

SECTION 3 - ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The term environment is used to describe both the natural and built up surroundings of a place however large or small this may be.
- 3.2 The natural environment is made up of elements which occur naturally (such as plants and animals) although these may have been influenced by the activities of mankind (such as agriculture and mineral extraction).
- 3.3 The built environment comprises those aspects of an area which are man-made (such as the architecture, the built form of settlements, archaeological and historic remains).
- 3.4 East Northamptonshire has a rich heritage of buildings and countryside. It is important to ensure that the District Council operates policies which provide for the protection, preservation and enhancement of this heritage.
- 3.5 This is not to suggest that change and development will be prohibited or severely curtailed, in all circumstances. The purpose of this Plan is to ensure that development and land use changes are directed and guided so as to minimise their impact. In addition, policies are made which will provide the basis for environmental improvements in both settlements and the countryside.
- 3.6 Environmental considerations affect many of the proposals for new development during the period of this Plan. It is important therefore to set out the criteria, safeguards and conditions, which will need to be addressed when new development is intended.

STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

- 3.7 The Northamptonshire County Structure Plan policies emphasise the need to provide for the conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment. Also stressed is the need for environmental considerations to be taken into account when development proposals are made.
- 3.8 The County Structure Plan includes policies which aim to:
- (i) conserve and improve the amenities, flora, fauna and landscape qualities of the countryside;
 - (ii) maintain and improve the quality of the built environment through conservation and sympathetic new building.
- 3.9 Strategic policies specifically provide for protection of the archaeological heritage of the County; protection and improvement of historic buildings; protection, conservation and enhancement of sites of geological, landscape and nature conservation importance; provisions for designating new nature reserves and conserving the historic built environment.

RECENT TRENDS

- 3.10 Increasing pressure for change is being placed on the environment of East Northamptonshire, as a result of the growing pressure for development in the District.
- 3.11 This pressure is evident both within and around towns and villages, as well as in the open countryside. It can be seen in the change in agricultural activity, including farm diversification and in major proposals for recreational developments and mineral extraction in the open countryside. In addition, there is demand for residential, industrial and commercial developments, on the fringe of and within historic centres of settlements.
- 3.12 Today there is more pressure for change than ever before with so many enterprises and agencies seeking opportunities for development. This creates a potential threat to the character and way of life in the environment of the District.
- 3.13 It is the planning system which provides the mechanism for balancing development needs, with the requirement to protect the quality of the environment.

ISSUES

- 3.14 There are a number of problems and issues linked to the environment which need to be addressed in this Plan.
- 3.15 In the open countryside, developments of the following kind can result in erosion of the character of the rural environment:
- (i) sporadic residential developments;
 - (ii) modern large scale agricultural buildings and other forms of intrusive development; and
 - (iii) any development which results in the loss of landscape features and/or wildlife habitats.
- 3.16 In the built environment the main problems are:
- (i) the loss or unsympathetic alteration of historic buildings, areas of townscape character and archaeological sites;
 - (ii) the bland character of much new development;
 - (iii) the complexities and sensitive nature of many town centre redevelopment sites;
 - (iv) the decaying fabric of town centres and adjacent developed areas;
 - (v) integrating new and old development in town centres and older residential areas;
 - (vi) the scale, density and form of much new building, which can lead to an over intensive development pattern or "cramming" on infill sites in towns and villages; and
 - (vii) adverse impacts arising from parked vehicles and the flow of traffic.
- 3.17 The District Council is concerned about the quality of the environment because this is an important factor in terms of:
- (i) the quality of life of existing residents and visitors to the District;
 - (ii) the recreational and tourist potential of the area; and
 - (iii) the image of East Northamptonshire and its economic well being.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 3.18 The environmental objectives of this Plan will be achieved firstly through the exercise of the District Council's development control powers and secondly, by positively promoting developments which secure such objectives. Development control powers will be used in order to restrict developments which would undermine the policy objectives. The environmental objectives of the Plan are to:
- (i) preserve and enhance the historic architectural heritage and character of the District, whether comprising individual buildings, or whole areas;
 - (ii) keep listed and other important buildings in a good state of repair and where necessary secure their adaptation to sympathetic new uses;
 - (iii) protect and preserve scheduled Ancient Monuments, evaluate sites of potential archaeological interest and ensure the survey and recording of sites where important remains cannot be preserved.
 - (iv) protect the landscape and countryside from adverse development and encourage good landscape management;
 - (v) protect important wildlife habitats, trees, woodlands and hedgerows;

- (vi) encourage a high standard of landscaping, layout and design in new development and to improve these features within existing development;
- (vii) control carefully the location and design of advertisements; and
- (viii) provide for new nature reserves and protect those already existing.

