Date: 17 August 2026
Our ref: 553941
Your ref: Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation

Cheshire East Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Cheshire East Council,

PLANNING CONSULTATION: CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 21 July 2026.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

We provide the below advice on matters that we would expect to be addressed within the emerging Local Plan. In addition, the following annexes are appended to this response:

- Annex A: Natural England's standard advice for air quality impacts for Local Plans, which also includes policy advice. Natural England no longer provides bespoke advice on air quality impacts.

- Annex B: Natural England's recommendations of sources of local plan evidence on the natural environment.

SCOPE OF THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

Creating a vision and objectives

Natural England advises that the Plan's vision and objectives should address impacts on and opportunities for the natural environment and set out the environmental ambition for the plan area. The plan should take a strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, including providing a net gain for biodiversity, considering opportunities to enhance and improve connectivity.

Planning for growth

Identifying and assessing sites

Natural England requests full consideration of the natural environment in the process of selecting and assessing sites for allocation through the Local Plan. Development allocations should be screened and assessed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to determine their impact on the natural environment, including designated sites. Any mitigation measures identified through the SEA or HRA as necessary to avoid potential impacts on the natural environment should be embedded as requirements within site-specific policies in the

Local Plan.

Green Belt

Plan policies and proposals should positively enhance land within the Green Belt. This should include compensatory improvements to environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt where land is removed from the Green Belt.

Green Belt land can often be degraded 'urban fringe' landscapes. Therefore, there will be opportunities to 'green' the Green Belt and deliver environmental benefits such as landscape enhancement, habitat creation and enhancement, and improved access to nature.

Spatial distribution

In setting an overall strategy to guide development and allocate land the Local Plan should:

- conserve and enhance the natural environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure;
- make as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land;
- allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.

It should be recognised that some previously developed land is important for biodiversity as it can contain open mosaic habitats (dataset), a priority habitat.

Transport and infrastructure

The Plan should recognise the role that transport networks, and their associated green infrastructure, can play in providing valuable ecosystem services that assist in the management of, and adaptation to, climate change e.g. carbon storage, drainage and water conservation, and cooling urban heat islands. Natural England's work on the Green Transport Corridors project with Network Rail, Highways England, Wildlife Trusts and Nature Improvement Areas, builds on the Government's Natural Environment White Paper commitment to work with transport bodies to enhance ecological connectivity on transport networks.

Natural environment

Designated sites

The Plan should include policies and proposals to protect and enhance biodiversity, including designated nature conservation sites (internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity[1]). Natural England advises that all relevant designated sites should be included on the proposals map for the area so they can be clearly identified in the context of proposed development allocations and policies for development. Designated sites should be protected and, where possible, enhanced.

The Local Plan should be screened under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) at an early stage so that outcomes of the assessment can inform key decision making on strategic options and development sites. It may be necessary to outline avoidance and/or mitigation measures at the plan level, which will usually need to be considered as part of an Appropriate Assessment, including a clear direction for project level HRA work to ensure no adverse effect on the integrity of internationally designated sites. It may also be necessary for plans to provide policies for strategic or cross boundary approaches, particularly in areas where designated sites cover more than one Local Planning Authority boundary.

[1] International sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. National sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). Local sites include wildlife Sites or geological sites (a variety of terms are in use for local sites).

The direct and indirect impacts of proposed development to designated sites should be considered, including impacts on water quality and supply to hydrologically sensitive designated sites (see PPG). Cheshire East features a network of water sensitive meres and mosses including Rostherne Mere and the Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar sites, as well as multiple standalone SSSIs, so the importance and sensitivity of these sites should be reflected in the Local Plan.

The Plan should make explicit reference to geological conservation (including protection for geological SSSIs and local geological sites) and the need to conserve, interpret and manage geological sites and features in the wider environment.

Criteria-based policies to guide development should include application of the mitigation hierarchy[2] and how the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of development on designated sites will be addressed.

Further information on designated sites is at Designated Sites View. Natural England's Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) on MAGIC maps (user guide) identify potential development impacts.

Habitats and species

Where a plan area contains irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, there should be appropriate policies to ensure their protection. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees. The Plan should also protect and enhance priority habitats and species. Details can be found on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website, standing advice for protected species and on MAGIC maps.

The Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) also identifies a set of priority species and species assemblages that have been identified as locally important and in need of additional conservation effort. The LNRS sets out a suite of potential measures to address the needs of these species, and the Local Plan should take account of these priorities and measures as per the LNRS as a whole.

Biodiversity net gain

The Plan should identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. This should include setting a percentage target level of provision of at least 10% net gain, higher targets should be supported by evidence. The Plan should also set out the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy including:

- requirements for on-site and off-site provision
- identifying priority opportunities of strategic significance using the Cheshire and Warrington LNRS (further information below under the 'nature recovery' heading)
- advising on the metric to use to calculate gains, for example the most up to date version of Defra's Biodiversity Metric.

The Plan should also aim to achieve wider environmental gains, going beyond BNG, to include wider natural capital benefits such as improved water and air quality and recreation. Natural England's Environment Benefits from Nature tool can help identify opportunities.

Hydrology

Natural England expects the Plan to consider the strategic impacts on water quality and water resources and to address flood risk management. The Local Plan should be based on an up-to-date evidence base on the water environment and as such the relevant River Basin Management Plans

[2] This requires developers to avoid significant adverse impacts. If this is not possible, developers should propose mitigation measures. As a last resort, where developers cannot avoid or mitigate adverse impacts, they must compensate for them.

(RBMPs) should inform the development proposed in the Local Plan. RBMPs (available here) implement the EU Water Framework Directive and outline the main issues for the water environment and the actions needed to tackle them. Local Planning Authorities must, in exercising their functions, have regard to these plans. It is worth noting that RBMPs are in the process of being updated by the Environment Agency (EA), and the EA also have a wealth of more up-to-date data available here: Water Data Explorer.

The Local Plan should contain policies which protect habitats from water related impacts, including nutrient mitigation, and where appropriate seek enhancement. Priority for enhancements should be focussed on internationally designated sites, SSSIs and local sites which contribute to a wider ecological network.

Nutrient pollution is a significant problem for our freshwater habitats and estuaries, adversely affecting water quality. Ensuring that our rivers and protected sites are clean, healthy and resilient is critical to meeting the Government's ground-breaking 25 Year Environment Plan which underpins the shared ambition to leave the environment in a better state for future generations. As part of the background information to water quality, Natural England would expect consideration of nutrient neutrality.

