

CHAPTER 14

Natural Environment and the Countryside

14.0 Introduction

- 14.1 The countryside of the District is one of its greatest assets. Whilst Bradford is a major city, with other substantial towns in the District, two thirds of the area is rural with moorland and attractive valleys surrounding and penetrating into the urban areas. The quality of Bradford's countryside contributes to the overall quality of life in the Bradford District and play's it's part in attracting inward investment, as outlined in the Council's "2020 Vision".
- 14.2 The Council shares the Countryside Agency's vision for the countryside, as set out in the Agency's strategy, "Towards tomorrow's countryside" (2001) namely:
- *conserving and enhancing the countryside
 - *spreading social and economic opportunity for the people who live there
 - *helping everyone, wherever they live and whatever their background, to enjoy the countryside
- 14.3 Within this strategy, the Countryside Agency identify a number of broad areas within which they will pursue these overarching objectives through specific projects such as:
- Countryside On Your Doorstep – creating attractive, accessible greenspace close to home
 - Local Heritage Initiative – helping people care for their landscapes, landmarks and traditions
 - Wider Welcome – opening up more of the countryside for more people, from all backgrounds, to enjoy
 - Vital Villages – equipping communities to shape their future
 - Market Towns – revitalising rural services for the wider countryside
 - Countryside Capital – making the most of the natural asset
- 14.4 These policies also reflect the themes and proposals outlined in the Government's rural white paper "Our Countryside: the future" (2001) which contains proposals relating to:
- Conserving and enhancing our countryside
 - Restoring and maintaining wildlife diversity and the natural environment
 - Increasing enjoyment of the countryside
- 14.5 This Unitary Development Plan embraces these national policies and priorities by setting out local policies to fulfil this vision – particularly those within this section and elsewhere (relating to Open Space (eg OS2, and OS3), Heritage, Green Belt, and Economy and Employment).

- 14.6 However, the Plan's policies can only really protect the countryside from unsympathetic development and seek to ensure that the best of the District's environment is retained. It is important that every opportunity is also taken to enhance the countryside, through for instance sensitive countryside management and environmental improvement. Whilst this generally falls outside the scope of the UDP, the Council is taking action to enhance the countryside. The strategic framework for such action is set down in the Council's Landscape Character Study, the Nature Conservation Strategy "Nature and People" and in other strategies such as the Woodland Strategy which seeks to significantly increase the extent of woodlands in the District.

Countryside Management

- 14.7 The Council recognises that it must continue to work with the Countryside Agency, other Government agencies, farmers and landowners in the continuing effort to create a sustainable, attractive and multi-purpose countryside.
- 14.8 Countryside recreation is increasingly important as a rural land use and people are visiting the countryside in increasing numbers. Reconciling the conflicting demands evident in the countryside requires skilful management and the Council, through it's Countryside Service, is committed to a programme of countryside and visitor management in partnership with the local community, voluntary groups and national and regional agencies.
- 14.9 Examples of current action include:-
- Maintenance and signposting of the local footpath network – including regional and national trails such as the Bronte Way, Dalesway and the Pennine Way.
 - Local Biodiversity Action Plans – produced in partnership with local interest groups, these seek to identify and protect locally important wildlife and habitats
 - Management of countryside sites in both the rural and urban parts of the District so that nature conservation goes hand in hand with public access
 - Encouragement of under-represented groups to enjoy Bradford's countryside and open spaces – for example by working with Asian communities in South Bradford
 - Supporting initiatives within the District such as Forest of Bradford community woodland project and voluntary groups to become involved in enhancing the local environment.
 - Supporting initiatives which seek to enhance the area's natural heritage on a regional basis, such as the Southern Pennines Heritage Strategy and related documents which have been produced through the Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities (SCOSPA).

Access and Rights of Way

- 14.10 As a major landowner in the countryside, Bradford Council has a specific responsibility to ensure that its own land is accessible to the public wherever possible and that such areas are managed sympathetically, particularly in a manner compatible with the preservation of wildlife. Much of this land is urban common and woodland and the Council is active in managing such sites for public enjoyment. Significant areas of open land which have public access are Ilkley Moor, Baildon Moor, Harden Moor, Penistone Hill, plus woodlands such as Hirst Woods, Judy Woods, Middleton Woods, Shipley Glen, Heaton and Northcliffe Woods.
- 14.11 The Council will continue to make its open land and woodland available for appropriate outdoor recreation and will provide opportunities for a range of acceptable activities to take place wherever possible. Management plans will be drawn up for sites to assist this.
- 14.12 Where private open country within the District is made accessible under the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill, the Council will play its part in supporting the Local Countryside Access Forum which will ensure access to open country is delivered and managed.
- 14.13 One of the most important resources in countryside recreation and management is the public rights of way network. The Bradford Metropolitan District has around 550 miles of public footpaths and bridleways which include the first national trail (the Pennine Way); regional trails (the Dalesway, the Bronte Way) and a complex network of popular local routes.
- 14.14 The Council recognises that public rights of way are the means by which people gain access to the countryside and it is committed to improving and managing this network, both within the Bradford District and in joint projects across local authority boundaries. The promotion of the network and raising awareness about the local countryside is an important feature of the Council's work. The Guided Walks programme run by Countryside Service Volunteers is one example of such promotion.
- 14.15 The Council recognises the special problems experienced by people with disabilities in gaining access to the countryside and will therefore continue its efforts to overcome obstacles which impede their greater use of the public rights of way network. The Council will also help to identify and promote particular routes which are most suitable for use by disabled people. Where development affects a right of way, the Council will ensure, as far as possible, that disabled people are not disadvantaged by diversions of the route or other physical works.
- 14.16 A constraint to the management of the public rights of way network is the lack of a Definitive Map for the 120 miles of public paths in the former City of Bradford County Borough. In view of the importance of the links between the urban area and the surrounding countryside the completion of the Definitive Map for the area is essential.

