits you will need from us.
- We promote good practice and want to work with you to help reduce the amount of waste produced during construction and make sure resources are being used efficiently.

- We can provide advice to businesses on how to improve environmental performance and benefit the environment more through their work.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- **Consider using waste as a resource** - removing and disposing of it's not necessarily the most efficient approach. Consider whether you can treat your waste to make it suitable for using again; your waste may also be useful to others.
- **Assess** as soon as possible the **different types and amount of waste** that your development may produce. Follow the principle of 'reduce, re-use, recycle, recover, dispose'. Use materials that can be used again and have least impact on the environment.
- Using spoil can sometimes have benefits. See [Contaminated Land: Applications in Real Environments](#) for details on re-using and recovering soil and construction waste.
- In England, new construction projects worth more than £300,000 currently need a **Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP)**. **Produce a plan to identify your major impacts and liabilities**. You can find further advice on the [WRAP](#) website. Your plan should focus on minimising construction waste and using resources efficiently.
- **Planning your site efficiently and storing material effectively** will reduce the amount of waste caused by damage and allow unused materials and waste to be separated, and, therefore, stand a better chance of being recovered effectively.
- Talk to your local authority about how they **sort and collect recycling waste** and the systems they use.
- Design your development to **allow space** for people using the building in the future to **separate and recycle waste**.

Further opportunities

- Sorting and re-using construction materials onsite saves costs. See also the Home Builders' Federation and WRAP '[A blueprint for reducing waste and cutting costs](#)'.
- Make sure you comply with your [Duty of Care obligations](#). Have a binding contract with all your subcontractors to make sure none of the waste produced from your site is disposed of illegally.
- Minimise and separate hazardous waste.
- Understand the environmental and financial value of the soil on your site. It's valuable in landscaping, creating habitats, sustainable drainage and preventing pollution. Using it on site can reduce unnecessary disposal costs.
- Make sure the soil is not contaminated with non-native invasive species (plants brought into the country that can harm the environment). The Environment Agency website has further information, including the control of [Japanese knotweed](#) and other [invasive non-native plants](#).

13. Woodlands and trees

Trees and woods offer a wide range of benefits, from helping us adapt to climate change and improving the quality of the air we breathe, to improving the look of developed areas and the value of property. 8.4 per cent of England is woodland.

Defra network lead: Forestry Commission



Our role

- The Forestry Commission [encourages developers](#) to recognise the benefits of trees in built up areas by protecting existing trees and woods, planting more trees and using wood and wood products in construction and renewable energy. Local planning authorities have specific policies to [protect and plant trees](#) in their area.
- We aim to protect and retain the trees and woods of greatest value. Ancient woodlands and veteran trees are irreplaceable and provide habitats for many of our native species. We are a non-statutory consultee on development affecting or within 500m of ancient woodland.
- Government policies strongly discourage development that damages ancient trees and woodland, so you must:
 - Avoid development in or close to ancient woodlands and check [existing advice](#).
 - Try to avoid damaging veteran trees and [improve their survival](#).
- We support planting trees and woodland in built up areas, seeking to make sure the right tree is in the right place. Trees and woods are an important part of high quality green infrastructure, and we provide information and evidence to help you make your decisions.
- The Forestry Commission is the competent authority under the [Environmental Impact Assessment \(Forestry\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 1999](#). Local Authorities are the competent authority under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. The relationship between the two sets of regulations¹ can be complex so you may need to seek [further advice](#) regarding trees and woodlands from the Forestry Commission.

Making it work for you and how we can help

¹ As part of the planning process, the local authority will provide a screening opinion as to whether or not an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is needed under the Town and Country Planning Regulations. If an EIA is not considered under these regulations but the proposal includes afforestation, deforestation (i.e. the removal of trees and woodlands), forest roads or forestry quarries you may need consent from us under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