New overnight development located within the nutrient neutrality catchment (as defined by Natural England) must demonstrate how it will address the impacts of potential nutrient loading through a HRA and include a nutrient budget calculator and mitigation strategy where necessary. The Rostherne nutrient neutrality evidence pack is available here: Rostherne Mere Ramsar - Evidence Pack - TIN203, and for Wybunbury Moss here: West Midland Mosses Special Area of Conservation - Evidence Pack - TIN206.

Policies should address water use, promoting the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and water sensitive design as part of a wider green and blue infrastructure approach. Where there is known water constraint, policies should manage available resources, such as through water efficiency or water reuse measures.

The Local Plan should have regard to relevant Diffuse Water Pollution Plans (DWPPs) for internationally and nationally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, including the DWPP for Wybunbury Moss.

Peat

Based on the England Peat Status GHG and C Storage dataset, Cheshire East has over 2,250 hectares of deep peat within its boundary. It is important that this is protected from development through planning policy. Development on peat results in the permanent loss of an irreplaceable resource, including vast quantities of carbon stored in these soils, whether through extraction or surface sealing. Such loss cannot be effectively mitigated. Natural England does not support the principle of development on deep, restorable peat.

We strongly encourage that the Local Plan includes adequate protection to the authority's peat resources from extraction and harmful development. It should define deep, restorable peat as peat soils of 30cm or more in depth where it occurs at or near the surface and is not overlain by a substantial layer of made ground or other mineral material, and by explicitly stating that development in these areas will not be permitted. It may also be beneficial to clarify that shallow peat refers to peat soils less than 30cm in depth. These soils remain an important carbon store and can be highly sensitive to disturbance.

It would be helpful if policies and supporting text should set out clear planning application requirements in areas where deep peat may be present. The England Peat Status Greenhouse Gas and Carbon Storage can be used as an initial screening tool to identify potential areas of deep peat. Natural England advises that this dataset should inform decisions on whether more detailed ground investigations are required. You could consider including this dataset in the assets map. Additional sources of evidence include the British Geological Survey maps portal and existing

borehole data from the British Geological Survey.

We note from the map of call for sites submissions that there are a number of submitted sites on deep peat, based on the England Peat Status GHG and C Storage dataset. Multiple of these sites appear to be situated on areas of deep peat which are connected to internationally and nationally designated sites. In line with our advice outlined above, Natural England does not support the principle of development on deep, restorable peat and recommend strong consideration is given to peat when determining which sites to take forward.

Consideration should be given not only to avoiding development on areas of deep peat, but also to the potential impacts of development on the wider peat mass, ensuring that the location of proposed allocations does not hinder the delivery of the objectives of the Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership Project (The Lindow Moss Landscape Partnership - Cheshire Local Nature Partnership).

The Cheshire and Warrington LNRS identified peatland as a key priority habitat to be restored across the county, and included specific measures related peatland restoration:

- P1.1 Where possible, peatland habitat should be restored. Where development is proposed, it should not create harm, which cannot be mitigated.
- P1.2 Improve the condition and functioning of upland peatlands through appropriate measures to re-wet habitats, to revegetate bare peat, to establish appropriate vegetation, and to stabilise areas of erosion, reducing carbon emissions and creating conditions for future peat formation, carbon sequestration and improved natural flood management.
- P1.3 Increase lowland raised bog restoration.
- P1.4 Enhance and restore blanket bog plant diversity.
- P1.5 Develop opportunities for local businesses to invest in peat restoration.

The Cheshire East Local Plan has the potential to contribute to all of these peatland-focused LNRS measures, however measure P1.1 will be of particular relevance to the Plan. It highlights that peatlands should be restored wherever possible and development should avoid damaging or destroying this irreplaceable resource.

Green and blue infrastructure

Green infrastructure (GI) refers to the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. It is often used in an urban context to provide multiple benefits including space for recreation, access to nature, flood storage and urban cooling to support climate change mitigation, food production, wildlife habitats and health and wellbeing improvements provided by trees, rights of way, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, rivers and wetlands. GI is also relevant in a rural context, where it might additionally refer to the use of farmland, woodland, wetlands or other natural features to provide services such as flood protection, carbon storage or water purification.

Natural England advise any GI is designed and delivered in alignment with Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF). The GIF was launched in January 2023 to aid local authorities and developers in embedding GI into local planning policy and new development with a view of further integrating the Lawton Principle of bigger, better and more connected ecological networks. The GIF includes, but is not limited to, five key components:

- GI Principles – the why, what and how principles developed to underpin the GIF;
- GI Standards – guidance on national standards for GI quantity and quality:

    S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard
    S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard
    S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard
    S4: Urban Greening Factor (UGF) Standard
    S5: Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard;

- GI Mapping Toolkit – mapped environmental, socio-economic datasets to support the standards and identification of priority and opportunity areas;
- GI Planning and Design Guide 2023 – a practical, evidence-based advice booklet on how to design good quality GI;
- GI Process Journeys – a set of guides on how to apply the above components in practice including a Process Journey for Developers and Design Teams.

The December 2025 draft NPPF makes explicit reference to Natural England's GI standards in policies GB8, HC1, HC3 and N1. As such, we strongly encourage Cheshire East's Local Plan to set standards for GI provision in line with the GIF, tailoring these as necessary to local circumstances and evidence.

Natural England encourages Cheshire East to include an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) standard within local planning policy. Local authorities elsewhere in England have introduced an UGF via policy, strategy or supplementary planning documents requiring new development proposals to demonstrate the highest feasible levels of greening and include an UGF calculation; see UGF Case Studies for further information. The introduction of a UGF would provide a mechanism to increase urban biodiversity where development may be exempt from BNG requirements because of zero scores within metric calculations. We refer you to the Urban Greening Factor User Guide and would be happy to support in the development of a UGF.

Also, the Plan can make use of data available through Natural England's GI Map as part of the baseline. Natural England has launched two new mapping tools on the database to map health inequality and environmental pressures: the Environmental Equity Index (EEI) and the Index of Multiple Environmental Deprivation (IMED). Further details on the EEI and IMED can be found here.

Nature recovery

Natural England welcomes reference to the Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in the listed plans and strategies to help inform the local plan, and we highlight the statutory duty of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to take the LNRS into account in plan-making. LPAs are required under the Gateway 1 approach to consider vision and objectives as well as prepare for SEA. The LNRS can be used to inform these processes and ensure LPAs take account of biodiversity and nature recovery, including the wider social and economic benefits of those opportunities.

