

Sources of local plan evidence on the natural environment

The following sources of evidence may be useful in ensuring local plans are evidence based, in line with paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and assist in meeting Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) requirements. A range of additional locally specific evidence is also likely to be needed to underpin plan preparation.

General natural environmental evidence

[National Character Areas](#) (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan.

Natural England has also published downloadable [natural capital maps](#). These are a suite of ten maps, of different aspects of natural capital, contributes to our understanding of where our natural capital is.

The [Magic](#) website will provide you with much of the **nationally held natural environment data** for your plan area in downloadable GIS format. Specific data sets are listed under the environmental topics below.

[Local environmental record centres](#) may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment, principally ecological.

The following local organizations may also hold environmental information where applicable: Local Nature Partnerships, Wildlife trusts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and [Nature Improvement Areas](#).

Evidence relating to the **significant environmental effects of the current local plan** should be available (in line with SEA legislation), as should suitable biodiversity evidence for any plan adopted after the NPPF came into effect (27 March 2012), usually through the current plan's Annual Monitoring Report.

Landscape

The [Magic](#) website provides data on the extent of protected landscapes (**National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**).

National Park/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans may also be a source of useful evidence. These are usually found on these organisations websites.

Most areas have local **landscape character assessments**. These are tools to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area.

Data on **tranquillity** is held by [CPRE](#). They also hold mapping data on [light pollution](#).

Biodiversity and geodiversity

The most relevant layers on [Magic](#) for you to consider are **Ancient Woodland, Local Nature Reserves, Priority Habitat Inventory, Sites of Special Scientific Interest** (including their **impact risk zones**), **Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar Sites** (including, where relevant, marine designations).

You may also wish to draw on more detailed information on specific [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) and the [Conservation Objectives](#) and [Site Improvement Plans](#) for **Special Areas of Conservation** and **Special Protection Areas**.

Priority habitats and species are those listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006 and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Larger areas of priority habitat will usually be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites or Local Geological Sites**. **Local wildlife site** data is usually held by local planning authorities themselves as is **local geological site** data. Local Environmental Record Centres and local wildlife and geoconservation groups are also a source of information on Local Sites.

Natural England maintains the **Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land Inventory** (a priority habitat dataset currently not integrated into the Priority Habitat Inventory on [Magic](#)) and is available on request from Natural England via email; NaturalEnglandGIDataManagers@naturalengland.org.uk.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) identify the local action needed to deliver UK targets for habitats and species. They also identify targets for other habitats and species of local importance and can provide a useful blueprint for biodiversity enhancement in any particular area. Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPS) identify agreed local action for geodiversity, a list of active LGAPs can be found at [UK Geodiversity Action Plan \(http://www.ukgap.org.uk/getting-involved/lgaps.aspx\)](http://www.ukgap.org.uk/getting-involved/lgaps.aspx).

Some areas have identified **Biodiversity Opportunity Areas** or similar for spatially targeting biodiversity restoration work.

Protected species are those species protected under domestic or European law. [Local environmental record centres](#) are likely to hold much of the available data on such species.

[APIS](#) holds data on air pollution in particular in relation to protected nature conservation sites.

Access

The [Magic](#) website holds the following access related data: **National Trails, Public Rights of Way (on the Ordnance Survey base map), Open Access Land (the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 layer), together with national and local nature reserves, country parks** and the [England Coast Path](#).

Locally held data will include the **definitive Public Rights of Way**, and may include **Rights of Way Improvement Plans** where they exist, and any locally mapped **open space audits or assessments**.

Natural England's work on [Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards \(ANGSt\)](#) may be of use in assessing current level of accessible natural greenspace and planning improved provision.

Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure strategies may comprise or contain useful evidence sources where they exist.

Soils

A provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) map is on [Magic](#), and the GIS layer 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile Land' is available on request from Natural England via email; NaturalEnglandGIDataManagers@naturalengland.org.uk.

Some areas already have detailed ALC maps. The coverage of existing detailed MAFF post 1988 ALC surveys is shown on [Magic](#). The MAFF post 1988 ALC survey reports and maps themselves are available from [Natural England](#) or from [Gov.UK](#).

Our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#) may also be of help.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](#) website and also from the [LandIS website](#), which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Climate change

The [Climate Change Adaptation Manual](#) provides evidence to support nature conservation in a changing climate.

The [National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Model](#) provides a spatially explicit assessment of the relative vulnerability of priority habitats. The data files can be accessed here: [National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment data](#).

The [LWEC Climate Change Impacts Report Cards](#) present the latest evidence on how climate change is affecting different aspects of our environment, economy and society.

Coastal and Marine issues

The following may be of help:

- [Catchment flood management plans](#) (considers all types of inland flooding, from rivers, groundwater, surface water and tidal flooding).
- [Shoreline management plans](#) (considers flooding from the sea).
- **Any estuary or harbour management plans** that are held locally.
- [River basin management plans](#) (covers entire river systems, including river, lake, groundwater, estuarine and coastal water bodies).
- [Coastal Erosion Maps](#).
- The Marine Management Organisation has a [marine planning evidence base](#) which supplies a range of information on marine planning.
- There may be specific **Heritage Coast** information held locally, such as a management plan.

Water Quality and Resources and Flood Risk Management

The Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on [information sources for the water environment](#).