ENVIRONMENT POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

1. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Open Countryside

POLICY EN1

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR PROPOSALS IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE OUTSIDE AREAS SPECIFICALLY ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT. EXCEPTIONS MAY INCLUDE:

- (I) AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY, RECREATION OR TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS, WHERE THESE WOULD NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT UPON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR THE AMENITIES OF ADJOINING LAND USERS;**
- (II) DEVELOPMENT WHICH RELATES TO THE RE-USE AND ADAPTATION OF BUILDINGS WHICH SATISFY POLICY AG4**

- 3.19 The protection of open countryside in general, the Special Landscape Area in particular and higher quality agricultural land must remain of prime importance in the consideration of development proposals. Development in the open countryside may cause specific problems and can often be visually obtrusive. (Also see policies AG1 to AG12).

Landscape Features, Trees and Hedgerows

POLICY EN2

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR PROPOSALS IN THE DESIGNATED SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA. EXCEPTIONS MAY INCLUDE:

- (I) AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY, RECREATION OR TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS WHERE THESE WOULD NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT UPON THE VISUAL QUALITY OF THE LANDSCAPE, THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR THE AMENITIES OF ADJOINING LAND USERS;**
- (II) DEVELOPMENT WHICH RELATES TO THE RE-USE AND ADAPTATION OF BUILDINGS WHICH SATISFIES POLICY AG4 PROVIDED THAT THIS IS OF A FORM AND CHARACTER WHICH IS COMPLEMENTARY TO THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA;**
- (III) DEVELOPMENT WHICH TAKES PLACE ON ALLOCATED SITES WITHIN TOWNS AND VILLAGES WHICH ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA**

- 3.20 This policy seeks to ensure the retention of existing landscape features and avoid structures and uses which could detract from the appearance of the landscape within the defined Special Landscape Area, which is as shown on the Proposals Map.

- 3.21 The Special Landscape Area has been identified by the County Council as being worthy of particular protection. Altogether there are 10 areas of this kind covering the most attractive parts of the County. The precise boundaries of the Special Landscape Area shown delineated on the Proposals Maps have been amended following a review carried out in the Summer of 1995. (The boundaries in the Deposit Plan arose from a survey and assessment undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council as long ago as 1972). The new boundaries have been drawn following a comprehensive public consultation exercise and approval by the District Council.

- 3.22 ***Tree Preservation Orders will be made to protect trees and woodland which are important in the Landscape.*** Trees and hedgerows make an important contribution to landscape character. Special protection is already given to trees in Conservation Areas and those already subject to confirmed Tree Preservation Orders. It may be necessary to seek to retain individual, groups, or areas of trees, which are not at present protected. The District Council will do this by use of formal powers to make new Tree Preservation Orders. In the near future, there will be a separate Hedgerow Notification Order which will be utilised to protect important lengths of long established traditional hedgerows.

POLICY EN3

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OR DAMAGE OF A TREE WHICH HAS AN AMENITY VALUE, OR WOULD CREATE AN UNSATISFACTORY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUILDINGS AND ANY SUCH TREE

- 3.23 The Planning Act places a duty on local planning authorities when granting planning permission to ensure that adequate provision is made for the preservation and planting of trees. It is essential to avoid conflict between the public amenity benefits obtained by the retention of mature trees within developments and the private needs and amenities of occupants. Satisfactory provision will be needed to protect trees in new development schemes. A useful source of advice is the Code of Practice BS5837:1980 "Trees in relation to construction." Also see Appendix 8 of the Plan for advice on landscaping and tree protection.
- 3.24 ***Initiatives for new tree planting including the Rockingham Forest project will continue to be supported.*** The Countryside Commission and the County Council operate a jointly funded planting scheme providing grants for new tree planting. This assistance is offered under the Landscape Conservation Grant Scheme which also supports landscape management initiatives. Free trees are also available from the County Council for planting sites visible to the public. The Forestry Commission also assists by means of the Woodland Grant Scheme. These initiatives which provide much of the incentive for new tree planting, will be supplemented by the District Council's own schemes which offer trees, or grants for planting schemes on areas which have public amenity value. In new planting schemes there is a presumption in favour of native broad-leaved species.
- 3.25 Benefits can be gained from the planting of additional trees and woodland areas. Once established, new woodland and even individual trees can significantly enhance the landscape. This may be particularly important in areas where there has been a recent loss of tree cover. Although the bid to locate a new national forest in Northamptonshire was unsuccessful, alternative options are now being investigated by the District Council in association with the County Council and the Countryside Commission.

POLICY EN4

PLANTING SCHEMES PREPARED IN CONNECTION WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS, OR AMENITY TREE PLANTING, WILL NORMALLY COMPRISE NATIVE SPECIES APPROPRIATE TO THE LOCALITY

- 3.26 In the interests of nature conservation and the general environment, native shrubs and trees should be used wherever possible in landscaping schemes. In certain circumstances, the use of native wild flower mixes will also be appropriate and could help to offset the effects of some forms of development. The species used should generally be native to this part of Northamptonshire in order to maintain and enhance landscape character.
- 3.27 This policy supplements the specific references to landscaping in connection with residential and industrial proposals and will apply to these and all other development proposals within the District. (Also see policies H20 and EMP7). Development briefs will need to take into account landscaping and planting requirements.