- 14.17 In support of the Countryside Agency's "Milestones" programme, the Council will work towards ensuring that all rights of way are legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised as soon as practicable. Further details are outlined in the Council's access strategy "Managing Bradford's Rights of Way"
- 14.18 The Council believes that rights of way must be maintained and preferably enhanced when development proposals are considered. Diversions using estate roads will be discouraged, as will narrow paths between high fences which pay insufficient regard to public amenity and safety preference being given to the formation of corridors providing through routes within developments.

Policy NE1

DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY WILL BE PERMITTED AS LONG AS A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE IS PROVIDED WHICH MAINTAINS THE CHARACTER OF THE ORIGINAL PATH.

Countryside Recreation

- 14.19 Visitors to the countryside need to be encouraged in order to provide opportunities for agricultural diversification, to provide an incentive for environmental improvement and in order to secure recreational benefits. However, it is important to recognise the impact visitors have on the countryside and that the pressures which result, need to be carefully managed in order to prevent the quality of the countryside from being diminished.
- 14.20 The Council also acknowledges the importance of the farming community as custodians of Bradford's countryside and recognises the increasing need to diversify their work in the face of falling farm incomes. The Council will therefore continue to work positively with farmers/landowners to find acceptable ways to diversify the rural economy in order to ensure that the countryside is properly cared for in the future. Preference will be given to proposals which protect the diversity and quality of the countryside.
- 14.21 In recent years the countryside has come under increasing pressure for development of more formal leisure and recreation facilities such as ski slopes on prominent open moorland, and golf courses and golf driving ranges on agricultural land. Much of this development pressure has arisen because of the ongoing changes in agriculture as farmers seek alternative sources of income and hence alternative uses for their land.
- 14.22 Outdoor sport and recreation uses are in principle appropriate in the countryside and help to improve the range of facilities available to the community. They may also contribute to the support of the rural economy. However such developments can have a significant impact on the countryside particularly on the character of the landscape. The Plan aims to ensure recreational uses do not detract from the important qualities of the countryside through the following policy:

Policy NE2

PLANNING PERMISSION FOR OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL BE GRANTED PROVIDED THE DEVELOPMENT SATISFIES ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- (1) IT DOES NOT MATERIALLY DETRACT FROM THE VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE;**
- (2) IT RETAINS OR ENHANCES IMPORTANT EXISTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND WILDLIFE HABITATS;**
- (3) IT ENSURES THAT ANY BUILT DEVELOPMENT IS STRICTLY ANCILLARY TO THE MAIN RECREATIONAL USE AND IS NO MORE THAN THE MINIMUM ESSENTIAL TO MEET ITS FUNCTIONAL NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS.**

- 14.23 The re-use of existing buildings to accommodate such facilities will be preferred to new buildings where opportunities exist. Proposals which include built development in the countryside which is not strictly ancillary to the recreational use, such as hotels or residential development will be opposed.
- 14.24 Proposals within the Green Belt will need to satisfy the Plan's Green Belt policies, GB1-GB6.
- 14.25 There are certain areas of the District where the character and quality of the landscape is degraded due to the adverse influence of man. Well designed outdoor sport and recreation facilities in these areas can enhance the landscape and secure other local benefits.
- 14.26 Given the nature, scale and location of proposals, planning applications must contain sufficient details to enable their environmental impact to be fully assessed. Applications should include:
- *a thorough landscape assessment
 - *an ecological survey of the site
 - *an assessment of the highway implications of the proposal
 - *evidence of the financial viability of the scheme.

Development in the Countryside

- 14.27 Government guidance on development in the countryside is set down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7. The general principle is that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and that non-renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection; this is reflected in Policy UDP2 in Part I of the Plan. More specifically, guidance now emphasises the need to promote diversification of the rural economy, and to weigh this up with other factors such as the protection of the landscape, wildlife habitats, the best and most versatile agricultural land and non-renewable resources. Policies in this section and elsewhere in the Plan seek to strike a balance in the consideration of these different factors.