The priorities for nature recovery and associated mapped and unmapped measures can provide evidence to justify a variety of policy approaches in a local plan, including, but not limited to, open space, natural health, GI and transport, as well as environmental policies. LNRSs contain delivery guidance for a wide range of audiences, including designers and developers. Unmapped measures are deliverable across the LNRS area wherever relevant to existing or proposed habitat.

Policy links occur between LNRS and BNG, particularly because, in line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Guidance, the LNRS is the sole indicator of Strategic Significance uplift within the statutory BNG metric. As such, it provides a valuable tool for informing BNG requirements for new development, offering a 1.15 uplift in biodiversity value where proposals deliver actions mapped in the LNRS.

Where monitoring of the emerging Local Plan is proposed it would be useful to include opportunities to capture nature recovery achievements as a result of the Plan, using the LNRS as a baseline. Responsible authorities leading on LNRSs are now required by Defra to monitor and report on the delivery of nature recovery actions across their LNRS area as part of their statutory delivery role. Aligning Local Plan monitoring with nature recovery objectives would generate valuable data and evidence, supporting responsible authorities in meeting these reporting requirements while also demonstrating the Plan's contribution to wider environmental outcomes.

The priorities and measures in an LNRS (both mapped and unmapped) can steer appraisal / assessment and policy development to ensure that opportunities for nature recovery and nature-

based solutions are captured. This also ensures that the wider benefits of that approach to development and land use change are embedded in economic and social policies as well as decision making.

The Local Plan should also refer to the Bollin to Mersey Nature Recovery Partnership (NRP), one of twelve Nature Recovery Projects across England. These multi-partnership projects are designed to fast-track nature recovery by working collaboratively to create and restore wildlife-rich habitats, corridors and stepping-stones to help wildlife populations to move around freely. Cheshire East Council, alongside Defra bodies and neighbouring authorities in southern Greater Manchester, sit on the NRP 'core partners' group, and have been able to shape the NRP vision and priorities. The Bollin to Mersey NRP aims to transform the natural landscape of northern Cheshire and southern Greater Manchester, which was drained over centuries for agriculture and urban development, into a connected network of water, wetland and woodland habitats bringing nature closer to where people live, work and play. The Local Plan should consider the NRP and how it could contribute to achieving this vision for the landscape.

Agricultural land and soils

The Plan should contain policies to protect Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (Grades 1, 2, 3a). Polices should avoid the loss of BMV land. The Plan should recognise that development has an irreversible adverse impact on the finite national stock of BMV land. Any development proposed on BMV land should be informed by a detailed soil survey.

The Plan should have a policy for the protection of and sustainable management of soils on development sites. This should set out mitigation measures to minimise soil disturbance and retain as many ecosystem services as possible through careful soil management during the construction process and appropriate soil re-use. The Plan should recognise that development (soil sealing) has a major and usually irreversible adverse impact on soils. The impact of all types of development on soils should be considered.

Healthy soils are not only important for agriculture, but soils with high environmental value (e.g. wetland carbon stores such as peatland and low nutrient soils) are also important to ecological connectivity. Development should be supported by soils surveys and management plans - see Defra's Code of Practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites.

Landscape

The plan area is next to the Peak District National Park, and we advise that you take into account the relevant Management Plan for the landscape. Development proposals brought forward through the plan should avoid significant impacts on protected landscapes, including those outside the plan's area.

The Plan should include policies and proposals for conserving and enhancing the landscape. It should identify, protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, informed by landscape character assessments. Policies for development in or adjacent to rural areas and urban fringe should ensure they reflect the character of the countryside, as well as seeking opportunities for enhancement and improved access to nature.

The Plan should include policy wording to reduce light pollution. Lighting can be harmful to wildlife and undermine enjoyment of the countryside or night sky, especially in intrinsically dark landscapes, such as protected landscapes and nature reserves. Where appropriate, the Plan should identify areas of tranquillity and include policy wording to protect them.

Health and wellbeing

Health and Health Inequalities

Spending time in green and blue spaces has been shown to encourage physical activity and

promote better mental health and wellbeing. Such spaces create opportunities for recreation, community gatherings, connecting with nature, and social interaction. For more information, see Natural England's Review of Nature Exposure and Human Health and Wellbeing, the *Natural and Sustainable Environments* chapter of Spatial Planning for Health, and The Nature Connection Handbook.

The Environmental Improvement Plan set a commitment that everyone should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space. An analysis of accessible green space in England is available through Natural England's Mapping Database. The potential to set local standards for the provision of open spaces can utilise Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standard to help determine the size, proximity, capacity and quality of the GI needed to provide everyone with access to a variety of quality green and blue spaces close to their home.

Active Travel

Embedding GI into walking and cycling routes can encourage the uptake of active travel, supporting increased physical activity, improved air quality and the reduction in vehicular traffic. Creating green corridors assists with urban cooling and increases people's opportunities to connect with nature. For more information we refer you to page 76 of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide and The Healthy Streets approach.

Policies should provide for better connections and address unequal access to nature to support health and wellbeing outcomes. The design of new or improved routes should consider a range of modes of access including walking and cycling, as well as a range of users including children and older people, different socio-economic groups and people with disabilities. Natural England advise that the Plan should ensure protection and enhancement of public rights of way.

Climate Change

Tree-lined streets provide shade and reduces urban heat islands, making it safer and more comfortable for everyone to be outside, particularly groups that are vulnerable to extreme heat (like children, older people and people with disabilities). The Local Plan could set targets to increase urban tree canopy cover in line with Natural England's Urban Tree Canopy Standard.

Climate Change Adaptation

The Plan should recognise that climate change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity loss are interlinked. Many habitats provide essential ecosystem services to allow adaptation to climate change e.g. natural flood management, as well as mitigation e.g. through tree planting and retaining peat as a carbon store. Policies should set out appropriate nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation such as woodland or wetland creation.

Consideration also needs to be given to the likely impacts of climate change on protected sites, habitats and species. See the Climate Change Adaptation Manual, Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat and National biodiversity climate change vulnerability model.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Should the Local Plan identify locations and/or include a policy guiding wind, solar or other low carbon energy generation, consideration should be given to the impact of proposals (individually and cumulatively) on protected landscapes, nature conservation sites and soils (including areas of shallow and deep peat).