- **Consider trees, particularly large canopy trees, and woodlands** as a key part of a network of green infrastructure. It's important that you design this network at the start of the development process, allowing the necessary space for trees in your plans.
- **Maximise the opportunities for trees** by considering at an early stage [utility layouts](#) (where water, electricity and sewerage will be placed) and how they will be maintained to avoid problems and reduce costs later on. [Save on annual grounds maintenance](#) by planting trees rather than leaving large areas of mown grass.
- Be aware of [Tree Preservation Orders](#) on your development site as you will need to consult the local authority about proposed work on these trees.
- [The Big Tree Plant](#) funds local community groups to plant small areas of trees (up to 0.25 hectares). You could **work with local groups**, helping them to develop a sense of ownership for the green spaces in your development. [Grants](#) for planting and managing woodlands may also be available where planning permission has been given.
- When planting, **consider increasing genetic diversity that will improve resilience** and provide the [right trees for a changing climate](#). Planting in [ancient and native woodland](#) needs particular care.
- **Woodland and open spaces can increase the risk of wildfires** as temperatures increase due to climate change. If your proposed development is next to these habitats, [consider the risks](#) carefully, particularly where you locate buildings and roads, and create and maintain firebreaks to help minimise risks.
- **Where existing trees will be retained** on a development site, manage risk, health and safety through a [proportionate and defensible](#) approach. There is a [British Standard](#) for trees in relation to development and construction.

Further opportunities

- When planning to reduce peak flows of surface water and managing the risk of flooding, consider how trees and woodlands can help you. See ['Slow the Flow'](#). The risk of flooding at your development site might be reduced by planting trees and woodland further upstream. Trees can also be included in SuDS.
- Creating woodland can improve water quality by reducing runoff from agricultural land. The Environment Agency has identified significant water management issues from diffuse pollution from agriculture. See [Woodland for Water](#) and [EWGS 7 \(Appendix 2\)](#).
- Consider opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of the development by using sustainable construction materials. Biomass boilers using locally produced [woodfuel](#) (chip, logs or pellet) can be a good way to produce heat energy on site and reduce carbon emissions.
- We can advise you on managing and creating woodland to the [UK Forestry Standard \(UKFS\)](#). We recommend that forestry practices used to create or manage woodland (for example as part of green infrastructure) are to the standards for sustainable forest management outlined in the UKFS.
- A range of good practice case studies are available. [The Case for Trees](#) highlights the benefits that trees and woods provide as part of development, and identifies how trees and woods are dealt with under planning legislation. See also [Newlands](#) (North West of England) and [The Canopy](#) for practical advice and examples on incorporating trees into the built environment in London.

14. Protected sites, biodiversity and geodiversity

Planning and development shapes the way in which we use our land, and has a pivotal role in conserving, restoring and improving the natural environment, wildlife and habitats. Protected sites have been identified for their special wildlife and geological interest.



Defra network lead: [Natural England](#)

Our role

- Natural England is a statutory consultee on planning issues related to [legally protected wildlife and geological sites](#), and works in partnership with other organisations for the conservation and restoration of the natural environment ([wider biodiversity](#) and [geodiversity](#)).
- As advisors on the water environment, the Environment Agency must make sure that the permits we issue don't damage plants and wildlife, and promote the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species, particularly those that depend on water to survive.
- Natural England and/or other nature conservation organisations provide advice and evidence so local planning authorities can meet their duties to protect the environment. Local authorities have duties under wildlife legislation, Government policy, national and local strategies to have proper regard for biodiversity, particularly [priority habitats and species](#).

Making it work for you and how we can help

- Think early on about possible effects on and opportunities for the natural environment . Your local planning authority is likely to want you to **carry out ecological survey** work to support any development proposal that could affect plants or wildlife. You'll need to carry out these surveys before submitting a planning application and at the [right time of year](#).
- **Ecological surveys should inform the final development design**, minimising impacts and maximising benefits. A design that fully integrates the needs of the natural environment should help the proposal comply with nature conservation legislation and Government and local policy, avoid expensive retrofitting and provide an attractive site with a range of benefits to people.
- **Commissioning ecological consultants early** in the process will help to avoid delays caused by waiting for work to be completed at the right time of year.
- Ask your [Local Environment Records Centre](#) or local planning authority for **information on local wildlife and geological assets**. Check if your development is close to a designated (protected) site or priority habitats via [Nature on the Map](#). Your Local

Environment Records Centre is likely to hold the most accurate and up-to-date data on priority habitat location.