- 14.28 Much of the District's countryside is designated as Green Belt. Within the Green Belt there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Policies GB1-GB6 of the Plan provide strict controls over development in the Green Belt, and hence also over development in much of the District's countryside. The policies in this chapter (Policies NE1-NE13) provide additional controls in relation to certain specific countryside issues such as landscape and nature conservation. Other policies elsewhere in the Plan, notably those in the Natural Resources and Waste Handling and Disposal sections are also important in controlling development in the countryside.
- 14.29 There are however two areas of open countryside, one to the west of Stanbury and the other to the north west of Silsden, which fall beyond the outer edge of the Green Belt. A substantial part of these areas consist of attractive open moorland, and are identified in the Landscape Character Study as part of the Pennine Upland and Rombalds ridge character areas respectively. Policy NE3 seeks to protect the character of the landscape. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 states that it is important that building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in the Plan should be strictly controlled. Therefore, in considering development proposals in areas of open countryside beyond the Green Belt boundary regard will be had to all relevant policies in the Plan and to Government Guidance on development in the countryside, currently contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7.

Landscape Character

- 14.30 One of the most striking features of the District is the quality of its landscape and in particular the proximity to the main urban areas of high landscape value. The character of the District's landscape is very varied, ranging from the rugged open moorland of the South Pennine uplands to the rolling farmland, and open river valleys to wooded hillsides.
- 14.31 The landscape is, however, facing major pressures for change due, in particular, to agricultural change diversification and increasing demand for leisure and recreation activities in the countryside. It is important that the distinctive character of the District's landscape is conserved and enhanced and that development which occurs is sympathetic to its character. Therefore:

Policy NE3

WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS, AS INDICATED BELOW AND SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED IF IT DOES NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE PARTICULAR CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE:

**AIREDALE
ESHOLT
PENNINE UPLAND
ROMBALDS RIDGE
SOUTH BRADFORD
THORNTON AND QUEENSBURY
TONG VALLEY
WILSDEN**

**WHARFEDALE
WORTH AND NORTH BECK VALLEY**

IN PARTICULAR, DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE INFORMED BY AND BE SYMPATHETIC TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND QUALITY AND SHOULD CONTRIBUTE, AS APPROPRIATE, TO THE REGENERATION, RESTORATION, ENHANCEMENT, MAINTENANCE OR ACTIVE CONSERVATION OF THE LANDSCAPE LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED. DEVELOPMENT WITH LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPLICATIONS WILL BE ASSESSED HAVING REGARD TO THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY WOULD:

- (a) CAUSE UNACCEPTABLE VISUAL INTRUSION;**
- (b) INTRODUCE (OR CONVERSELY) REMOVE INCONGRUOUS LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS;**
- (c) CAUSE THE DISTURBANCE OR LOSS OF (OR CONVERSELY) HELP TO MAINTAIN:**
 - (1) LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS;**
 - (2) HISTORIC ELEMENTS WHICH CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND QUALITY, SUCH AS FIELD, SETTLEMENT OR ROAD PATTERNS, AND LANDFORM;**
 - (3) SEMI-NATURAL VEGETATION WHICH IS CHARACTERISTIC OF THAT LANDSCAPE TYPE;**
 - (4) THE VISUAL CONDITION OF LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS.**

14.32 A detailed landscape appraisal of Bradford District has recently been carried out, based upon the approach to distinct landscape character developed by the Countryside Agency. The appraisal identifies the 10 specific, distinct, and unique landscape character areas, listed above, which are all very different from each other. The built-up areas including Bradford, Keighley, Bingley, Shipley, Ilkley, Silsden, Menston, and Burley-in-Wharfedale, as well as smaller villages, are not included within these areas, because they are not within the open countryside.

14.33 For the purposes of appraising proposed developments, reference should be made to the 'Bradford Landscape Character Study' (CBMDC 2001). This identifies the landscape character areas setting out for each a description, important features, analysis of the areas sensitivity to change, and detractors within the area. It then sets out landscape strategies for the fabric of the landscape and for development taking place within it. An additional level of detail is provided with each character area being broken down further into a number of 'local landscape types, areas of land very similar to each other which occur throughout the District, such as moorland, wooded valleys or enclosed pasture. These are each described with an analysis of their strength of character and condition, together with policy guidelines for the conservation or improvement of the local landscape type. The guidelines contained in the 'Landscape Character Study' will guide planning decisions across the whole of the countryside within Bradford District.