Heritage

Heritage assets, whether tangible elements like sites and structures or intangible elements such as stories and cultural practices, serve as valuable catalysts for social interaction within communities. Narratives passed down through our cultural heritage provide a foundation for our sense of place

and our belonging in society.

Natural and cultural heritage can open up richer access to the outdoors and nearby places of significance, from ancient woodlands with deep histories to notable geological formations and even urban environments shaped by vibrant cultural and industrial traditions.

Canal networks, public rights of way and disused railways are examples of historic routes. Enhancing these heritage corridors can support their long-term preservation and support nature recovery while strengthening their role in connecting people with nature and promoting active travel.

Local plan evidence base

Natural England would welcome reference to the Cheshire East Green Infrastructure Plan (2019 to 2030) in the list of plans and strategies to help inform the new local plan. We would encourage Cheshire East Council to consider producing/commissioning an updated green and blue infrastructure (GBI) strategy, particularly with the existing plan due to become outdated in a few years.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Local Plan's policies and site allocations should be screened in the HRA to determine whether they will have a likely significant effect (LSE) on internationally designated sites (SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites). Those elements of the Plan with potential for LSEs should be taken through to an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to determine whether there will be an adverse effect on the integrity of the designated site when mitigation is taken into account.

Where there is LSE alone, these site allocations and/or policies need to be taken to AA alone. Where there is no LSE alone, these sites need to be assessed in-combination with other plans or projects, including relevant NSIPs, to establish if, together, they result in an LSE that needs to be considered at AA. This in-combination assessment of LSE ruled out alone should come before the AA.

First, the AA must look at the potentially damaging aspects of each site allocation and/or policy and the potential effects on the site features and conservation objectives and characterise the impacts in terms of their likelihood, nature, scale, severity and duration. This assessment needs to include a consideration of the impacts on:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying habitats and species;
- The abundance and spatial distribution of qualifying species or assemblages;
- The structure of the qualifying habitat, which should not be affected in terms of abundance and diversity;
- The physical, chemical and biological processes that support the qualifying habitat to ensure these are not affected.

The AA must then look at any potential mitigation measures, to determine if they can reduce the likelihood, nature, scale, and duration of the effect to a lower level. The AA should seek mitigation measures that are capable of implementation and will reduce the impact to the lowest level possible. Any residual effects after applying mitigation should also be considered alone and in-combination.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Natural England expect standalone SSSIs (those which do not overlap with internationally designated sites) to be assessed in the SEA to determine the effects of the Plan's policies and allocations. It is also important to highlight that the notified features of a SSSI may differ from those

of the overlapping internationally designated site, meaning the HRA may not fully cover the SSSI assessment, and we expect this to be considered in the SEA. Further information on SSSIs and their designation can be found on Designated Sites View.

The SEA should also consider the Plan's impact on other biodiversity assets, including protected landscapes, peat, priority habitats and species, irreplaceable habitats, ancient woodland and BMV land. The SEA can also establish how the Plan will enhance the natural environment, for example through nature restoration, implementation of nature-based solutions, improving access to greenspace and supporting the delivery of the LNRS.

Nature Towns and Cities

We recommend Cheshire East Council consider taking part in the Nature Towns and Cities Accreditation scheme as part of your local planning process. The scheme aligns to implementation of the GI Framework and Standards and is designed to recognise towns and cities that put nature and GI at the heart of their communities. The accreditation has been co-designed and tested with a group of local authorities, with input from the voluntary sector, independent experts and government agencies.

Achievement of accreditation demonstrates that a local authority has a strong commitment to transforming GI to benefit people, place and nature and is working with communities and other partners to create greener, healthier, resilient and thriving places. Applications could be for a whole authority area or a specific town within it.

Why apply for accreditation?

- The process of accreditation is based on a framework that will help you plan how GBI can deliver across a range of priorities in your place, supporting the process of implementing a new GBI Strategy as part of your Local Plan process. It will support authorities in evaluating their current GBI, supported by a self-evaluation tool and to consider links between GBI and public health, climate resilience, community empowerment and nature recovery and pressing issues like economic growth, active travel, and youth skills and employment.
- Strengthen your partnerships: The accreditation process supports the building of partnerships to deliver change, creating a sense of shared direction and building capacity across a place.
- Get external recognition for your plans to deliver urban landscape-scale change, which will help you make the case for investment and gain support from partners and the public.
- Secure funding and investment: Accreditation will provide assurance to potential funders and investors that your place is equipped to deliver ambitious change. This will help to attract funding and finance from public, private and philanthropic sources.

We would be happy to support Cheshire East if you are interested in pursuing a Nature Towns and Cities accreditation - please do get in touch if this is of interest to you. Nature Towns and Cities run a free online monthly call where interested parties can find out more about the accreditation scheme, please visit Accreditation support series - Nature Towns & Cities to sign up for forthcoming sessions.

In addition to accreditation, the Nature Towns and Cities programme is supported by a free network that you can join by entering your email address at the bottom of the website. The network has a free to access resource library to support planning and delivery for urban nature and green spaces, featuring case studies, articles and past webinars: Resources Library - Nature Towns & Cities and a rolling events programme: Events - Nature Towns & Cities.

Please continue to send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation, to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully

Matt Browne

Sustainable Development Higher Officer
Cheshire to Lancashire Area Team
Natural England

Annex A: Standard Advice for Air Quality Impacts for Local Plans

Local Plans are likely to generate increased emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and ammonia, and additional nitrogen deposition as a result of increased traffic generation associated with new development. As impacts from individual development management proposals would be difficult to quantify without an overarching assessment of the cumulative impacts from Local Plan development, it is necessary for this to be considered strategically at plan level. Natural England would expect the environmental assessment of the plan including the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to consider any detrimental impacts on the natural environment from these emissions. It should also suggest appropriate avoidance or mitigation measures where applicable. Technical guidance about the ecological impacts from road transport can also be found in the Natural England research report '*The ecological effects of air pollution from road transport: an updated review*' (NECR199).

Protected sites are 'sites of special scientific interest' (SSSIs) and 'habitats sites' (also called 'European sites'). For the purposes of this advice, Habitats Sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), possible SACs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Potential SPAs, Ramsar sites, and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on Habitats Sites.

Although their regulatory frameworks differ, the general principles and approach for air pollution assessment outlined for Habitats Sites are also relevant for SSSIs. Where the following advice applies to both, we use the term protected sites. Where the advice or approach differs, the individual terms are used.