POLICY EN5

WHERE AN EXISTING FEATURE, SUCH AS A HEDGEROW, TREE OR POND WILL ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SITE, IT WILL BE A REQUIREMENT THAT IT IS RETAINED IN THE LANDSCAPING SCHEME

- 3.28 It is important to integrate and blend new development into the landscape to avoid the creation of strident features which have an adverse impact upon the appearance of the landscape. The District Council fully supports the Countryside Commission's Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which offers payments to land managers for maintaining field boundaries and other landscape features. The District Council's Guidelines for Landscaping are set out in Appendix 8.
- 3.29 *Protection will be given to areas of important landscape and environmental value by the use of directions under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988, in those cases where there is a serious threat from harmful development.* In some sensitive areas development which is permitted by virtue of the General Development Order, may result in a reduction in the environmental quality of the surroundings. It is important to adopt a general principle to be prepared to use formal powers, when this is necessary.

POLICY EN6

IN AREAS ADJOINING THE RIVERS NENE AND WELLAND AND THEIR ASSOCIATED TRIBUTARIES, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR PROPOSALS WHICH WILL HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THESE IMPORTANT VALLEY AND FLOODPLAIN LANDSCAPE FEATURES

- 3.30 River valleys and floodplains provide important resources for nature conservation and recreation in the District and have rich historical and cultural associations. If the character of the river landscapes is to be maintained, they need to be protected from any development proposals which may prejudice their special character. In this respect the Ministry of Agriculture's Countryside Stewardship Scheme is available to promote traditional management of the landscape. (Also see policy RL10 and paragraph 9.27).

POLICY EN7

THE NENE AND WELLAND RIVER VALLEYS WILL BE PROMOTED AND PROTECTED AS IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES, BY:-

- (I) **CONSERVING EXISTING AREAS OF VALUE AND WHERE NECESSARY RESTORING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ELEMENTS OF THE RIVER ENVIRONMENT;**
 - (II) **CONTINUING TO IDENTIFY LOCATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL PURSUITS OF A SCALE AND FORM WHICH WILL NOT RESULT IN AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT; AND**
 - (III) **CONTROLLING ANY DEVELOPMENT WHICH COULD IMPEDE THE FLOW OF WATER AND INCREASE THE RISK OF FLOODING IN BUILT UP AREAS**
- 3.31 It is important to provide for the undertaking of joint initiatives aimed at conserving, enhancing or restoring the particular character of the Nene and Welland river valleys and in addition to promote, but carefully control and manage all recreational activity. In addition, development needs to be carefully controlled so that it does not interfere with the natural drainage role of watercourses. These measures would be undertaken in consultation with the National Rivers Authority (N.R.A.), the County Council and the Countryside Commission. (Also see policies PU1 to PU5).
- 3.32 *The principles and practice of countryside management as a means of achieving the conservation and improvement of the landscape area will be supported.* Management Plans and schemes undertaken by the County Council, environmental agencies, statutory bodies and voluntary groups, can achieve a great deal on the basis of common agreed approaches. Such consultation and collaboration can be undertaken in respect of landscape assessments, the identification of landscape character areas and guidelines for the management of the landscape, by landowners and interested agencies and organisations. The District Council will support acceptable initiatives, by offering specialist advice from staff and financial contributions, as and when resources permit this. An example of such an initiative is the Nene Valley Project, which aims to improve opportunities for countryside recreation and to conserve and enhance the Nene Valley's landscape and wildlife.

*Nature Conservation***POLICY EN8**

DEVELOPMENT THAT MAY DESTROY OR AFFECT ADVERSELY (EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY) A DESIGNATED OR PROPOSED SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST, NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE OR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS PLANNING CONDITIONS OR OBLIGATIONS SECURE PRACTICABLE, EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE MITIGATING MEASURES

- 3.33 Parts of the District have special importance because of their conservation interest. The most important of these are the "Sites of Special Scientific Interest" (SSSI) designated by the Nature Conservancy Council for England (English Nature). In addition to requiring planning permission, development which affects these sites also needs consent from English Nature. Advice is sought whenever applications are received.
- 3.34 The aim of this policy is to prevent the loss of important geological or physiographic features, to ensure that the heritage of wild flora and fauna and their habitats, remains as large and diverse as possible. This applies both to sites which are already recognised and designated for protection and also to proposed sites. A list of all the sites is given under Appendix 1. Existing protected sites are also shown on the Proposals Map.
- 3.35 *The principle and practice of the designation of local nature reserves will be supported.* The designation of Local Nature Reserves is one of the ways that the District Council can play an important role in nature conservation. In carrying out designations of this kind it will be necessary for consultation to take place with the County Council and English Nature. Local Nature Reserves are sites that are owned, leased or managed under agreement, by local authorities.