- 14.34 The countryside is protected for its own sake under policy UDP2 of the Plan and advice in PPG7 'The countryside – environmental quality and economic and social development', and in the main under green belt policy. This policy is not intended to prevent appropriate development from taking place in the countryside. Where development is permitted under other policies of the plan, however, it is important that it respects or enhances the landscape character of the surrounding countryside.
- 14.35 The landscape of the District includes detrimental features such as tips, quarries and overhead power lines, these elements are identified where they currently exist in the landscape appraisal. In order to retain the visual character of the landscape it is important that proposals, which would result in such additional features, are carefully controlled. The council will also encourage where opportunities arise through development proposals, the removal of detrimental features, where practical, or measures to mitigate their impact. Policies to control waste disposal and the exploitation of natural resources are set out in separate sections of the plan.
- 14.36 In the case of overhead power lines, the Council has only very limited control. Certain new overhead power lines can be constructed under permitted development rights granted under the General Permitted Development Order 1995 and the remainder require the consent of the President of the Board of Trade. However, the Council will negotiate with the relevant statutory undertakers to minimise the visual impact of new lengths of overhead power lines (and renewals /upgrades of existing lines) on the character of the landscape. Special consideration should be given to the detailed routing of the overhead power lines in the landscape, and the possibility of undergrounding lines in appropriate instances. In such negotiations particular regard will be had to the 'Holford Rules'.

Trees/Areas of Woodland Cover

- 14.37 Woodlands and trees are key elements of a sustainable environment. They enhance our landscape, both urban and rural, provide valuable habitats for wildlife, create opportunities for leisure and recreation and combat pollution by providing oxygen and absorbing dust and carbon dioxide. Trees can also help reduce heat loss from buildings and contribute to energy conservation objectives (see Policy D2) by providing shelter, minimising the effects of driving rain and reducing exposure. They can also provide an economic resource. Therefore:

Policy NE4

THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE CONTRIBUTION THAT TREES AND AREAS OF WOODLAND COVER MAKE TO THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT, (INCLUDING THE AMENITY VALUE OF TREES IN BUILT UP AREAS). IN PARTICULAR THE COUNCIL WILL:

- (1) RESIST DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF TREES OR AREAS OF WOODLAND COVER WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO:**

- (a) **THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE;**
 - (b) **THE CHARACTER OF A SETTLEMENT OR ITS SETTING;**
 - (c) **THE AMENITY OF THE BUILT UP AREA, OR**
 - (d) **PROVIDE VALUABLE WILDLIFE HABITATS.**
- (2) **MAKING TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS WHERE NECESSARY TO PROTECT TREES AND WOODLAND AREAS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL AMENITY OR LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER;**
- (3) **PROMOTING AN INCREASE IN TREE AND WOODLAND COVER IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS, AS DEFINED BY THE WOODLAND STRATEGY AND REQUIRING DEVELOPERS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WOODLAND STRATEGY AS PART OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS;**
- (4) **ENCOURAGING WOODLAND MANAGEMENT AND TREE AND HEDGEROW PLANTING SCHEMES BY LANDOWNERS, VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS OR OTHERS, INCLUDING SECURING EFFECTIVE WOODLAND AND TREE MANAGEMENT AS PART OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.**
- 14.38 The Council is committed to protecting existing woodland and tree cover and increasing its coverage where appropriate. Currently only approximately 4.5% of the Districts land area is wooded, compared with 10% nationally and it is a target of the Council's Woodland Strategy to increase this total in partnership with organisations including 'The Forest of Bradford' and 'White Rose Forest'. The Woodland Strategy identifies key areas where new planting will be promoted.
- 14.39 Developers will be encouraged, where appropriate, to include tree planting as part of their landscape proposals, within all development sites. Furthermore, within those key areas identified by the Council's woodland Strategy developers will be expected, where possible, to make a more positive contribution to the objectives of the Strategy, by making appropriate provision for more significant new areas of tree planting both within and outside development sites.
- 14.40 Tree Preservation Orders will be actively used to sustain the landscape character of the District and influence the layout of new development. In particular, they will be used to ensure retention of the mature treescape where development occurs providing pleasant visual amenity for the community.
- 14.41 Landowners will also be encouraged to improve the upkeep and management of woodlands and trees to ensure that these valuable assets continue to benefit future generations. Further advice on woodland management is contained in the Woodland Strategy
- 14.42 Where existing woodlands or new planting are important to the successful integration of new development into the landscape, developers will be required to deliver long term Woodland Management Plans for these areas. This will also define the responsibilities and mechanisms for the maintenance and improvement of the woodland areas once development is completed. Typically this will be achieved by obligations or agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 and typically, long term Woodland Management Plans.

Protection and Assessment of Trees on Development Sites

- 14.43 Trees significantly enhance the appearance of development and provide a quality of life for the community. Development, which does not manage the trees as necessary during the construction period, may result in damage or trees loss. It is imperative that damage to trees is avoided, preventing unnecessary tree loss and subsequent threats to life and property caused by unhealthy trees.

