

NATURE CONSERVATION

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NATURE CONSERVATION

Links to Sustainable Development

- 8.01 Central Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1) contains a commitment to sustainable development, stating that *'the sum total of decisions in the planning field as elsewhere, should not deny future generations the best of today's environment'*.
- 8.02 The Local Plan Review is an opportunity to identify and protect those aspects of the natural environment which are of most importance to quality of life now and in the future.
- 8.03 In both the natural and built environments there exist some irreplaceable benefits or assets e.g. the historic buildings, unspoilt ancient woodlands and wildlife habitats in Hastings and St. Leonards. These could not possibly be relocated or recreated, and their loss could not be compensated for - therefore it is important that these be identified and protected through planning policies.
- 8.04 Some of the most important and valuable wildlife habitats in Hastings are the three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) at Marline Valley, Combe Haven Valley and the coastal area of the Country Park. These are nationally important in terms of the habitats and wildlife species they support, and the Local Plan will seek to protect and safeguard this natural heritage.
- 8.05 Protecting such sites of outstanding value is important, but the overall value of the natural environment to future generations would quickly disappear if these sites were retained in isolation. It would be like one generation inheriting the overall housing stock and passing on only the stately homes to the next generation. Hastings has a rich network of greenspaces and wildlife habitats including ponds, streams, meadows, railway embankments, seashore, ghylls and woodlands. This stock of natural assets is important in making the Borough an attractive place to live and work, giving character to local areas and providing a valuable recreation and education resource.
- 8.06 The aim of the new policies in the Plan is to maintain and enhance, as far as possible, this overall network.

A New Approach to Nature Conservation

- 8.07 In order to achieve a sustainable nature conservation resource, new policies have been introduced in three key areas:-
- the particular protection of statutorily designated sites (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserves) and other sites which are of special importance within the Borough.
 - the protection of the rest of the nature conservation resource.
 - enhancement of the environment through development.

The Nature Conservation Strategy

- 8.08 The Borough Council has prepared a Nature Conservation Strategy which appraises the nature conservation resource of the Borough, and includes detailed policies which the Council will seek to implement in order to effectively protect and manage this resource.
- 8.09 Relevant land use policies from the Nature Conservation Strategy are included in this Plan.

KEY ISSUES

- 8.10 ~~These are~~ THE COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVING THE DIVERSITY OF WILDLIFE AND HABITATS, AND WILL SEEK TO:-^[8a/1]
- a) ~~to~~ protect all sites of special importance for wildlife and nature conservation in the Borough;
 - b) ~~to~~ maintain a green network of wildlife habitats, informal nature areas and wildlife corridors;
 - c) ~~to~~ ensure that new developments cause minimal damage to wildlife and their habitats;
- D) ENSURE THAT POTENTIAL NEW BENEFITS FOR BIODIVERSITY ARE RECOGNISED AND ENCOURAGED.^[8a/1]
- ~~to~~ E) protect the remaining areas of woodland;
- ~~to~~ F) manage Council-owned land in a manner which is sympathetic to the needs of wildlife and nature conservation. BIODIVERSITY.^[8a/1]
- G) DEVELOP A LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN SETTING ACHIEVABLE TARGETS AND FOCUSING RESOURCES TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY;
- H) ENSURE THE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE IS UNDERSTOOD AND FULLY TAKEN ACCOUNT OF IN ALL PLANNING DECISIONS;
- I) ENSURE THAT THE BOROUGH'S WILDLIFE RESOURCES ARE REGULARLY SURVEYED, KEPT UP TO DATE AND ABLE TO FULLY INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.^[8a/1]