POLICY EN9

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON SITES OF LOCAL CONSERVATION INTEREST, IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED, PLANNING CONDITIONS OR FORMAL PLANNING AGREEMENTS WILL BE UTILISED TO PROTECT THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE AREA

- 3.36 Other "County Wildlife Sites" have been identified by the Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire. These do not have the same protection as the SSSI's, but may contain species and habitats which are locally, and in some instances, nationally rare. They contribute to the nature conservation interest of the District and wherever possible should be protected from development.
- 3.37 Further sites in the Nene Valley have been identified as "Nature Conservation Zones" and "River Reaches of Nature Conservation Importance". Most of the above sites, of whatever type, are privately owned and their care and management is the responsibility of the owner. In addition, some sites are owned and managed as reserves by the Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire or Forest Enterprise and a number of these have already been declared Local Nature Reserves. Access by the general public is positively encouraged at these sites.
- 3.38 It is important that all of these sites are protected and where appropriate used for study purposes. Planning applications which affect any of the areas will be subject to consultations with English Nature and the Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire and their comments will be taken into account before any decisions are made. These areas are shown on the Proposals Map.
- 3.39 The maintenance of wildlife habitats such as woodland, flood meadows, unimproved pastures, marshes, streams, ponds, parks, lakes and green lanes is also important. In addition the Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire is currently identifying Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites, and these should also be preserved.
- 3.40 The impact upon habitats can be minimised when development occurs, by making provision in the form of planning conditions or legal agreements, for the retention, of habitat features. Where this is not possible the replacement or substitution of such features should form part of the development. Geological sites will normally require to be safeguarded and retained. Agreements may be made under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to allow access to be made for education and research.

POLICY EN10

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON A SITE SUPPORTING A SPECIES PROTECTED BY LAW. IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED, PLANNING CONDITIONS OR FORMAL LEGAL AGREEMENTS WILL BE UTILISED TO PROTECT THIS SPECIAL INTEREST

- 3.41 Laws place restrictions on the killing, taking, keeping and sale of wild birds and their eggs and there are other controls protecting other defined animals and plants. The existence of a protected species will be a factor taken into account, particularly when determining applications for conversions and alterations to existing buildings.
- 3.42 *Management agreements will be entered into to help protect, interpret and enhance important non-statutory nature conservation and geological sites.* It is important to establish the principle of using either informal agreements, or alternatively formal agreements, which are provided for under several Acts of Parliament. Protecting sites from unsuitable development or land-use change is a key component of conservation but on its own is insufficient. A recommended method of site management is essential too. Agreements can be used to conserve features and areas of local value that are unprotected by specific designation. Suitable schemes which could be subject to agreements of this kind are the rehabilitation of neglected woodland, conservation management of traditional farming patterns of land use, the maintenance of aquatic habitats, such as ponds and lakes, the protection and enhancement of geological sites and features and the interpretation of areas of interest, so as to increase the awareness and enjoyment of these areas by the public.
- 3.43 *The principles and practice of the enhancement of areas of nature conservation value will be supported.* Areas of nature conservation value can be enhanced by restoring features that have been lost, or by the creation of new features appropriate to the locality.

POLICY EN11

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENTS PROVIDED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO UNACCEPTABLE LOSS, FRAGMENTATION, OR DAMAGE TO THE PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OR CHARACTER OF ANCIENT OR BROAD-LEAVED WOODLANDS, OR TO OTHER WOODLANDS, WHICH ARE OF IMPORTANCE FOR VISUAL OR RECREATIONAL AMENITY IN THEIR PRESENT FORM

- 3.44 Ancient semi-natural and broad-leaved woodlands are important to the nature conservation, ecological, low key recreational and landscape value of the area and must therefore be protected. Ancient woodlands in the District are highlighted on the Proposals Map.

2. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT*Conservation Areas*

- 3.45 *The need for the designation of new Conservation Areas will be investigated. The boundaries of the existing designated Conservation Areas will be modified where necessary.* Conservation Areas have special characteristics or features which it is desirable to retain or enhance. A Conservation Area generally centres on an important group of buildings of historical or architectural interest, where the relationships and spaces between the buildings combine to produce an area of particular value.
- 3.46 Formal designation of a Conservation Area enhances the District Council's influence over development and brings most demolition and the removal of trees, under the control of the planning authority. A survey of existing Conservation Areas is being carried out and their boundaries extended or adjusted as necessary. The existing Conservation Areas are listed in Appendix 2 and shown on the Proposals Map.
- 3.47 Development in Conservation Areas should seek to preserve the character and enhance the quality of the area. This applies not only to proposals by private individuals, but also to work carried out by statutory and public bodies. Standard designs may need to be adapted to ensure compatibility with the surrounding environment. Street furniture, signs, surface treatment, kerbs and road alignment should be sympathetic to, and enhance the traditional character of the locality.