Therefore:

Policy NE5

ON DEVELOPMENT SITES THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE THE RETENTION OF THOSE TREES WHICH ARE HEALTHY AND WHICH HAVE OR WOULD HAVE A CLEAR PUBLIC AMENITY BENEFIT. THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE THE PROTECTION DURING CONSTRUCTION OF TREES TO BE RETAINED AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, REPLACEMENT TREE PLANTING.

Policy NE6

IN ORDER TO ENSURE SATISFACTORY TREE MANAGEMENT AND PLANTING ON DEVELOPMENT SITES, DURING CONSTRUCTION, THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE PROTECTION MEASURES WHICH MET THE MINIMUM STANDARDS AS SET OUT IN BS5837: 1991 GUIDE FOR TREES IN RELATION TO CONSTRUCTION (OR ITS SUCCESSOR).

- 14.44 Where trees and woodlands are affected by development proposals the developer should always contact the council at an early stage. On development sites where there are significant trees issues, the Council will require an Arboricultural Management/Method Statement.
- 14.45 The Council will provide supplementary planning guidance in relation to details of tree protection on development sites, distances in relation to trees and development and the encouragement of active tree management.

Nature Conservation

- 14.46 The diversity of the Bradford District is one of its prime assets. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 'The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development', emphasises the importance of protecting the diversity of the rural landscape and wildlife habitats. Planning Policy Guidance Note 9: 'Nature Conservation', also sets out the statutory framework for nature conservation and its role in land use planning. Furthermore, as an overall structure for the identification, protection and enhancement of nature conservation sites (and the linkages between them) and to promote greater public awareness of and access to wildlife habitats in the Bradford District, the Council has prepared a Nature Conservation Strategy, 'Nature and People' (adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 1998). The Council also recognises the importance of urban areas for wildlife habitats and that nature often flourishes on derelict or degraded land which has re-colonised after being left undisturbed for long periods.

- 14.47 Some of the best examples of the District's landscape and areas of nature conservation importance are given special recognition and protection under Policies NE3 and NE7 to NE9. The District also possesses many other areas of nature conservation value which are regionally and locally important for their biodiversity and scientific interest as well as their educational resource. These include moorlands, woodlands, wetlands, and grassland habitats, as well as geological/ geomorphological features and the Council has designated the best examples of these sites accordingly.
- 14.48 It is important that there is no net loss of biodiversity (habitats and species) within the District as a result of development and that the natural assets of the District as a whole are protected from further fragmentation. As the key to sustainable development, however, opportunities will also be sought to enhance the natural environment through further planting and habitat creation/management.

Designated Sites

- 14.49 There are four levels of designated sites within the Bradford District. A number of nature conservation sites have been recognised as of national and international importance. English Nature designates sites of national importance known as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); there are 4 SSSIs in the Bradford District. One of these SSSIs (the South Pennine Moors – represented by Rombalds Moor and Haworth Moor in the Bradford District) has been further designated, by English Nature under the European Birds Directive, as the South Pennine Moors Special Protection Area (SPA - an area of some 20,938 ha of which 4295 ha is located within the Bradford District) because of the importance of its breeding bird populations. The area covered by the SPA has also been proposed as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), under the European Habitats Directive because it contains habitat types which are rare or threatened within a European context. In line with paragraph 8 of PPG9 the Council will endeavour to comply with the United Kingdom's international obligations to protect those Sites of Special Scientific Interest designated or proposed as Special Protection Areas or Special Areas of Conservation by applying the policies set out below.
- 14.50 In addition, there are a number of other sites of nature conservation value designated at a regional or local level, which the Council recognises as contributing to the biodiversity of the Bradford District and the wider area. 21 Sites of Ecological or Geological Importance (SEGIs) and 16 Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) have been designated by the Council, following county-wide surveys by West Yorkshire Ecology and the West Yorkshire RIGS Group, as sites of regional significance. In addition, over 100 sites of local nature conservation value, Bradford Wildlife Areas (BWAs), have also been designated, not only for their biodiversity interest, but also for their community benefits in respect of their accessibility for the quiet enjoyment of nature, their educational value or their heritage associations (such as mill ponds). All designated sites within the Nature Conservation Strategy are shown on the UDP Proposals map.
- 14.51 The Council will protect the designated sites of nature conservation value, and any such sites designated in the future, by applying the following policies:-

Sites of International Importance (SPA, SAC)

Policy NE7

DEVELOPMENT NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH OR NECESSARY TO THE MANAGEMENT OF AN SPA/SAC OR A PROPOSED SPA/SAC AND WHICH ARE LIKELY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE SITE WILL BE SUBJECT TO THE MOST RIGOROUS EXAMINATION AND WILL NORMALLY REQUIRE AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT. WHERE SUCH DEVELOPMENTS WOULD AFFECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE SITE THEY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:-

- (a) THERE ARE IMPERATIVE REASONS OF OVER-RIDING NATIONAL PUBLIC INTEREST FOR THE DEVELOPMENT; AND**
- (b) THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION AND/OR LOCATION**