PLANNING FOR BIODIVERSITY

- 8.10A BIODIVERSITY MEANS ALL THE SPECIES, COMMUNITIES, HABITATS AND ECO SYSTEMS IN THE LIVING NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND ALL PUBLIC BODIES ARE COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE UK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (B.A.P.) TO SUPPORT THESE SYSTEMS.
- 8.10B WITHIN SUSSEX, A LOCAL B.A.P. IS BEING DEVELOPED TO WHICH LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORS AND THE BOROUGH COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO THE PRODUCTION OF A LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FOR THE BOROUGH. THIS WILL TRANSLATE THE UK STRATEGY INTO AN ACHIEVABLE PLAN TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY LOCALLY.
- 8.10C IT IS ENVISAGED THAT A TARGET - LED PLAN WILL ALLOW THE COUNCIL TO REGULARLY MONITOR, ASSESS AND RE-EVALUATE PRIORITIES IN THE LIGHT OF A MORE THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. IT IS ALSO RECOGNISED THAT A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXISTING BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE OF THE BOROUGH AND THE WAY DEVELOPMENT MAY AFFECT BIODIVERSITY WILL LEAD TO BETTER INFORMED PLANNING DECISIONS. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN WILL THEREFORE BE BASED ON A COMPREHENSIVE AND UP TO DATE AUDIT OF ALL ECO SYSTEMS WITHIN THE BOROUGH, INCLUDING SPECIES OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE.

POLICY NCA

THE COUNCIL WILL PRODUCE A LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY IN THE TOWN AND HELP INFORM PLANNING DECISIONS AFFECTING WILDLIFE.

PRIME BIODIVERSITY AREAS

- 8.10D PRIME BIODIVERSITY AREAS (P.B.A.'S) ARE DEFINED BY THE UK STEERING GROUP FOR BIODIVERSITY AS "AREAS WHERE PARTICULAR CONCENTRATIONS OF HIGH PRIORITY HABITAT OCCUR" - WHICH IN HASTINGS ARE LOCATED TO THE WEST OF THE TOWN IN THE MARLINE AND COMBE HAVEN VALLEYS.
- 8.10E ALTHOUGH NOT A FORMAL DESIGNATION, P.B.A.'S ARE A VALUABLE TOOL TO HELP FOCUS AND TARGET RESOURCES ON THE MOST IMPORTANT RANGE OF HABITATS IN THE BOROUGH, WHERE THE GREATEST BENEFITS TO BIODIVERSITY COULD READILY BE ACHIEVED AND THE DANGERS OF HABITAT FRAGMENTATION AVOIDED.
- 8.10F FURTHER INFORMATION ON BIODIVERSITY IN HASTINGS WILL BE INCLUDED IN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE TO BE PRODUCED IN DUE COURSE.

[8a/1]

PROTECTING IMPORTANT SITES AND HABITATS

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

8.11 These are areas of national importance for nature conservation and represent irreplaceable natural assets in the Borough. There are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) in the Borough:-

a) Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach SSSI (300 hectares)

~~A large part of this SSSI is located within the coastal section of Hastings Country Park; the eastern section extending to Pett Beach is in neighbouring Rother District.~~

~~The site is of great geological and biological importance. A variety of habitats are found amongst the cliffs and glens, including ancient woodland, scrub and maritime grassland. These support a number of rare bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) lichens, flowering plants and beetles. THIS REPRESENTS THE LARGEST SSSI IN THE BOROUGH. THE EASTERN PART EXTENDS OUTSIDE THE BOROUGH INTO NEIGHBOURING ROTHER DISTRICT. THE SSSI IS OF INTERNATIONAL ECOLOGICAL AND GEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE DUE TO ITS UNIQUE COLLECTION OF HABITATS AND THE SPECTACULAR GEOLOGICAL EXPOSURES ALONG THE CLIFF-LINE EAST OF ROCK-A-NORE. HASTINGS COUNTRY PARK IS SITUATED WITHIN THE SSSI.~~