POLICY EN12

PLANNING PERMISSION OR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT WILL ONLY BE GRANTED WITHIN, OR ADJACENT TO A CONSERVATION AREA, WHERE IT RELATES TO A DEVELOPMENT WHICH PRESERVES OR ENHANCES THE SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF THE AREA. IMPORTANT STREET SCENES AND VIEWS INTO AND OUT OF CONSERVATION AREAS WILL BE PROTECTED THROUGH LAYOUT, SCALE, SITING, DESIGN AND MATERIALS

- 3.48 Applications for planning permission or listed building consent will only be permitted where the proposed development is sympathetic to and does not detract from the character of the Conservation Area and the overall quality and appearance of the area. The District Council will generally expect applications for development in Conservation Areas to be of a detailed nature and therefore accompanied by full and comprehensive drawings and plans.

POLICY EN13

CONSENT WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR THE DEMOLITION, OR PARTIAL DEMOLITION, OF ANY BUILDING OR STRUCTURE WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA IF IT CONTRIBUTES TO THE STREET SCENE, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OR CHARACTER OF THE AREA. IN THOSE FEW CASES WHERE CONSENT CAN BE GIVEN, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO FIRST GAIN PLANNING PERMISSION AND LET A CONTRACT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT NECESSITATING THE DEMOLITION

- 3.49 Although Conservation Areas usually contain a high proportion of listed buildings, which are subject to protection from demolition, there may be many other buildings which make an important contribution to the character of the area and these should also be retained. In the few cases where redevelopment or alterations may be acceptable, it is necessary to finalise a scheme and programme to avoid the creation of unsuitable vacant sites or eyesores, following demolition or partial demolition. Whenever possible applications for planning permission and conservation area consent will be determined simultaneously.

POLICY EN14

CONSENT WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR THE UNNECESSARY REMOVAL OF TREES OR FOR TOPPING, LOPPING OR OTHER WORK TO TREES WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO THE CHARACTER OF A CONSERVATION AREA

- 3.50 Trees can be very important features within the built environment and where possible should be retained. Persons intending to remove or carry out work to a tree in a Conservation Area, which is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order, must give the District Council six weeks notice of their intention to do so. Where notification of work is received a Tree Preservation Order will be prepared to protect the tree, unless there are exceptional reasons to allow it to be removed, or have work carried out. Any tree that is removed and is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order may need to be replaced.
- 3.51 *Proposals by British Telecom to remove existing K6 telephone kiosks from Conservation Areas and replace them with modern designs will be resisted. Sympathetic design and location of road signs and other street furniture will be encouraged* In most Conservation Areas kiosks of the K6 design known as the "Jubilee Box", still exist and can contribute to the overall character of the area. The new designs are not considered appropriate within these important historic areas. Traffic signs, street lights, planters, seats and waste paper bins can detract from the environmental quality of Conservation Areas if poorly designed and located.

*Listed Buildings and Buildings in Conservation Areas***POLICY EN15**

CONSENT WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR THE DEMOLITION OR PARTIAL DEMOLITION OF ANY LISTED BUILDING OR ANY STRUCTURE WITHIN ITS CURTILAGE, OR FOR THE REMOVAL OF ANY FIXTURE FROM THE BUILDING OR ITS CURTILAGE, WHERE THIS WOULD DETRACT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OR CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA OR THE ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORIC INTEREST/INTEGRITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL BUILDING. IN THE FEW INSTANCES WHERE CONSENT IS GRANTED, A CONDITION WILL BE IMPOSED PREVENTING DEMOLITION UNTIL CONTRACTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE REPLACEMENT BUILDING HAVE BEEN LET

- 3.52 Many buildings in the District are listed by the Department of National Heritage because of their architectural or historic interest. These buildings contribute significantly to the appearance of the area and reflect its local building styles, materials and traditions. They are also a finite resource. Consequently listed buildings are the subject of additional protection.
- 3.53 The retention of listed buildings is of primary importance. Although not always referred to in the description of a listed building, other buildings and structures within its grounds may contribute towards its setting and should also be retained. Special features and architectural details within the curtilage, attached to, or inside the building, will also contribute towards its character and should not be removed. In the exceptional cases where a listed building is to be demolished, the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England has a right to enter and record its features. In the few cases where consent is given, it will be necessary to ensure that a replacement building or alteration to an existing listed building is carried out immediately, to prevent the creation of unsightly vacant sites or eyesores.
- 3.54 *Article 4 Directions will be promoted within Conservation Areas. Where it is necessary to bring any external alterations to unlisted buildings within the scope of planning control.* Unsympathetic alterations to buildings within Conservation Areas can have a seriously detrimental effect on both the buildings themselves and the area as a whole. Protection exists as far as the alteration of listed buildings is concerned, but it is desirable to ensure that unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas are protected from unsympathetic alteration.
- 3.55 An Article 4 Direction requires owners of buildings in specified areas to seek permission before proceeding with certain works which would otherwise have been exempt from planning control.