14.52 The Council will need to be satisfied that there are no alternative solutions or sites suitable for the proposed development and will consult English Nature on the likely impact of the development on the integrity of the designated site ie whether the proposals would have any adverse effect on the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which would affect the sustainability of the habitat, mosaic of habitats and/or the levels of populations for which the site was designated. English Nature will advise on the scope and content of an appropriate assessment, depending on the location and significance of the proposals and will identify particular aspects of information, such as hydrology, disturbance or land take, to be addressed by the developer. PPG 9 also states that "if planning permission is granted for a development which would adversely affect the integrity of an SPA or SAC, regulation 53 requires the Secretary of State to secure that any necessary compensatory measures are taken to ensure the overall coherence of the Community-wide network of SPA's and SAC's, known as Natura 2000, is protected."

14.53 In relation to permitted development rights, developers should also note that Regulations 60-63 of the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) ensure that any permission granted under the GDPO is not in breach of the terms of the Habitats Directive and prevent any development which is likely to significantly affect an SPA or SAC. Developers should therefore seek the opinion of English Nature before proceeding with any development within an SPA or SAC.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Policy NE 8

DEVELOPMENTS IN OR LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE REASONS AND/OR BENEFITS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CLEARLY OUTWEIGH THE NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE SITE ITSELF AND THE NATIONAL POLICY TO SAFEGUARD THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF SUCH SITES. WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED THE AUTHORITY WILL CONSIDER THE USE OF CONDITIONS OR PLANNING

OBLIGATIONS TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE SITE'S NATURE CONSERVATION INTERESTS.

- 14.54 English Nature specify to the owners or occupiers of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, at the time of notification, the operations which they consider harmful to the conservation interest of the site. Consent is required from English Nature before any potentially damaging operations can be carried out on a SSSI unless they are in accordance with the terms of a management agreement. The Council will alert English Nature to any proposed development on land on or adjacent to SSSIs and seek guidance on the likely impact of the development on the integrity of the designated site. The Council will need to be satisfied that there are no alternative solutions or sites suitable for the proposed development. English Nature will advise the developer regarding the scope and content of the appropriate level of assessment to be provided with the application.
- 14.55 Developers are advised to seek advice from the local English Nature team on any proposals within Sites of Special Scientific Importance.

Sites of Regional and Local Importance (SEGI, RIGS, BWA)**Policy NE9**

DEVELOPMENT LIKELY TO HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON A SITE OF ECOLOGICAL/GEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE (SEGIs & RIGS), OR A SITE OF LOCAL NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE (BRADFORD WILDLIFE AREAS-BWAs), AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP (OR SUBSEQUENT REVIEWS), WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT CAN BE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE ARE REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL WHICH OUTWEIGH THE NEED TO SAFEGUARD THE SUBSTANTIVE NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE SITE. WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED WHICH WOULD DAMAGE THE NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE SITE, SUCH DAMAGE WILL BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM. WHERE APPROPRIATE THE AUTHORITY WILL CONSIDER THE USE OF CONDITIONS AND/OR PLANNING OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE MITIGATION.

- 14.56 In accordance with national and regional planning guidance, the Council recognises the importance of areas of nature conservation interest which do not meet the criteria of national or international designations but which have been deemed significant to the District's natural capital at a regional and local level. Sites of Ecological/Geological Importance are designated through a five yearly county-wide review by West Yorkshire Ecology (formerly Ecological Advisory Service) and Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological Sites have been recommended by the West Yorkshire RIGS Group under the guidance of English Nature. In addition, Bradford Wildlife Areas have been selected for their local wildlife value and have been designated and will be periodically reviewed through public consultation by the Council via the mechanism of the Nature Conservation Strategy for Bradford, 'Nature and People'. The Strategy states that all designated sites in the Bradford District will be given appropriate protection from development. There will be a general presumption against development which would adversely affect all designated sites, but the weight given to the consideration of the proposal against the nature conservation value

of the site will be commensurate to its level of deemed importance. West Yorkshire Ecology – the advisory service for ecological issues within West Yorkshire – will be consulted on all proposals which affect SEGIs and will undertake a five yearly review of Sites of Ecological/Geological Importance on behalf of the West Yorkshire local authorities. Advice will be sought from English Nature and the West Yorkshire RIGS Group in respect of proposals relating to designated RIGS sites.