- **Talk to Natural England** early, especially if you have questions about **protected sites**. The Natural England [Discretionary Advice Service](#) for planning applicants includes an initial level of advice, free of charge, to help identify key issues and opportunities on any development proposal with the potential for significant impact on protected sites.
- **Talk to the Environment Agency** at an early stage if you need advice on a **development proposal that may affect a river, lake, wetland** or species that depends on these habitats. Please also consult Natural England if these sites are designated for nature conservation interest or of high biodiversity value.
- **Join up and improve connections between natural habitats** to also improve quality of life for local people and provide other benefits such as urban cooling and flood storage (see [Providing green infrastructure](#)).

Further opportunities

- Further [information for developers](#) is available on Natural England's website.
- [National Character Area profiles](#) can help developers identify the key environmental assets and opportunities within a given area.
- [Nature Improvement Areas](#) (NIAs) are focus areas for restoring biodiversity, providing opportunities for developers, landowners, nature conservation groups and public bodies to work together to create [better places for wildlife](#), with well connected habitats over large areas. Outside NIAs, consider regional opportunity maps and landscape scale biodiversity initiatives identified by regional and local partnerships, including local authorities.
- Extra information on designated sites includes:
 - European sites – [Special Protection Areas](#) (SPAs) and [Special Areas of Conservation](#) (SACs) protect habitats and species of European importance, along with [Ramsar sites](#) (internationally important wetlands). Natural England works with local planning authorities and developers to meet the requirements of the [Habitats Regulations](#), protecting these sites of highest nature conservation priority.
 - [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSIs) – legally protected sites conserving our nationally important wildlife, geological and physiographical heritage.
 - Local Sites – provide a network of locally designated wildlife and geological sites that include habitats and a safe haven for rare and priority species as well as important geology. We support local planning authorities, the Wildlife Trusts, local geoconservation groups and other organisations in their work to conserve and enhance the [Local Site](#) network.
 - [Priority habitats and species](#) – are nationally important habitats and species. Local planning authorities work to minimise impacts on and promote the restoration of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species.
- The [biodiversity planning toolkit](#) helps users to incorporate biodiversity into the planning system and new development.

15. Protected species, wildlife management and licensing

England contains a rich variety of wildlife and habitats that together form a vital part of our natural heritage. We work with developers and planners to make sure our wildlife is protected and its habitats are conserved and enhanced for the future. We help to ensure that activities relating to development proceed in accordance with wildlife law



Defra network lead: **Natural England**

Our role

- Natural England may be consulted on the impacts of development on legally [protected species](#) and has adopted national [standing advice](#). This provides a consistent level of basic advice that can be applied to any planning application. Local authorities use our standing advice to help them assess planning applications, in particular those:
 - Submitted without the relevant protected species surveys (our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) provide a list of protected species); or
 - Recommending further surveys that have not been included; or
 - Containing survey or mitigation proposals for certain species covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (water vole, white-clawed crayfish, widespread reptiles, barn owls, other breeding birds not protected by Schedule 1) and advice on survey or mitigation proposals for badgers.
- Developers may also find our standing advice useful in understanding what information is needed to assess impacts on protected species. We will still provide detailed advice to applicants and local authorities on other matters affecting protected species, unless additional local arrangements are in place.
- Natural England is also responsible for issuing licences for activities that affect protected species. We usually take the following approach to protected species work: provision of high-level advice to planning authorities at the planning consultation stage, and subsequently - if offences are likely and a licence required - a more detailed assessment of mitigation proposals at the licence determination stage. A licence is not always necessary. We advocate the use of good practice and avoidance measures to minimise the impact of a proposed activity on wildlife. Licensing should be seen as the last resort, where all other alternative ways of avoiding impacts on the species have been considered and discounted.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- **Think as early as possible** in the design process whether **there are likely to be protected species at your site**. The best time to survey for some species and habitats is very limited and planning early reduces the risk of your development suffering delays. For more information, see [Flowchart – Dealing with protected species in the planning process](#) and, to help guide your development, our [decision tree - Which habitats or features are associated with protected species?](#)
- **Employ an ecological consultant** with experience of the appropriate species to advise you early on. They can advise on: the surveys needed; building the management of ecological assets into your development from the outset, avoiding expensive retrofitting; measures that may avoid the need for a licence; and where necessary, help you apply for a licence and complete the works. We recommend developers obtain quotes from a range of experienced consultancies.
- You will only need to provide **sufficient habitat to ensure 'no net loss'** to meet licensing requirements for the species affected. Our detailed online [guidance](#) provides specific advice on wildlife management and licensing and detailed advice on the [protected species](#) most often affected by development. However, we may also work with you at an early stage to secure habitat enhancements.
- **Talk to us early**. Natural England offers a chargeable [pre-submission screening service](#) (PSS) for European Protected Species mitigation licence applications, enabling the applicant to find out whether their plans are likely to meet licensing requirements prior to submitting a formal application.