~~THE STEEP SIDED GHYLL STEAMS ARE A STRIKING FEATURE OF THE SSSI WHERE THE STABLE, MOIST MICRO-CLIMATE FAVOURS THE GROWTH OF SOME OF THE RAREST FERNS AND BRYOPHYTES (MOSESSES AND LIVERWORTS) FOUND IN BRITAIN. THE GHYLLS OF THE SSSI REPRESENT A RELIC FLORA FROM THE FORESTS OF THE ATLANTIC PERIOD OVER 5,000 YEARS AGO AND ARE OF WORLDWIDE IMPORTANCE.~~ ^[8a/2]

b) Combe Haven SSSI (156 hectares)

Part of the Combe Haven SSSI is located within the south-western outskirts of the Borough. It comprises extensive areas of wet alluvial meadows and reedbeds, particularly important for wetland wildlife, and remains one of the largest unimproved tracts of this habitat type in the country.

c) Marline Valley Woods SSSI (55 hectares)

An important area of ancient woodland and unimproved grassland in the north west of the Borough. The scientific interest of this site falls into 3 main categories:-

- the flora associated with the stream system is one of the "Atlantic" type, typical of Wealden ghylls and is particularly rich;
- the pedunculate oak-hornbeam woodland type that dominates the woods;
- the species rich unimproved grassland, a nationally declining habitat.

POLICY NC1

The Borough Council will safeguard and protect areas designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest by ~~resisting~~ NOT PERMITTING ^[8a/3] development proposals which would directly or indirectly have a damaging impact on the wildlife, and nature conservation OR GEOLOGICAL ^[8a/4] interest of the site.

Local Nature Reserves

8.12 There are 17 Local Nature Reserves in East Sussex of which 3 are in Hastings Borough. Local Nature Reserves are important in that they protect wildlife habitats and the natural heritage, but they also have a broader community role:-

- To forge partnerships between the local authority, local nature conservation organisations and local people.
- To provide an ideal environment for children to learn about nature.
- To increase people's awareness and enjoyment of wild plants and animals.

a) Marline Valley LNR (43 hectares)

This covers, to a large extent, the same areas as part of the Marline Valley SSSI to the east of the Marline stream. The reserve is owned by the Borough Council. Sussex Wildlife Trust are responsible for management work, which has included re-introduction of coppicing in the woodland areas, and annual mowing of the meadows.

b) Filsham Reedbeds LNR (18 hectares)

The largest and most important reedbed in East Sussex. The reserve is owned by the Borough Council. Sussex Wildlife Trust are responsible for management work, which includes reed cutting, dredging and control of water levels in the reedbed area.

c) St. Helens Wood LNR (38.8 hectares)

This is the only sizeable tract of natural countryside remaining within the town. The Reserve is owned by St. Helens Park Preservation Society, and managed by the Society in consultation with the Borough Council and Hastings Urban Wildlife Group. The woodlands, meadows and stream valleys are an important resource in the surrounding urban area.

8.13 These areas are a unique and irreplaceable natural resource and warrant the highest level of protection.

POLICY NC2

The Borough Council will safeguard and protect areas designated as Local Nature Reserves by resisting development proposals which would directly or indirectly have a damaging impact on the wildlife and nature conservation interest of the Reserve.

8.14 In the long-term the Borough Council seeks to secure the extension of the Marline Valley Local Nature Reserve to land west of the Marline Stream. A further extension of the St. Helens Wood Local Nature Reserve has been completed.

POLICY NC3

The Borough Council will support the extension of Marline Valley Local Nature Reserve as shown on the Proposals Map.

- 8.15 In 1997 a management strategy was drawn up for Church Wood. This recommended that the wood be declared a Local Nature Reserve. This proposal is supported in the Local Plan for the following reason:

“The area comprises of 27.6 hectares of ancient woodland and adjacent habitats surrounded by development. It is an ecologically important woodland which also fulfils a valuable role in providing a resource for informal recreation for the people who live near it, and visit regularly.”

- 8.16 The woodland has potential to link to other sites of wildlife interest and has an important role in the green network.
- 8.17 The boundary of the proposed LNR is shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

POLICY NC4

The Borough Council supports the designation of Church Wood as a Local Nature Reserve.

Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

- 8.18 A Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) is a non-statutory designation applying to a site of Borough-wide importance. The designation seeks to provide recognition of the wildlife value of these sites to the local community and, where possible, to prevent significant damage arising from development.

- 8.19 SNCI's may be defined as:-

“Semi-natural habitat which contributes to the overall natural resource and green network of the Borough, through species and/or habitat importance and fulfils an important passive, informal, recreation and/or education role for residents and visitors, therefore contributing to an enhanced quality of the environment and quality of life within the Borough.”

Source: Nature Conservation Strategy 1996

- 8.20 The Borough Council recognises the importance of an integrated network of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance which contribute to the quality of the environment of Hastings and St. Leonards and the quality of life of all its residents.

- 8.21 A schedule of proposed SNCI's is shown below. These sites are identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

Site Name	Map ref	Area (in ha)	Habitat Description
Old Filsham Golf Course	TQ 783100	9.98	Semi improved meadow and scrub
Broomgrove	TQ 827108	10.67	Mature scrub complex
Clive Vale	TQ 836105	5.71	Wooded stream valley
Augustus Way Pond	TQ 792125	0.21	Open water with marginal vegetation
Bulverhythe Shingle Beach and Cliffs	TQ 775084	11.27	Maritime cliffs and shingle beach

Castle Hill	TQ 822095	3.55	Rough grassland, scrub and coastal rock outcrop
Caves Road Cliffs	TQ 792088	3.02	Colonised cliff
Cemetery	TQ 827125	2.51	Semi natural woodland
Church Wood	TQ 785113	27.57	Semi natural woodland and meadow complex
Lower Cornwallis Allotments	TQ 815102	2.14	Mixed use allotment
East Hill	TQ 828097	5.08	Bracken / gorse rocky outcrop
Gorringe Stream	TQ 773087	1.05	Reeded stream
Helenswood Meadows and Pond	TQ 806129	0.53	Open water and meadow
High St. Wall All Saints St. Wall	TQ 825098 TQ 827097	250m 270m	Vegetated walls
Hollington Valley	TQ 793125	13.93	Semi natural woodland with associated stream and meadows
Ledsham Close	TQ 798123	0.15	Managed grass verge
Ochiltree Woods	TQ 823116	3.38	Semi natural woodland
Old Roar Ghyll / Coronation Wood	TQ 804115	7.87	Ancient semi natural woodland
Ponds Wood	TQ 792105	21.80	Semi natural woodland with associated stream and meadows
Rock-a-Nore Shingle Beach	TQ 827094	2.11	Shingle beach
Wainwright Close	TQ 778114	0.50	Grassland / scrub / pond
Wishing Tree	TQ 780105	20.88	Semi improved meadow, open water and semi natural woodland
Water Tower	TQ 773084	0.72	Semi improved grassland
South Saxons	TQ 785090	3.96	Reedbed and carr
Glyne Gap	TQ 767085	5.55	Marshy grassland and reedbed
Shornden Meadow	TQ 802105	0.55	Semi improved meadow

Holmhurst St Mary	TQ 803127	8.53	Semi natural woodland and meadow complex
West St. Leonards Railway Embankments	TQ 788090	4.11	Railside marginal habitat
Summerfields Woods	TQ 809097	7.31	Semi natural woodland
Shornden Woodland	TQ 806105	0.87	Semi natural woodland edge

- 8.22 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance represent valuable wildlife areas within the built environment. They contribute to the green network of wildlife sites and a quality natural environment in the Borough.
- 8.23 *MOST OF THE SNCI's WITHIN HASTINGS BOROUGH* ^[8a/5] have been identified by the Borough Ecologist utilising the criteria contained within the approved definition of an SNCI within the Nature Conservation Strategy. The list represents a continuing process of assessment and monitoring of the natural resource of the Borough. The list has been adjudged and approved by a panel of ecologists, in order to present a level of consistency and objectivity over site selection, and to ensure these sites have a county-wide significance and consistency.