Biodiversity

- 14.57 As well as its obvious environmental implications biodiversity also has social and economic links, by creating attractive high quality settings for residential development and business investment, as well as a cultural and recreational resource. Following a commitment made by the Government at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 to protect and enhance global biodiversity, the Government published the 'Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan'. This sets out a structured approach to biodiversity planning, providing a framework to achieve national conservation targets through effective action at a local level. A steering group, the Bradford Biodiversity Partnership, has been established to prepare the Bradford Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), "to conserve and enhance the wildlife species and habitats of the District, as part of Bradford's contribution to the conservation of UK and global biodiversity". The objectives of the Bradford LBAP will be to:-
- Produce a Local Biodiversity Action Plan to provide a framework for the delivery of the UK BAP and inform local and regional planning policies on biodiversity issues
 - Safeguard locally and nationally valued species and habitats
 - Ensure the sustainable use of biological resources, making important links to initiatives such as Local Agenda 21
 - Develop effective and participative partnerships that co-ordinate action and focus resources
 - Raise public awareness of and commitment towards biodiversity issues
- 14.58 The Bradford Biodiversity Action Plan will consist of a series of individual species and habitat action plans, containing information on the current status of the subject, causes of loss or decline, with recommendations for protection, management and monitoring. The production of action plans will be a continual process and development will need to acknowledge the importance of the species or habitats currently contained within the Bradford BAP. A first 'set' of approximately 12 individual Species and Habitats Action Plans will be produced by the Bradford Biodiversity Partnership in Summer 2001, with further Action Plans to follow.
- 14.59 It is also recognised that, in addition to designated sites, the natural character and diversity of the Bradford District should be retained by protecting important landscape features (including rivers, canals or streams; natural valley landforms, open moorland vistas or stone walls) ecological features (including woodlands and trees, meadows, ponds, water courses and wetlands, hedges and moorland habitats) and geological features (including significant rock strata, glacial features or overflow channels) and the variety of wildlife species which they support. This

is particularly important in cases where statutorily protected species occur or in respect of proposals, which affect species/habitats outlined in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan or Bradford Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Policy NE10

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD ENSURE THAT IMPORTANT:-

- **LANDSCAPE**
- **ECOLOGICAL**
- **GEOLOGICAL FEATURES, or**
- **WILDLIFE HABITATS AFFECTING PROTECTED SPECIES OR SPECIES AND HABITATS OUTLINED IN THE UK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN OR BRADFORD LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN; ARE PROTECTED. THE COUNCIL WILL ENSURE THAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS POLICY ARE SATISFIED THROUGH THE USE OF CONDITIONS AND/OR PLANNING OBLIGATIONS.**

WHERE THE SITE CONCERNED HOSTS A PROTECTED SPECIES DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT IS NECESSARY FOR IMPERATIVE REASONS OF HUMAN HEALTH OR PUBLIC SAFETY OR FOR BENEFITS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. PROPOSALS LIKELY TO AFFECT PROTECTED OR OTHER RARE SPECIES SHOULD BE GUIDED BY EXPERT SURVEY AND SPECIALIST ADVICE.

14.60 The presence of a protected species is a material consideration in respect of granting planning permission for a proposal which, if carried out, can provide legal justification for undertaking works which would harm a protected species or SAC natural habitat. In such cases, English Nature will be consulted before determining any such application and, where permission is granted, the Council will draw the applicant's attention to the need to obtain any necessary licence to disturb protected species. Potential harm can often be overcome by modifications to the proposals (such as restricting works to specific seasons to protect nesting birds, breeding badgers or bat roosts). Species protected by British or European law relevant to the Bradford District are:-

- Badgers (Protection of Badgers Act 1992)
- All wild birds with particular reference to Schedule 1 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Wild animals listed in Schedule 5 (W&C Act 1981), especially bats, water voles & otters
- Wild plants listed in Schedule 8 (W&C Act 1981)
- Species listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive 79/409/EEC
- Species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC

14.61 The Schedules to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are updated every five years

- 14.62 In addition, due consideration will also be taken in the planning process of proposals which might have an adverse effect upon species and habitats which are globally or nationally threatened or rapidly declining as found listed below:-
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan - Short List Key Species and Key Habitats
 - RSPB Birds of Conservation Concern - Red and Amber List
 - Red Data Book species – plants, vertebrates and invertebrates
 - Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- 14.63 Plus other considerations, where development would have an adverse effect upon:-
- Bradford Local Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitats.
 - Aquatic habitats – including ponds, and mill ponds, in part particular for their heritage as well as their ecological value; water courses and other wetlands such as reservoirs.

General Considerations

- 14.64 The policies set out in this Unitary Development Plan apply to the general principles of nature conservation as set out in PPG 9. The Council's Nature Conservation Strategy contains more detailed policies for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, specific to the Bradford District, and should be read as supplementary guidance to and in conjunction with the UDP.
- 14.65 In the case of development affecting trees, the Council will be producing Supplementary Planning Guidance, based on guidelines set down in British Standard 5837 (1991) to guide developments in relation to the protection of trees on sites. See also Policies NE5 and NE6 on the protection of trees and woodlands within development

Ecological Appraisals

- 14.66 The developer will be required to demonstrate due consideration of the environmental impact of the proposed development, by way of an ecological appraisal, where the development is likely to have an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the Bradford District. The developer will also be expected to carry out regular review and monitoring programmes of post development impacts where appropriate and implement measures to mitigate any subsequent adverse effects of the development. The Council will need to be satisfied that the level and detail of information contained within the ecological appraisal is appropriate for the particular nature conservation value of the site. Environmental Impact Assessments will be required in accordance with the Environmental Assessment Regulations.
- 14.67 It should be noted that a development may have an indirect effect on a designated nature conservation site, for instance a wetland site may be damaged by water abstraction some distance away.