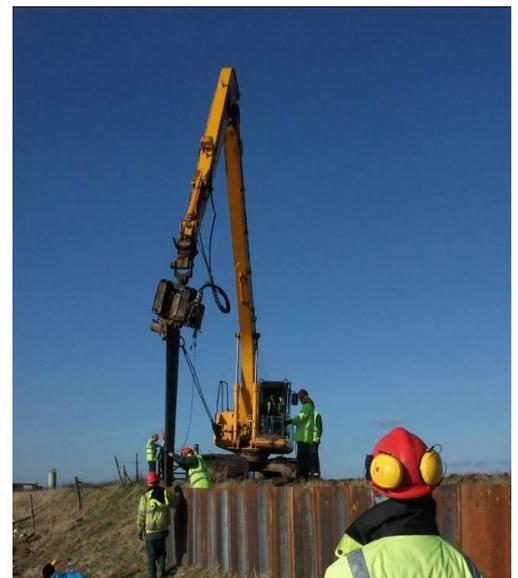
Further opportunities

- [National Character Area profiles](#) can help developers identify the key environmental assets and opportunities within a given area.

16. Agricultural land and sustainably managing soils

Development has a close relationship with the soil and the land on which it's built. Well-managed soil provides many benefits, such as storing carbon, reducing surface water run-off and improving water quality. Particular care is needed to safeguard 'best and most versatile' agricultural land. It's important, therefore, that you consider carefully the impact your development could have and make sure that you avoid damaging the soil during construction, avoid waste and find sustainable alternatives to disposal.

Defra network lead: Natural England



Our role

- Local Planning Authorities consult Natural England on safeguarding the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the Agricultural Land Classification) for developments greater than 20 ha, and on sustainably managing soil, particularly on mineral and waste sites where it's proposed to restore the land for farming.
- We can provide you with advice and guidance to make sure that these issues are effectively addressed in the environmental appraisal of development proposals.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- When commissioning **detailed environmental surveys**, you will find it useful to know what existing Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey data already exists. You can view Defra's [provisional Agricultural Land Classification \(ALC\)](#). Regional maps based on the same data are also available from the [Natural England website](#).
- We have also made the detailed **site-specific surveys** carried out by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) available to [view](#) (these are normally needed to support applications for major development proposals) and we can supply further information about individual surveys on request.
- To help make sure your proposals follow best practice guidance, check our [website](#) for information on **protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land** and for links to the Defra [Code for the Sustainable Management of Soils During Construction](#). The National Archives website hosts the Defra Good Practice Guidance for Handling Soils, and the Defra Guide to the Successful Reclamation of Minerals and Waste Sites.
- **Check with your local planning authority** what **ALC and soil information** it will need to make its decisions.
- For major infrastructure development or mineral and waste projects of 20 hectares or more, we recommend you speak to us as early as possible to discuss possible impacts and opportunities to address these.

Further opportunities

- For major construction projects, by thinking about soils early on, you may be able to manage them more cheaply, for example by not having to import soils or carry out costly remedial work.
- For minerals and waste development, you can restore the land in a way that adds value, for example safeguarding the best and most versatile land, while enhancing wildlife habitats.
- Through their ecosystem services information, [National Character Area profiles](#) can also provide some local information on sustainable management of soils and water resources.

17. Access, recreation and leisure

Having access to high quality natural environments can benefit people's health and well-being and help create a strong sense of identity and pride in their local area. Improving access can also bring economic benefits by boosting tourism and leisure experiences. Developers should design recreational spaces and off-road paths and trails as part of a network of green infrastructure.