POLICY NC5

Development proposals will only normally be acceptable if they do not have a significant adverse effect on any land designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance, or land identified as having demonstrable nature conservation importance which contributes to the overall natural resource of the Borough, or is particularly valuable to the local community.

- 8.24 This policy recognises that nature is not static. Due to natural processes the types of plant and animal to be found on any site may change over time and all SNCI's will be reviewed as an ongoing process. The nature conservation value of an SNCI may decline, or the value of a site not currently designated as an SNCI may increase; each site will be considered on its own merits in relation to this policy, if and when development is proposed.

POLICY NC6

The following sites represent an exception to Policy NC5. On these sites the local need for development takes precedence over nature conservation interests; however, the conservation and enhancement of some natural features will be supported where feasible through the use of conditions or planning obligations.

(a) Ashdown (part of Hollington Valley SNCI) - employment land / land required for Bexhill / Hastings Bypass;

**(b) Broomgrove (part of Broomgrove SNCI) - ~~employment land~~
MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT ^[8a/6];**

- (c) Land south of Grove School (part of Wishing Tree SNCI) - housing land;
- (d) Hollington Park School (part of Ponds Wood SNCI) - housing and employment land;
- (e) Pinders Valley - 2 sites (part of Clive Vale SNCI) - housing land;
- (f) West Hill Road (part of Caves Road Cliffs SNCI) - housing land;
- (g) Land rear of Beaufort Road (part of Shornden Woodland SNCI) - housing land;
- (h) South of Holmhurst St. Mary (part of Holmhurst St. Mary SNCI) - site subject to a planning brief;
- (i) Land adjacent to Old Roar Ghyll (part of Old Roar Ghyll SNCI) - housing land;
- (j) ~~Pilot Field, Elphinstone Road (part of Ochiltree Woods SNCI) - housing land.~~ ^[8a/7] LAND AROUND THE BULVERHYTHE HEADWORKS (PART OF THE WATER TOWER SNCI) WHICH CONTAINS ESSENTIAL SEWERAGE INFRASTRUCTURE. ^[8a/8]

8.25 In the preceding cases, land allocated for development has been found to have nature conservation interest. However, there is a demonstrable local need for both jobs and housing in the Borough, and in relation to these specific sites this is sufficiently important to override nature conservation considerations. Each of the sites has a planning history predating the SNCI designation and the Borough Council will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations in the interests of nature conservation where appropriate. In every case the development land is part of a much larger SNCI.

Site	Reason for Policy Overlap
Ashdown (part of Hollington Valley SNCI N°15)	Site originally allocated as employment land by Hastings Borough District Plan 1986. Part of site also required for link roads to Hastings Western Bypass.
Broomgrove (part of SNCI N°2)	Site originally allocated as employment land by Hastings Borough District Plan 1986. Regeneration Strategy for Hastings proposes employment uses for this site.
Land south of Grove School (part of Wishing Tree SNCI N°22)	Site originally allocated as housing land by Hastings Borough District Plan 1986.
Hollington Park School (part of Ponds Wood SNCI N°19)	Both remaining sites originally allocated as housing land by Hastings Borough District Plan 1986.
Pinders Valley (2 sites) (small parts of Clive Vale SNCI N°3)	South-western site originally allocated as housing land by Hastings Borough District Plan 1986 - site now has planning permission. North-eastern site granted permission for housing on appeal in 1990 - now expired - but allocated for housing by Hastings Borough Plan 1993.
West Hill Road (small part of Caves Road Cliffs SNCI N°7)	Queen Charlotte's Hospital and 123 West Hill Road both allocated for housing by Hastings Borough Plan 1993.