POLICY EN16

WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS AND ON ANY LISTED BUILDING, CONSENT WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR BOX SIGNS PROJECTING FROM, OR MOUNTED ON, ANY PART OF THE BUILDING, OR FOR ANY INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED SIGNS. THE USE OF UNSUITABLE COLOURS OR STYLES OF LETTERING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED

- 3.56 The modern materials normally used in the construction of box signs and their general appearance makes them unsuitable for use in Conservation Areas. Traditional signs are the most suitable type and simple clear lettering is the most effective and pleasing form of display. Hand painted trade signs can enhance the street scene and are the only type of projecting sign considered appropriate in Conservation Areas. It should be noted that listed building consent will be required for advertisements on listed buildings whether or not advertisement consent is required.
- 3.57 Internally illuminated signs, particularly full-depth fascias, are out of character and will be resisted. Hand painted timber signs are considered to be the most appropriate for the Conservation Areas. Illumination is likely to be necessary or desirable only on those premises which are open during the hours of darkness, such as restaurants and public houses. In these cases it is considered that illumination by spotlight, rather than internally, is the most appropriate.

- 3.58 *Where circumstances warrant, powers will be used to require the discontinuance of advertisements displayed with the benefit of deemed consent and areas of special control will be declared, in order to govern the display of advertisements in Conservation Areas.* Consent is required for some types of advertisements including illuminated signs in Conservation Areas. Other types of signs, however, can normally be erected without obtaining consent from the District Council unless the building is listed, in which case listed building consent will be required.
- 3.59 The declaration of an Area of Special Control places additional restrictions on the display of advertisements by bringing more of them within the scope of planning control. This enables the planning authority to negotiate with the applicant for a sign that is less obtrusive and more appropriate to its sensitive setting.

POLICY EN17

WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS AND ON LISTED BUILDINGS, PLANNING PERMISSION, LISTED BUILDING CONSENT OR ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR CONTINENTAL STYLE SHOP BLINDS, THE PROVISION OF ADVERTISEMENTS ON BLINDS OR SIDE PANELS, OR FOR SATELLITE ANTENNA

- 3.60 There has been a recent trend towards the fitting of Continental style blinds. This constitutes an alteration to a shop front for which planning permission and, in relation to a listed building, listed building consent is required. In addition, the display of names or other words on a blind or its side panels, is an advertisement which may require consent.
- 3.61 Continental blinds with their associated advertisements are considered inappropriate within Conservation Areas and proposals for their introduction will be resisted. Satellite antenna will also be resisted when they are proposed to be erected on listed buildings and, where planning permission is required, on unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas.

POLICY EN18

CONSENT WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR ALTERATIONS OR EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS WHERE IT RELATES TO DEVELOPMENTS WHICH PRESERVE, RETAIN OR ENHANCE THE APPEARANCE, CHARACTER AND SETTING OF THE BUILDINGS AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS. SCALE, DESIGN AND MATERIALS WILL NEED TO BE SYMPATHETIC

- 3.62 It will be necessary for all listed building consent applications to be supported by detailed drawings. These must illustrate floor plans, external elevations and any other aspects of the structure, or detailing of the building, which is relevant. These drawings should also be prepared to illustrate the building as existing and as it will appear on completion of the alterations and/or works applied for.
- 3.63 It is essential to retain the character and appearance of listed buildings, therefore extensions, alterations and changes of use, should respect the scale and design of the existing buildings both in terms of its original function and the materials used. This applies to internal as well as external alterations and to other buildings and structures within the grounds of listed buildings.
- 3.64 It should be noted with regard to listed buildings that changing the type of material used for thatching requires consent. The traditional material used in the District is long straw and where this exists it should continue to be used for repairs or the renewal of thatch.
- 3.65 Listed Building Consent is required for all work which affects the character or appearance of a listed building. Where work is proposed it is advisable to contact the planning department for advice.

POLICY EN19

PLANNING PERMISSION OR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT WILL BE GRANTED FOR PROPOSALS WHICH RESULT IN THE RESTORATION OF BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS, OR LISTED BUILDINGS, PROVIDING ANY SCHEMES RESPECT THE CHARACTER AND FABRIC OF THE STRUCTURE AND DO NOT REQUIRE ANY EXTENSIVE ALTERATION, REBUILDING OR EXTENSION

- 3.66 To prevent the physical deterioration of historic buildings proposals for their restoration, conversion, or new use, will be considered sympathetically. Although the original use of a building is preferred it is sometimes not practicable or viable to achieve this. In these circumstances, a suitable alternative use which ensures the retention and future life of the building may be allowed. All proposals will be considered with regard to their impact on the historic and architectural features of the building.
- 3.67 ***Action will be taken to protect unlisted buildings of architectural, historic or townscape importance which come under threat.*** There may be instances where a building although not included on the statutory list, is of sufficient architectural, historic or townscape importance to merit protection and retention. The above policy will therefore apply to any buildings which are considered to be of special character and townscape value.
- 3.68 Where there are proposals to demolish, alter or extend unlisted buildings which are worthy of retention, the District Council will take formal action to secure their protection.