Habitats Sites and SSSIs at risk from local impacts are those within 200m of a road with increased traffic, which feature habitats that are vulnerable to nitrogen deposition and/or acidification.

Natural England provides the following standard advice on air pollution. This advice relates to the protection of protected sites under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and should also be taken as Natural England's formal representation under the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. This standard advice is applicable to all stages of the Local Plan process. This includes advice on information that is required to assess air quality and how to interpret the results of air quality modelling for your LPA to conclude whether air quality impacts would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a Habitat site or a SSSI. Detailed guidance on how to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment for air pollution impacts generated from traffic can be found here Natural England's approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations (NEA001).

You should also consider any relevant caselaw that could affect how you carry out any air quality assessments.

Air pollutants

This advice covers the following air pollutants:

- ammonia (NH3)
- nitrogen oxides (NO, NO2 or NOx)
- nitrogen deposition
- acid deposition
- sulphur dioxide (SO2)

Standing advice on air pollution and development is also available here:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-pollution-and-development-advice-for-local-authorities

Whilst the standing advice does not cover Local Plans, it does include additional technical advice which may prove useful. However, in summary, Table 1 provides the steps that we advise should be taken by local planning authorities.

Table 1: Sequential approach to air quality assessments

Stage	Step		Supplemental evidence/ basis for judgment
Initial screening for credible risk of an effect	**1**	Check Distance criteria - could significant emissions reach a protected site? Yes = move to Step 2 No = no further HRA required	The Air Pollution Information System (APIS) includes an introduction to air pollution. APIS provides site specific information on the interest features of individual protected sites and the sensitivity to air quality impacts of those features. For road traffic impacts, roads on the affected road network that lie within 200m of a designated site should be considered. Use Magic Map to check the location of designated sites. Search for the location then select the 'Designations' option.
	2	Check if the qualifying habitats or supporting habitat of qualifying species are sensitive to air quality impacts. Yes = move to Step 3 No = no further HRA required APIS Site relevant Critical Loads and Levels (based on literature and professional judgement) http://www.apis.ac.uk/srcl Some habitats may not have a critical load because there is not enough data. In these cases, you should find the critical load for a similar habitat type or feature.	The qualifying features of Habitats Sites can be identified in the relevant Site Conservation Objectives and Supplementary advice packages, which include a definitive list of legally qualifying features. These objectives are available here. Alternatively, a list of qualifying features can also be found by searching for the Habitats Site and SSSIs on Designated Sites View , alongside Conservation Objectives and Supplementary Advice for Habitats Sites. The above links will also show whether any of the qualifying features for Habitats Sites have a Restore or Maintain Conservation Objective in relation to air quality thresholds (critical levels or loads). If the site is a SPA or an SAC/SSSI designated for an animal species (as opposed to a habitat), determine whether the predicted pollution effects on the supporting habitat will have a negative effect on the notified species.
Detailed AQ modelling	**3**	Undertake detailed modelling using a recognised dispersal model – i.e. Atmospheric Dispersion Modelling System (ADMS) - Roads Unless robust site-specific evidence is provided, we advise the lower range of the critical load should be used in modelling. If there are site specific reasons why it is more appropriate to use the higher end of the range, then this should be clearly evidenced.	Air Quality modelling for Local Plans should include relevant scenarios that are clearly identified. We advise an allowance is also made for windfall development. One such example of scenarios is a baseline plus future forecasts as follows: Baseline, future baseline (at end of plan period taking into account background trends for each pollutant), do nothing (without plan), do something (with plan). The Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) has produced the following document to assist its members in the assessment of the air quality impacts of development on designated nature conservation sites: air-quality-impacts-on-nature-sites-2020.pdf
Applying screening thresholds	**4a**	Apply Screening Threshold Alone If below threshold alone, move to step 4b. If above = move straight to step 5	Ascertain the Process Contribution (PC) from the plan or project (emissions and predicted deposition). Apply Screening threshold (1% of critical level or load) alone using the annual averages. If the process contribution is less than 1% of the relevant long-term benchmark (Environmental Assessment Level, Critical Level or Critical Load), the emission is not likely to have a significant effect alone irrespective of the background levels.
	4b	Apply Screening Threshold In-combination.	Use information from competent authorities (Planning Portal or Environmental Permitting register) to

		If below threshold in-combination = no LSE/significant risk of damage etc and no further assessment required. If above = move straight to step 5	determine if there are plans or projects in the pipeline (not included in the current baseline) that should be considered in-combination for emission from roads/ increase in traffic. For example, add emissions & deposition from other Local Plans together and apply 1% to that sum. If the process contribution is less than 1% of the relevant long-term benchmark (Environmental Assessment Level, Critical Level or Critical Load), the emission is not likely to have a significant effect in-combination irrespective of background levels.
Detailed Assessment of ecological impacts	**5**	This step is to consider the ecological impacts of AQ on the interest features of the designated site and is not based only on numerical figures. If it is not certain whether sensitive features are located within the areas to be impacted, a site visit may be helpful to determine this. For SSSIs, this step should provide all the information necessary, including any required mitigation, for the LPA to determine if there would be an adverse effect on a SSSI. Should an adverse effect not be ruled out, this will need consideration within the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal and consideration of the tests of the NPPF (para 193b). If Habitats Sites are impacted by the proposals, move to Step 6.	The following information is likely to be helpful for the LPA: Is the sensitive feature(s) located within the pollution footprint? Should it be there for the site to meet its Conservation Objectives or is there some other, natural reason (e.g. hydrology), why the sensitive feature(s) would not be expected to occur there? Check APIS Trends Tab for reasonable expectation on whether background pollution may be decreasing or not. Assess likely scale and duration of impacts on habitats from emissions. Check whether any strategic initiatives in the area (such as shared nitrogen action plans) would be compromised by the proposals.
Appropriate Assessment (AA) for habitats sites	**6**	LPA to undertake their AA to conclude whether or not there will be an adverse effect on integrity (AEOI) of habitats sites. Any mitigation proposed by the applicant should also be assessed at this point. Should the AA conclude that the Local Plan would have an AEOI that cannot be excluded with mitigation measures, consider derogation route of the HRA process. Should compensation measures be required under derogation, please contact Natural England for specific advice. Note: If an AA has been undertaken of the proposals alone and concluded that there will not be an adverse effect on integrity, if there are residual impacts that are not fully mitigated, these will need to be considered in combination with other plans or projects	Where mitigation is required to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity to be reached the AA must be able to show that mitigation measures can be relied upon to avoid adverse effects over the full lifetime of the plan. To be viable, such measures should be **effective, reliable, timely, guaranteed** and of **sufficient duration**. The assessment of such measures should be supported by evidence. When deciding on whether the proposals set out in the plan will have an adverse effect on Integrity on a Habitats Site, the Conservation Objectives and any supplementary advice should be taken into account. Including whether the site is already exceeding the environmental thresholds for ammonia, nitrogen oxides and nitrogen deposition and has a restore conservation objective.