Land rear of Beaufort Road (small part of Shornden Woodland SNCI N°30)	SNCI overlaps a small part of this housing site which was originally allocated for housing in Hastings Borough District Plan 1986.
South of Holmhurst St. Mary (SNCI N°27)	Site subject of planning brief for wider area in Local Plan Review.
Land adjacent to Old Roar Ghyll (small part of Old Roar Ghyll SNCI N°18)	SNCI overlaps part of this housing site which was originally allocated for housing in Hastings Borough District Plan 1986.
Pilot Field, Elphinstone Road (small part of Ochiltree Woods SNCI N°-17)	SNCI overlaps a small part of this housing site. ^[8a/7]
<u>BULVERHYTHE HEADWORKS (PART OF WATER TOWER SNCI N°23)</u>	<u>CONSTRUCTION WORK WILL NEED TO TAKE PLACE ON THE SITE IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEMOLITION OF THE HEADWORKS TOWER AND THE MAKING OF MAJOR UNDERGROUND SEWERAGE CONNECTIONS.</u> ^[8a/8]

Species Protection

- 8.26 Some plants and animals are specially protected by law. Although they are not necessarily rare in all parts of the country, they are all under threat in some way - often as a direct result of human activity. Hastings has a large badger population and the Council is concerned to protect setts and foraging grounds where these may be affected by development.

POLICY NC7

Development proposals which may have an adverse effect on badgers **(PROTECTED BY THE PROTECTION OF BADGERS ACT 1992)** ^[8a/9] and other species protected by ~~schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981~~ **ANY LEGISLATION** (as amended) ^[8a/10] will not be permitted unless it can reasonably be demonstrated that harm to the species will be avoided.

The Local Planning Authority may consider the use of planning conditions and obligations which seek to:-

- (a) facilitate the survival of individual members of the species;
- (b) reduce disturbance to a satisfactory minimum;
- (c) provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current level of population.

Protecting the Green Network

- 8.27 The Borough Council recognises the most appropriate manner in which to regard its nature conservation resource is to view it as a holistic interdependent system of habitats and green spaces, some of which stretch outside the Borough. This resource can be seen as the green network of different habitats and areas of land, water and landscape features which provide conditions suitable for wildlife to flourish.
- 8.28 By continually defining, monitoring and safeguarding a green network, the Borough Council seeks not only to protect a strategic natural resource for wildlife, but to protect a quality natural environment with easy access for all residents and visitors to the Borough to enjoy.
- 8.29 It is generally accepted that nature sites have a greater biological viability when they form part of a larger network system. This facilitates the general movement of plant, animal and bird communities and reduces the vulnerability of sites or communities which may become island-like open spaces, and therefore prone to deterioration or unsympathetic development.
- 8.30 The green network itself includes all the important and recognised wildlife sites. This includes SSSI's, LNR's, SNCI's, woodlands, rivers, coastal areas, ponds and informal nature areas and wildlife corridors- and is shown in the Nature Conservation Strategy.
- 8.31 It is inevitable that parts of the green network will be lost to development. Indeed, the Hastings Local Plan identifies and allocates areas for specific development. Whilst these allocations fulfil a statutory obligation, it is recognised that many of these sites may possess or develop an intrinsic nature conservation interest. It is therefore important to integrate this nature conservation interest with potential development plans for these sites and recognise opportunities for strengthening the green network to protect the overall integrity of the natural environment.

POLICY NC8

An integrated green network of wildlife habitats, informal nature areas and wildlife corridors will be conserved, enhanced and protected. Development which may adversely affect, sever or, in general, act to the overall detriment of this green network will not be permitted.

- 8.32 Wildlife corridors, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance are shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

DESIGNING AND MANAGING LAND FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

- 8.33 As the major land owner within the Borough, the Borough Council recognises that it can have a positive effect on the conservation value of land by establishing design and management principles and practices which are sympathetic to the needs of wildlife and nature conservation. These principles extend throughout the Borough to both designated nature areas (SUCH AS THE SSSI'S AND HASTINGS COUNTRY PARK) ^[8a/11] and the more informal areas which provide a passive recreation experience for local communities.
- 8.34 Through the adoption of these principles IN SSSI'S WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S OWNERSHIP, ^[8a/12] the Borough Council will lead by example, encouraging other landowners to follow.