Financial Assistance and Environmental Enhancement Schemes

- 3.69 ***Financial assistance will continue to be given towards existing Historic Town Schemes, the establishment and financing of further Town Schemes will be considered.*** In recognition of the special quality of the Conservation Areas in Higham Ferrers and Oundle, Historic Town Schemes have been introduced. Through these schemes grants are available to the owners of specified buildings within the Conservation Area, for the cost of necessary repairs. The District Council, the County Council and The Historic Building and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage), all contribute towards the schemes.
- 3.70 ***Financial assistance will normally be offered for repairs necessary to maintain those historic buildings whose character renders them worthy of retention.*** Buildings of architectural or historic interest may be eligible for financial assistance towards structural repairs or the reinstatement of historic details. Priority will generally be given, within available resources, to those schemes where the greatest benefits can be secured.
- 3.71 ***The implementation of environmental improvement schemes will continue to be supported.*** The District Council intends to promote area improvement schemes. These could relate to the enhancement of Conservation Areas and improvements to town centres and older housing areas. It is likely that large scale schemes will be implemented in association with other public and private organisations.

Important Open Land Within Towns and Villages

POLICY EN20

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECTS OPEN LAND OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FORM AND CHARACTER OF A TOWN OR VILLAGE, AS IDENTIFIED BY ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:-

- (I) THE LAND CONTRIBUTES TO THE RETENTION OF THE EXISTING FORM AND CHARACTER OF A PARTICULAR SETTLEMENT;**
- (II) THE LAND PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT OPEN AREA WITHIN A SETTLEMENT WHICH SEPARATES DISTINCT GROUPS OF BUILDINGS OR PARTS OF THE SETTLEMENT;**
- (III) THE LAND CONTRIBUTES TO THE SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING, A BUILDING OF TOWNSCAPE QUALITY, ANCIENT MONUMENT OR LANDSCAPE FEATURE, OR CONTRIBUTES TO THE CHARACTER OF A CONSERVATION AREA;**
- (IV) THE LAND ALLOWS VIEWS INTO THE SETTLEMENT FROM APPROACH ROADS OR OPEN COUNTRYSIDE, VIEWS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE FROM WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT, AND/OR VIEWS ACROSS TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SETTLEMENT**

- 3.72 The character of the District's towns and villages depends not only on their buildings, but also on the open spaces and their relationship to buildings and features. The particular character of a settlement may be determined largely by the arrangement of buildings around these open areas and the views they give of the surrounding countryside. Apart from their attractiveness, such areas may also have historic or nature conservation significance, or may be part of an important network of green space, which it is desirable to maintain and enhance.
- 3.73 The Proposals Map illustrates the sites which are considered to be important open land and to which the above policy will apply.

The Display of Advertisements

POLICY EN21

ADVERTISEMENTS NEEDING CONSENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE THE POSITION, SIZE AND COLOUR OF THE DISPLAY AND THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF SUCH DISPLAYS, AFFECTS ADVERSELY THE TOWNSCAPE OR LANDSCAPE QUALITY OF THE AREA

- 3.74 The proliferation of advertisement displays will not be allowed. Advertisements have a significant influence on the street scene in settlements and on the landscape in the rural area. In the case of existing advertisements or those displayed without consent, consideration will be given to the desirability of action to secure the removal of signs that have an adverse impact on the surrounding area.

POLICY EN22

ADVERTISEMENTS NEEDING CONSENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

- 3.75 The aim of this policy is to prevent the display of advertisements in the countryside. In particular, free standing advance warning signs will not be permitted
- 3.76 The impact of advertisement displays is of particular concern in Conservation Areas and has been dealt with separately by policies EN16, EN17 and paragraph 3.58. Exceptions to this policy are considered in relation to tourism, in policy T07 and paragraph 9.31.

Sites of Archaeological Interest

POLICY EN23

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHERE THERE WOULD BE NO ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER AND SETTING OF SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS OR OTHER IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

- 3.77 Apart from the protection afforded to listed buildings and to buildings in Conservation Areas, many structures and sites of archaeological or historic importance are "Scheduled Ancient Monuments" and these and other important archaeological sites are protected from damaging developments. These sites are all part of the District's rich historic heritage and help form a picture of what life would have been like for the inhabitants of the area through the ages. Scheduled ancient monuments are shown on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 3.

POLICY EN24

WHERE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AFFECT IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES WHERE PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS PERMIT, AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO ANY PLANNING APPLICATION BEING DETERMINED. IN THE FEW CASES WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED, AND IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PRESERVE REMAINS IN SITU, PLANNING CONDITIONS WILL BE IMPOSED REQUIRING PROVISION TO BE MADE FOR EXCAVATION AND RECORDING, BEFORE OR DURING DEVELOPMENT