Additional advice

For many protected sites, the current background pollution may already be exceeding the relevant critical load/level from a different source type to the project being assessed (e.g. the main source of background exceedance is due to agriculture, but the proposal is a road scheme). Proposals must consider their own impacts against the relevant environmental thresholds. There are many reasons why background levels are high, but the conservation objective is to 'maintain or restore' air pollutants to within these benchmarks. The objective would be undermined by proposals that add further emissions, including if it compromises any strategic initiatives to reduce air pollution levels.

Where an air quality report concludes that only a very small area of the site will be impacted, the assessment of effects on integrity or damage to the site, should take into account the interest features of the site, their distribution and how they will be impacted by proposals rather than on specific percentages of site. Dependent on features being present in the area to be impacted, this could have a disproportionate impact on the site if an area of a rare habitat type were lost rather than a judgement just on the percentages of habitat.

Improvements in vehicle technology and a move to further electrification of the vehicle fleet will, over time, result in lower background levels of nitrogen deposition and Nitrogen Oxide pollution near to roads. As most sites are currently over the relevant thresholds and have a "restore" objective, this should be noted as a "retardation" of the restore objective and expressed in months and years. Retardation of less than one year is acceptable as air quality is considered against an annual average. Please note that ammonia impacts cannot be assessed in this manner as there is no certainty of a declining trend.

Common Standards Monitoring[1] is used to define the ecological condition of a protected site. It is undertaken on a broader level and does not currently consider air quality impacts. The relevant benchmark for assessing impacts is the critical thresholds. Therefore, the existing status of a designated site should not be the sole reason for judgement on potential impact.

Defra Emissions Factor Toolkit

The Defra Emission Factor Toolkit (EFT) allows for gradual introduction of electric vehicles into the fleet (cars and LGVs) up to 2050. These are the emission factors we advise that Local Plans should be using (which we advise should also consider ammonia emissions as well as NOx – using one of three sets of emission factors available). The User Guide to the EFT highlights that calculation tools only support assessment years up to a certain date, reflecting that predictions and assumptions beyond then become less certain. If the Defra EFT is used, any future assumptions of fleet composition must not be made further into the future than specified in the version used.

We therefore advise that emission factors no later than 2030 are used for HRAs– which would mean percentages of EVs are at predicted 2030 levels. A key concern is that, although EVs themselves have no tailpipe emissions, and the percentage of them will increase, the remaining combustion engine vehicles on the road may become more polluting as they age as selective catalytic reduction technology may create 'ammonia slip' over time. Ammonia slip is the unreacted ammonia (NH_3) that escapes from a selective catalytic reduction (SCR) or selective non-catalytic reduction (SNCR) system used to reduce NOx in exhaust gases.

Motorways within the affected road network

There is potentially an added complexity to the need for in-combination assessments when considering traffic on motorways, as including these roads can mean that the assessment takes account of traffic growth related to strategic factors or long range (external) trips that are independent of the specific plan or project and neighbouring plans or projects. These roads are strategically important and tend to have high volumes of traffic as well as being well represented in traffic models. The air quality assessment should therefore include traffic flows on these roads, but the external trips can be excluded from the initial screening assessment. A justification and

explanation of which journeys are included and excluded in the traffic model should be provided.

The conclusions reached on the air pollution impacts of the HRA must be incorporated into the wider HRA conclusions for other impact pathways identified for the local plan.

How to Use this Advice in Decision Making

Provided you have followed the above advice and have been able to conclude there would be no adverse effects on any protected sites we would be able to agree with the conclusions of your HRA in relation to air quality impacts and that the Local Plan is sound in this regard.

Local plan policy Advice:

Natural England would expect the plan to address the impacts of air quality on the natural environment. In particular, it should address the traffic impacts associated with new development, particularly where this impacts on protected sites. If the Local Plan would result in other air quality impacts apart from traffic, then this will also need to be addressed.

Local authorities should consider including a local plan policy based on the suggestion below to address air pollution impacts on Habitat Sites and SSSIs. The local plan policy could include the following:

1. *Proposals should not significantly delay the date for compliance with environmental thresholds for air pollutants for Habitats Sites or SSSIs that are currently in exceedance of environmental benchmarks (critical levels and loads).*
2. *Proposals emitting air pollutants which impact Habitats Sites must rule out adverse effects on the integrity of such sites. Where this is not possible the derogations route of the Habitats Regulations should be followed.*
3. *To avoid and minimise air pollution impacts any development requiring Habitats Regulations Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or impacts to SSSIs unrelated to EIA development should consider:*
    - *the measures included which will minimise air pollution impacts on SSSIs and Habitats Sites and SSSIs during the design process of the development; and*
    - *how air quality improvements have informed the design choices made about the location of the development, its layout, and distribution of buildings, on-site activities, amenity spaces and infrastructure.*

A local plan could go on to set out what would be required for different development types in more detail. This may be important where there is strong evidence that particular sources of air pollution are preventing nature recovery. For example, where agricultural development is known to be one of the main sources of air pollution, a policy could specify a buffer around a protected site within which new or intensified agricultural proposals would not be permitted, apart from in exceptional circumstances.[2]

[1] Common Standards Monitoring | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation
[2] Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) Nitrogen Futures Project, available at: https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/nitrogen-futures/

Annex B: Sources of local plan evidence on the natural environment

Contents

SD: Spatial data layer available for download from link provided (unless otherwise indicated)

M: indicates also available to view on MAGIC mapper (https://magic.defra.gov.uk)