POLICY NC9

The Borough Council will ensure that its working practices include design principles and management operations which promote and enhance the nature conservation value of its land holdings and will promote the adoption of similar principles to other land managers and designers.

Furthermore, the Borough Council will develop and implement management plans to enhance the nature conservation value of land in its ownership or land over which it has influence.

- 8.35 The Borough Council will encourage voluntary and community groups/projects to play an active role in the management of both recognised important wildlife sites and informal local wildlife sites.

Public Access to Areas of Nature Conservation Interest

- 8.36 The Borough Council recognises the need for public access to areas of nature conservation interest for enjoyment, amenity, recreation and education. It believes that access to and appropriate use of areas with wildlife interest promotes a caring attitude towards nature and wildlife which is essential in order to protect these areas from vandalism and misuse.

POLICY NC10

The provision of appropriate public access, especially by means other than the private car, to areas of nature conservation interest will be supported. The Borough Council will provide information on wildlife and nature conservation and will promote a greater awareness, understanding and enjoyment of areas of wildlife interest.

- 8.37 This policy does not apply to all areas of nature conservation interest. In some areas, public access may be deemed inappropriate due to wildlife or habitat sensitivity; in others it may conflict with the interests of landowners or land users.

POLICY NC11

The Council will support the provision of interpretive/information centres in areas of nature conservation interest, subject to:-

- (a) there being no significant adverse environmental impact from such developments;
- (b) the availability of funds to construct and manage the centres.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND NATURE CONSERVATION

- 8.38 It is neither desirable nor realistic to seek to prevent development in every single case where it may affect the nature conservation resource.
- 8.39 Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 (Nature Conservation) states:-
- "... local planning authorities should not refuse permission if development can be subject to conditions that will prevent damaging impacts on wildlife habitats or important physical features, or if other material factors are sufficient to override nature conservation considerations."*
- 8.40 However, as the Borough Council is keen to ensure that new developments cause minimal damage to wildlife and their habitats it will, wherever appropriate, seek opportunities to improve the local environment from both a nature conservation and amenity perspective.
- 8.41 The following proposed policy aims to secure environmental enhancement through development.

POLICY NC12

The Council will promote development in accordance with natural ecological processes and nature conservation interest. Wherever possible, all new development and redevelopment should:-

- (a) retain woodland, trees, hedgerows, wetland habitats, herb rich grassland, watercourses, geological features and other natural features or habitats and protect them during construction;
- (b) put into practice the Borough Council's guidelines on tree retention and protection of trees on development sites - "Retaining Hastings' Trees";
- (c) where the loss of existing wildlife habitats or geological features is unavoidable, provide for replacement habitats where appropriate;
- (d) incorporate, wherever appropriate, creative conservation measures such as the development of new wildlife habitats;
- (e) incorporate the greatest possible proportion of appropriate native vegetation in any landscaping or planting scheme,

except where special requirements of purpose or location dictate otherwise;

- (f) incorporate the maximum possible area of permeable ground surface and take such steps as are necessary to regulate surface water flows from impermeable surfaces in the interests of nature conservation;
- (g) seek to incorporate wildlife habitats in the design of built structures;
- (h) positively address adjacent or proximate nature conservation interests.

These measures will be achieved through the use of planning conditions or Section 106 agreements where appropriate.

8.42 Planning decisions affecting the nature conservation resource of the Borough must be based on accurate and up-to-date information. The following proposed policy aims to ensure that developers are aware of the type of information which should accompany planning applications likely to affect nature conservation interests.