Defra network lead: [Natural England](#)

Our role

- Natural England can provide advice on how a high quality accessible natural environment can be integral to your development.
- We work with local authorities and Local Access Forums (community representatives that advise local authorities and others on matters relating to access and recreation) to improve provision of access and recreation opportunities.
- We have expertise and can provide advice on Country Parks and nature reserves. We also have statutory roles that allow us to propose long-distance walking, cycling and horse riding routes ('National Trails') to the Secretary of State, and recommend changes to existing ones. Natural England is working to create the [England Coast Path](#) – a new National Trail around all of England's open coast.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- Natural England can help you by highlighting **examples of good practice that have provided green spaces** and off-road paths and trails for walking, cycling and horse riding. Check Natural England's [website](#) for helpful guidance on how to provide and manage [access](#) and [green spaces](#).
- Make sure you have a plan that shows **how any newly created and enhanced green spaces**, parks, play areas, paths and routes **will be maintained and paid for**.
- Take account of the impact of your development on any **existing Public Rights of Way and designated open spaces**. Your relevant local authority can provide specific advice on whether your proposed development will impact on any existing access rights and on the potential to improve green spaces and access routes.

- Contact your local highway authority to discuss how a new development would complement or help to achieve proposals and assessments set out in its **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**.
- Consult with the Sports Council and your local authority about needs for **facilities for formal recreation and leisure** in the area and how these might be located within any new open spaces created.
- It's good practice for development and redevelopment proposals on the coast or close to an existing [National Trail](#) to consider those who will be using the trail and the surrounding landscape. On the coast it will be helpful to consider early on the need for the public to have an onward route close to the sea, normally with sea views. If this can be factored in from the outset, it will save you and us time when the formal Coastal Access alignment process begins in the area.
- You may need to manage access issues during your development. You can find further information on open access land, including searchable maps, on our [website](#). Contact the Open Access Contact Centre on 0845 100 3298 for further information

Further opportunities

- High quality accessible green spaces make a development more attractive, benefit local communities and improve the market value of the scheme. Ask your local highway authority for a copy of their Rights of Way Improvement Plan to identify the local priorities for improving access.
- [National Character Area profiles](#) can help developers identify the key environmental assets and opportunities within a given area.

18. Landscape character

Landscape character is simply what makes an area unique. Natural England encourages development that is sensitive to its location, responding to and enhancing local character and distinctiveness, while bringing benefits to local communities and the natural environment.

Defra network lead: Natural England



Our role

- Natural England advises Government on landscape issues and helps deliver the European Landscape Convention in England. The Convention promotes protection, management and planning for all landscapes everywhere.

- We encourage Local Authorities to carry out landscape character assessments for their areas and to use these to underpin Local Plan policies that protect and enhance local distinctiveness.
- We have published [National Character Area Profiles](#) to help developers identify the key environmental assets and opportunities in a given area.
- We support the [Landscape Character Network](#), which provides good practice and advice for local authorities, developers and communities.
- We are a statutory consultee for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for developments that may affect sensitive landscapes such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Making it work for you and how we can help

- For major developments that need an EIA, we welcome early engagement with developers and local planning authorities to identify potential significant impacts, explore measures for reducing these and spot opportunities to improve the landscape. **Check with your local planning authority what Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) information they hold, and any associated urban and landscape design guidance.**
- The Natural England [Discretionary Advice Service](#) for planning applicants includes an initial level of advice, free of charge, to help identify key issues and opportunities on any development proposal with the potential for significant impact on [protected landscapes](#).
- Make sure that **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)** follows best practice guidelines.
- Natural England has prepared [guidance on Landscape Character Assessments](#) (LCA). Although aimed at local authorities, the guidance will help developers understand more about how these assessments are used to identify the capacity and sensitivity of areas to accommodate different sorts of development, and help to inform the appropriate and high quality design of new buildings and other structures.
- The Natural England [website](#) has **further information on landscape character and landscape character assessment**, together with maps of protected landscapes and links to management plans and contacts for the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. If you need further information on landscape character issues for your application, please contact your local authority.

Further opportunities

- Think about opportunities to improve landscape character and benefit the natural environment. Use Landscape Character Assessments to guide your thoughts on good, locally appropriate design of buildings.
- When considering how your development can best be integrated into the landscape, think about the role of sustainable drainage and providing green spaces and paths to give people access to the natural environment, both on their doorstep and across the wider area.