- 14.68 Furthermore, the abandonment or inappropriate change to the management of habitats as a result of development should be avoided. It is important that any such indirect adverse effects are prevented.

Policy NE11

DEVELOPERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE AN APPROPRIATE ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL FOR ALL PROPOSALS ON OR ADJACENT TO A DESIGNATED NATURE CONSERVATION SITE OR WHICH COULD AFFECT PROTECTED SPECIES, SAC NATURAL HABITATS OR OTHER SPECIES/HABITATS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN AS LISTED ABOVE. EXPERT SURVEY AND SPECIALIST ADVICE SHOULD BE SOUGHT WHERE NECESSARY.

Enhancement

- 14.69 To ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity throughout the Bradford District, the Council will, where appropriate, warrant that the policies for the protection of the natural assets are satisfied through the use of planning conditions and obligations. However, in order to be sustainable, development should not just protect but also look at positive opportunities for enhancing the biodiversity and landscape value of a proposals site. Due weight will be given to proposals which propose additional enhancement through tree and shrub planting schemes or habitat creation such as ponds or wetland features (especially where linked to sustainable urban drainage schemes), wildflower areas, hedge planting or provision of nest boxes, where appropriate. Opportunities for biodiversity and landscape enhancement will be sought in connection with development for the creation, extension or improvement of wildlife habitats, in particular through the restoration of mineral and waste sites.

Policy NE12

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE PROPOSALS WHICH INCLUDE LANDSCAPE AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT.

- 14.70 The Council is preparing an update of the Woodland Strategy, which will help to inform and guide tree planting in key areas. Other references should also be made to the Bradford Landscape Character Study, which will indicate significant areas for planting as a framework for new development.

Wildlife Corridors

- 14.71 The Nature Conservation Strategy for Bradford, 'Nature and People', recognises the value of wildlife corridors to provide habitat links and migration zones. Wildlife corridors should be identified and protected from fragmentation by development, especially along valley bottoms where the land is most likely to be under pressure. The topography of the Bradford District suggests that valleys, rivers, canal and watercourses, as well as disused railway lines, often with associated wooded margins, form the main linear wildlife habitats for foraging and migration. Other valuable wildlife corridors may be smaller, consisting of hedges, streams, linked urban green spaces, mill ponds and even derelict land;

some of the incised valleys on the moorland edges are of prime importance as migration corridors for a variety of birds.

POLICY NE 13

DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE INTEGRITY AND VALUE OF THE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR NETWORK ACROSS THE BRADFORD DISTRICT OR THE MOVEMENT OF FLORA AND/OR FAUNA SPECIES WITHIN WILDLIFE CORRIDORS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. PROPOSALS INVOLVING LAND IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AND PROPOSALS AFFECTING OR ADJACENT TO ALL WATERCOURSES AS PART OF A WILDLIFE CORRIDOR SHOULD MAKE PROVISION FOR THE RETENTION OF THE CORRIDOR AND PROTECTION OF ITS WILDLIFE LINKS.

- 14.72 The aim of this policy is to strengthen links between important wildlife habitats. Therefore, the Council will identify wildlife corridors on the proposals map and will recognise that Wildlife Corridors cross administrative boundaries into adjacent local authority areas.
- 14.73 Particular consideration will be given to developments which would affect watercourses as wildlife corridors and significant natural buffer strips to allow movement and migration of wildlife will be required as part of development proposals adjacent to all streams and larger watercourses. Development pressure can result in the encroachment of built development into river channels, canals and their corridors. This can have an adverse effect on nature conservation, recreation interests and water quality, as well as being visually intrusive. Where appropriate, the Council will encourage the incorporation of a 'buffer strip' between the development and the edge of the watercourse etc. Buffer strips have a wide range of benefits; they create/conserves wildlife habitats, stabilise river banks (thus reducing erosion and build-up of silt); reduce the risk of flooding and help to reduce the risk of pollution, as well as improving the visual amenity of the river/canal corridor.
- 14.74 There will be a general presumption against the culverting of any watercourse unless necessary in conjunction with a major highway scheme, where provision for wildlife movement should be accommodated within the culvert design. Formal consent of the Environment Agency is required for culverting under the Water Resources Act 1991.
- 14.75 The use of powers under the Hedgerow Protection Regulations will be also be used to secure the protection of hedges as wildlife corridors, especially where linking other habitats such as woodland or unimproved pastures.