POLICY NC13

When considering planning applications, the Borough Council will require the submission of the information set out below where this is necessary to assess the impact of proposed developments on habitats, wildlife, landscape and the green network:-

- (a) an ecological assessment detailing the potential impact of the application;
- (b) an accurate survey of all existing trees, hedges and shrubs including those affected by the proposed development;
- (c) proposed changes to ground levels and drainage, existing or proposed services;
- (d) proposed protection measures for existing vegetation, single or groups of trees, ponds, or any other habitats from the effect of the development or construction operations;
- (e) landscape schemes and re-instatement proposals giving full details of planting species, species mix, plant specifications and densities;
- (f) where appropriate, a full maintenance plan for any reinstatement or landscape works;
- (g) where proposals affect an existing or adjacent woodland, the identification and preservation of a suitable and viable woodland edge.

WOODLANDS

Ancient Woodland

- 8.43 Ancient woodland is defined as an area which has had a continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. As such the ecological associations between plants, animals, birds and insects which have adapted over hundreds of years are very fragile and subject to irreversible damage when disturbed. Ancient woodlands are, therefore, recognised as one of the most valuable and important habitat types in Britain today. Ancient woodland comprises an irreplaceable asset of great importance to nature conservation which, once destroyed, can never be recreated. As a result, many of the plants, insects and other organisms which are found in ancient woodlands are virtually confined to this habitat and found in no other woodland habitat.
- 8.44 English Nature have compiled an Ancient Woodland Inventory of all ancient semi-natural woodlands in Britain. St. Helens, Marline, Old Roar, Churchwood, Robsack, Fairlight Glen, Gillsmans, Ponds, Willows, Rectory, Dogkennel, Redgeland, and Park AND HOADS ^[8a/13] Woods all appear on the national Inventory, and are protected under ~~the following policy:-~~ POLICY NC14. THE EXISTING HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AT HOADSWOOD NORTH AND HOLLINGTON PARK SCHOOL WHICH OVERLAP ANCIENT WOODLAND HAVE BEEN RETAINED, IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION THEY MAKE TO MEETING THE HOUSING PROVISION FIGURES. THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL CONSULT THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ON ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS AFFECTING ANCIENT WOODLAND. ^[8a/20]

POLICY NC14

Proposals for development which would adversely affect THE ancient woodland shown on the Proposals Map AND ANY OTHER ANCIENT WOODLAND ^[8a/21] will not be permitted. ANY DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING AT HOADSWOOD NORTH AND HOLLINGTON PARK SCHOOL, WHICH INCLUDE AREAS OF ANCIENT WOODLAND, MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF THIS DESIGNATION WITHIN THEIR LAYOUTS. ^[8a/21]

Preserved Woodland

- 8.45 In order to prevent damage to existing trees which may overhang or where root systems may extend underneath development sites, it is not intended normally to permit the construction of any new building within 20 metres of the boundary of any preserved woodland area as identified on the Proposals Map. A protection zone of 20 metres would avoid damage to trees by compaction of the ground nearby, pollution, spillage of fuel, scorching, or severance of roots by trenching. It would avoid requests from households for lopping and felling in the interests of safety, light and leaf control. It would reduce harmful alterations to micro-elements and the water table. The provision of large gardens in the dwellings near to the woodland would avoid woodland degradation and dumping by householders.

POLICY NC15

No new building will normally be permitted within 20 metres of the boundary of any existing woodland area of more than 0.4ha (1 acre) in extent which is subject to a confirmed Tree Preservation Order.

St. Helens Wood

- 8.46 St. Helens Wood is the only sizeable tract of natural countryside remaining within the built-up area. As such it is of outstanding amenity value to the town as a whole and, more particularly, to the surrounding residential area.
- 8.47 The area is of particular significance because of its high forest conditions and lack of fragmentation. This is combined with a high proportion of standard trees, an interesting ground flora and a wooded stream valley.
- 8.48 The St. Helens Wood area is intact because of the limited amount of development which has been undertaken on the periphery of and within the area. This could be eroded and the ecological balance disturbed if development is permitted in certain areas.

POLICY NC16

There shall be no further development within St. Helens Wood as defined on the Proposals Map. Where residential development is proposed on the periphery, the density and form of development should reflect both the need to retain as many trees as possible on the fringes of the Wood and the preservation of the visual quality of the valley.