19. Consents and permits you may need

Environmental permits (Environment Agency)

Environmental permitting covers waste and installations, water discharge and groundwater activities, and the regulation of radioactive substances.

For more information on environmental permits and help with applying, see our [website](#).

Water abstraction (Environment Agency)

The supply of water is limited, so we make sure that it's managed and used effectively to meet the needs of people and the natural environment. We do this through a licensing system. For more information on whether you need an abstraction licence, and to apply see our [website](#).

Flood defence consents (Environment Agency)

The Water Resources Act 1991 and associated byelaws require you to apply for formal consent for works in, over, under or adjacent to main rivers. This is to ensure that these activities don't cause flooding or make an existing flooding problem worse, and don't damage the local environment, fisheries, wildlife, and flood defences. Main rivers are watercourses designated by Defra and are usually larger rivers or streams. A map of main rivers is available on our website - [What's in your back yard?](#)

[Contact us](#) as soon as possible to discuss your plans. Consents for works on non-main river (ordinary watercourses) are dealt with by your lead local flood authority.

Wildlife licensing (Natural England)

Developers must take account of proposals that may affect protected species or sites. Natural England provides advice on managing and licensing wildlife. See the '[Protected species, managing and licensing wildlife](#)' section of this document or see our [advice](#) for more information.

Licences to fell trees (Forestry Commission)

You need a [felling licence](#) from the Forestry Commission to fell trees, unless an exemption applies. Full planning permission for a development automatically provides an exemption for felling trees. Without this permission or a felling licence, felling trees may be an offence under the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended). Whether or not a prosecution takes place, a Notice can require the land to be re-stocked with trees, to be maintained for up to 10 years. The overall process is described in the [Quick Guide](#) and full details are available in the booklet [Tree Felling - Getting Permission](#) (PDF 1748kb).

The Forestry Commission will only award a felling licence if the proposals for tree felling are consistent with good forestry practice as outlined in the [UK Forestry Standard](#). Typically a licence will require restocking (replanting).

Other legal controls on tree felling are mainly covered by [Tree Preservation Orders](#) and the [Hedgerow Regulations](#). This legislation is administered by local planning authorities.

20. How to contact us

Environment Agency

Talking to us early on helps everyone and avoids delays and wasted effort.

General Enquiries: 03708 506 506 (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm).

Incident Hotline: 0800 807 060 (24 hour service to report an incident, such as pollution).

We aim to respond to pre-planning application enquiries and planning consultations within 21 days. We encourage you to make pre-planning enquiries by completing the [pre application enquiry form](#) on our website.

Please complete as much information as possible and email to enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Natural England

At Natural England we are committed to providing our customers with an efficient and effective service and have published a set of [Corporate Service Standards](#) that show the level of service customers can expect from our staff.

You should send all planning and development consultations electronically to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk. If the consultation is particularly large or only available in hard copy and it's not possible to send it electronically, you should send it to:

Natural England Consultation Service, Hornbeam House, Electra Way, Crewe Business Park, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 6GJ

We have also set up a General Enquiry Line - **0300 060 3900**. Our enquiries team is your first point of contact with Natural England regarding any general planning and development queries. Please be aware that staff in the enquiries team don't have the specialist technical knowledge to answer detailed queries. If they are unable to answer your query, they will pass your enquiry onto the appropriate team in Natural England to provide a response.

You should send any queries relating to European Protected Species (EPS) Mitigation Licensing to EPS.Mitigation@naturalengland.org.uk

Send all other non-EPS related wildlife licensing queries to Wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Forestry Commission

For general enquiries: Telephone: **0845 3673787**

Website: www.forestry.gov.uk Email: fcengland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Our [Area Offices](#) local to you will be able to give further advice and assistance.

**Would you like to find out more about us,
or about your environment?**

Then call us on

03708 506 506 (Mon-Fri 8-6)

Calls to 03 numbers cost the same as calls to standard geographic numbers
(i.e. numbers beginning with 01 or 02).

email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

or visit our website

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

floodline 0845 988 1188



Environment first: Are you viewing this on screen? Please consider the environment and only print if absolutely necessary. If you are reading a paper copy, please don't forget to reuse and recycle if possible.