Key evidence sources	Data Published by	Link to open data or information	SD
ACCESS			
National Trails	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/ac8c851c-99a0-4488-8973-6c8863529c45/national-trails	✓ M
King Charles III England Coast Path	Natural England	**Open Route:** Route: https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/2cc04258-a5d4-4eea-823d-bf493aa31eef/england-coast-path-route Coastal margins: https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/8f709382-e4ba-4a59-9c65-41d098712504/england-coast-path-coastal-margins	✓ M ✓ M
		Sections in progress: King Charles III England Coast Path: improving public access to the coast - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (pdf maps only)	
Public Rights of Way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans	Local Planning Authorities		
Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – Section 15 land (England) Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – Access Layer (England)	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/f7255820-97d1-4891-aa7c-b6a2baa1e2b6/crow-act-2000-section-15-land https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/05fa192a-06ba-4b2b-b98c-5b6bec5ff638/crow-act-2000-access-layer	✓ M ✓ M
Local Nature Reserves	Local Planning Authorities and Local Wildlife	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/acdf4a9e-a115-41fb-bbe9-603c819aa7f7/local-nature-reserves-england	✓ M

	Organisations – published by Natural England		
National Nature Reserves (England)	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/726484b0-d14e-44a3-9621-29e79fc47bfc/national-nature-reserves-england	✓ **M**
Country Parks	Local Planning Authorities	Natural England have mapped Country Parks using data from Local Planning Authority data https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/e729abb9-aa6c-42c5-baec-b6673e2b3a62/country-parks-england	✓ **M**
People and Nature Survey	Natural England	People and Nature Survey since 2019 https://people-and-nature-survey-defra.hub.arcgis.com/ Replaced the Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey dashboard – replaced by The MENE survey dashboard https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2f24d6c942d44e81821c3ed2d4ab2ada	
AIR QUALITY			
Nitrogen Decision Framework	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)	A decision framework to attribute atmospheric nitrogen deposition as a threat to or cause of unfavourable habitat condition on protected sites | JNCC Resource Hub	
Air Pollution Information System (Data on air pollution related to designated sites)	Various including Natural England	https://www.apis.ac.uk/ (data not downloadable)	✓
CLIMATE CHANGE			
'Climate Change Adaptation Manual' Second Edition 2020 (NE751)	Natural England	http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5679197848862720	
The National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Model	Natural England	Report: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5069081749225472#:~:text=The%20National%20Biodiversity%20Climate%20Change,be%20used%20(in%20conjunction%20with (data not downloadable)	✓ **M**
Species Risks and Opportunities Maps	Natural England	http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4674414199177216 (pdf maps, data not downloadable)	✓
DESIGNATED SITES			
Boundaries of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/5b632bd7-9838-4ef2-9101-ea9384421b0d/sites-of-special-scientific-interest-england	✓ **M**
Boundaries of Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/174f4e23-acb6-4305-9365-1e33c8d0e455/special-protection-areas-england	✓ **M**
Boundaries of Special	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/a85e64d9-d0f1-	✓

Areas of Conservation (SACs)		4500-9080-b0e29b81fbc8/special-areas-of-conservation-england	**M**
Boundaries of Ramsar Sites	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/67b4ef48-d0b2-4b6f-b659-4efa33469889/ramsar-england	✓ **M**
Boundaries of Marine Conservation Zones	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (published by Natural England)	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/80c075c3-1880-44a0-bffc-69e20f307c21/marine-conservation-zones-england	✓ **M**
SSSI Impact Risk Zones	Natural England	Full details: https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::sssi-impact-risk-zones-england/about Data: https://data.gov.uk/dataset/5ae2af0c-1363-4d40-9d1a-e5a1381449f8/sssi-impact-risk-zones-england	✓ **M**
SSSI, SAC and Conservation Objectives	Natural England	SSSI: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ SAC/SPA: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216	
SAC, SPA, Site Improvement Plans (SIPS)	Natural England	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/	
Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites	Local Planning Authority and/or Local Environmental Records Centre and/or Local Wildlife Trust		
Potential Special Protection Areas	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/f97c82ea-fe9a-4281-b9f6-08694a7d65b5/potential-special-protection-areas-england	✓ **M**
Possible Special Areas of Conservation	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/be02be84-201e-4293-bf1f-0c2c296be5ad/possible-special-areas-of-conservation-england	✓ **M**
Existing HRA compensation sites	Local Planning Authority and Natural England		
Details and locations of existing strategic solutions	Local Planning Authority and Natural England		
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE			
Green Infrastructure Map	Natural England	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx National Green Infrastructure mapping database, with Links to data sources used in GI mapping: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/pu	

		blication/4635531295326208	
Green Infrastructure Framework – Principles and Standards for England, including Accessible Greenspace Standard (AGS) and Urban Greening Factor (UGF)	Natural England	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx	
Green Belt boundaries	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/ccb505e0-67a8-4ace-b294-19a3cbff4861/english-local-authority-green-belt-dataset	✓ **M**
Open Space Assessments	Local Planning Authority		
Urban Forestry	Forestry Commission	How to protect and manage the urban forest https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-protect-and-manage-the-urban-forest	
UK Ward Canopy Cover	Forestry Commission	Data set: https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/43ca8e70-6cba-47a1-b3a8-c6b318862610/uk-ward-canopy-cover Viewer: https://forestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d8c253ab17e1412586d9774d1a09fa07	✓
HABITATS AND SPECIES			
Ancient Woodland	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/9461f463-c363-4309-ae77-fdcd7e9df7d3/ancient-woodland-england	✓ **M**
Ancient and Veteran Trees	The Ancient Tree Inventory Woodland Trust and Natural England	The Ancient Tree Inventory https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/ (data not downloadable)	✓
	Natural England	The wood pasture and parkland inventory https://data.gov.uk/dataset/bac6feb6-8222-4665-8abe-8774829ea623/wood-pasture-and-parkland-england	✓ **M**
Priority Habitat Inventory s41 habitats	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/4b6ddab7-6c0f-4407-946e-d6499f19fcde/priority-habitat-inventory-england https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=39403df11c8044d998772db5b54ad86c#overview	✓ **M**
Priority Habitat Creation and Restoration by the Environment Agency	Environment Agency	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/e0165747-8368-4ff7-a644-df9aeb27bb0b/priority-habitat-creation-and-restoration	✓
Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land Inventory (draft)	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/8509c11a-de20-42e8-9ce4-b47e0ba47481/open-mosaic-habitat-draft	✓ **M**
Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPS)	Local Planning Authority		
Priority habitats and species	Local		

as listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act, 2006 and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).	Environmental Record Centres		
National Forest Inventory on Trees and Woodland 2020	Forestry Commission	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/6e3126bd-fb2c-4cac-b2c4-d521f006b87a/national-forest-inventory-woodland-england-2020 (check for later releases)	✓ **M**
Local Nature Recovery Strategies (NB few are yet to be completed)	County Authorities / Responsible Authorities	Nature Recovery Network Evidence Handbook: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6105140258144256 Data viewer: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/7c5242fdec7f433aa4ee4510383e3909/page/Home/ (collection of data)	✓
HERITAGE and HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT			
National Heritage Register including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, Conservation Areas, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wrecks	Historic England	https://opendata-historicengland.hub.arcgis.com/maps/historicengland::national-heritage-list-for-england-nhle/about and search on data.gov.uk (not all on magic.gov.uk)	✓ **M**
World Heritage Sites	Historic England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/3ac5c299-6805-476b-af9b-90aadec5e7b4/world-heritage-sites-gis-data	✓ **M**
National Historic Landscape Characterisation 250m and 500m grid	Natural England	500m grid: https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/3fd13432-eee3-43d4-8bd0-e00a0bbc688f/national-historic-landscape-characterisation-500m-grid-england 250m grid: https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/8b8c5df3-d7e3-484c-89d8-c7b819205002/national-historic-landscape-characterisation-250m-grid-england	✓ **M**
Heritage Coasts	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/79b3515f-b00e-419a-9c7e-1d3163555886/heritage-coasts	✓
Heritage Coast Management Plans	Local Planning Authority		
LANDSCAPE			
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty boundaries	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/8e3ae3b9-a827-47f1-b025-f08527a4e84e/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-england	✓ **M**
National Park boundaries	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/334e1b27-e193-4ef5-b14e-696b58bb7e95/national-parks-england	✓ **M**
National Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plans	Conservation Boards/ AONB Partnerships and National Park		

	Authorities		
Landscape National Character Areas (England)	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/21104eeb-4a53-4e41-8ada-d2d442e416e0/national-character-areas-england https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130	✓ **M**
All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Hub	Natural England	https://all-england-strategic-landscapes-mapping-hub-luc.hub.arcgis.com/ (not available for download)	✓
Local landscape character assessments	Local Planning Authority		
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments	Local Planning Authority		
Landscape capacity and sensitivity assessments	Local Planning Authority		
Tranquillity and light pollution	Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	https://nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/ (not available for download)	✓
MARINE / COAST			
MMO marine planning evidence base	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-and-the-marine-management-organisation-mmo	
MEDIN Marine Data Portal	The National Oceanography Centre	https://portal.medin.org.uk/portal/start.php	
Shoreline Management Plans	Environment Agency	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shoreline-management-plans-smps	
Coastal erosion maps/ Coastal Change Management Area data/strategies	Environment Agency / Local Planning Authority	Information on CCMA: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6167783398440960	
NATURAL CAPITAL			
Natural Capital Atlases: Mapping and Mapping Indicators for County and City Regions (NECR318)	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/a9de8eaa-5424-40ac-b1b3-3e33e94e1648/natural-capital-county-atlas-mapping-england including link to full Evidence Catalogue http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6672365834731520	✓
Nature Improvement Areas	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/a19c95e3-9657-457d-825e-3d2f3993b653/nature-improvement-areas	✓ **M**
National Habitat Network (England)	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/0ef2ed26-2f04-4e0f-9493-ffbdbfaeb159/habitat-networks-england	✓ **M**
Living England Habitat Map	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/e207e1b3-72e2-4b6a-8aec-0c7b8bb9998c/living-england-habitat-map-phase-4	✓ **M**
Enabling a Natural Capital Approach	Defra	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/3930b9ca-26c3-489f-900f-6b9eec2602c6/enabling-a-natural-capital-approach	
Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA)	Natural England under development	In the long term, the NCEA will provide a comprehensive programme that will provide high quality (national and local) data to assess the state and condition of biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural capital	

		assets in the terrestrial, aquatic & marine environment which will transform decision making for critical environmental policies and interventions to meet the 25 Year Environment Plan https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-capital-and-ecosystem-assessment-programme/natural-capital-and-ecosystem-assessment-programme	
NET GAIN			
Biodiversity Net Gain guidance and metric	Defra and Natural England	Guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain Metric: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-metric-calculate-the-biodiversity-net-gain-of-a-project-or-development	
Environmental Benefits from Nature Tool (Beta Test Version)	Natural England	https://nepubprod.appspot.com/publication/6414097026646016	
SOILS and PEAT			
Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Maps	Natural England	https://data.gov.uk/dataset/952421ec-da63-4569-817d-4d6399df40a1/provisional-agricultural-land-classification-alc	✓ **M**
Strategic mapping assigning the likelihood of BMV agricultural land (created as a companion to the Provisional ALC maps)	Natural England	http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5208993007403008 (pdf only - data not downloadable)	
Detailed ALC reports – post 1988 ALC survey	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/c002ceea-d650-4408-b302-939e9b88eb0b/agricultural-land-classification-alc-grades-post-1988-survey-polygons http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6249382855835648 (limited national coverage)	✓ **M**
Peaty Soil Location	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/c9eb1cd9-c254-4128-a18d-d368fbe6acf0/peaty-soils-location	✓
England Peat Status Green House Gas and Carbon Storage	Natural England	https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/8ea9074e-bafc-4cc4-85dd-19cda1dfbfd5/england-peat-status-ghg-and-c-storage Report: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/30021?category=24011	✓
General mapped information on soil types, including peaty soils, is available as 'Soilscapes'. This also includes a simple ecosystem services provision guide.	National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI)	https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/ (not open data for free download)	✓ **M**
WATER			
Strategic Flood Risk	Local Planning		

Assessments	Authority led		
Local Flood Risk Management Strategies	Lead Local Flood Authorities		
Water Resource Management Plans	Environment Agency / Water Authorities		
River Basin Management Plans	Environment Agency	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-basin-management-plans-updated-2022	
Catchment Flood Management Plans	Environment Agency	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/catchment-flood-management-plans	
Nutrient Impacts	Natural England Local Planning Authority	A summary guide and frequently asked questions (NE776): https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6248597523005440 Nutrient pollution: reducing the impact on protected sites - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Tools and resources for calculating nutrient neutrality. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tools-and-resources-for-calculating-nutrient-neutrality Information on Nature Based Solutions as Nutrient Mitigation (NBS2024) https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6680815300509696	