- 3.78 Other sites of archaeological importance will be protected, although the case for preservation in situ will depend on the intrinsic merits of the remains and the nature of the development proposals. Although an evaluation will normally be requested in areas of archaeological importance, there may be some circumstances where this is not practicable for part or all of the site (for example where there are existing buildings on part of the site). Where the requirement is stipulated however, it will be necessary for the exercise to be completed prior to the determination of a planning application. In some instances it may be beneficial for this to be undertaken prior to the application being submitted.
- 3.79 Where permission is granted for development on archaeological sites the applicant will need to demonstrate that the important features will be satisfactorily preserved in situ or excavated and recorded. Excavation and recording will be achieved through attaching appropriate conditions to any planning permission. The District Council will wish to be satisfied that this will be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist.
- 3.80 ***The enhancement, interpretation and preservation of sites of archaeological interest (including the setting of the sites) will be encouraged.*** It is insufficient to merely protect sites of archaeological interest. Of equal importance is the need to encourage a variety of formal and voluntary agencies to undertake work to enhance, preserve and carry out initiatives to interpret the form and nature of the remains for the benefit of the public. This could be by the provision of publicity material, suitable premises for display purposes and on-site interpretation facilities. The Countryside Commission is currently working on a range of initiatives in association with the County Archaeologist.

Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes

POLICY EN25

PLANNING PERMISSION OR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER AND SETTING OF HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

- 3.81 The District has several large stately houses which are listed because of their special architectural or historic interest. Associated with many of these are historic parks and gardens which were often planned and designed around the house and usually incorporate parkland, ornamental gardens and kitchen gardens. They may also contain other listed buildings, structures or ornaments and important archaeological features. These parks and gardens contribute significantly to the character and setting of individual listed buildings and are often of special interest in their own right.
- 3.82 Although historic parks and gardens have no separate statutory protection it is important to ensure that their character and setting is not adversely affected by new uses or development proposals. Proposals to enhance or restore Historic Gardens will normally be supported. A County Gardens Trust has been established to stimulate interest in Historic Parks and Gardens. English Heritage has produced a register of parks and gardens which are of particular historic value and these are shown on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 4.
- 3.83 ***The principles and practice of the management of historic landscapes will be supported.*** Parkland and ancient strip farming systems are included in the Countryside Commission's Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Land managers can be offered incentives to sustain or return such systems to beneficial management practices.

Control of Light Pollution

POLICY EN26

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR LIGHTING SCHEMES PROVIDED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR ON THE AMENITIES OF ADJOINING LAND USERS, AND IT WILL NOT RESULT IN THE CREATION OF UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF GLARE AND SPILLAGE OF LIGHT INTO AREAS OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

- 3.84 While recognising the importance of lighting for security and safety purposes, badly orientated or poorly designed lighting is wasteful of resources and can cause disturbance. The provision of floodlighting or lighting in new development where this requires consent, should be designed to prevent spillage into surrounding areas or into the sky, where it could have an adverse impact on residential amenities, landscape features, or the night sky.

- 3.85 The District Council will seek to achieve the most efficient and effective system when it promotes or provides lighting as part of any development or environmental enhancement scheme. It will look to developers to provide similarly sympathetic lighting proposals when private development takes place. The modification of existing schemes could contribute to a reduction in problems caused by already poorly designed lighting systems.

Overhead Lines

- 3.86 *In considering proposals for the development of overhead lines in the open countryside, the need to avoid visual intrusion in the landscape, particularly within the defined Special Landscape Area, should be taken into account. Where the impact is considered to be unacceptable, underground routing of wires should take place.* The appearance of the landscape can be severely blighted by the routing of overhead transmission lines. The impact can be reduced by avoiding the provision of overhead lines in the future, wherever practicable. The replacement of some existing lines by underground routing, would result in considerable visual improvement to the landscape.

Pollution and Environmental Nuisance

- 3.87 *Work will be undertaken with other organisations in an effort to resolve pollution and environmental nuisances caused by existing uses and installations, both within the District and adjacent to its boundaries.* The quality of the environment on a local scale is often significantly reduced by established uses, through the creation of noise, vibration, dust, smell or other forms of pollution.
- 3.88 Policies EMP6, EMP14, EMP15 and AG3 ensure that any adverse environmental effect caused by new development is kept to a minimum. There are no planning controls relating to existing uses but the District Council will endeavour to resolve nuisances through negotiation with the relevant statutory bodies, property owners and private organisations.

Shop Fronts

POLICY EN27

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR NEW SHOP FRONTS AND FRONTS TO OTHER COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS IN TOWN CENTRES AND VILLAGES WHERE THE PROPOSAL:

- (I) DISPLAYS A UNITY WITH THE BUILDING OF WHICH IT IS A PART;**
- (II) UTILISES MATCHING OR COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS;**
- (III) INCORPORATES TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS OF SHOP FRONT DESIGN, OR IS OF A FORM AND SCALE WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT;**
- (IV) REFLECTS THE SCALE AND PROPORTION OF ADJOINING BUILDINGS AND THE STREET SCENE AS A WHOLE**

- 3.89 Shop fronts have a considerable impact on the appearance of the areas in which they are situated and care is needed in all proposals for new shop fronts, particularly in Conservation Areas and/or where listed buildings are involved. The District Council is keen to ensure that proposals for new shop fronts or the alteration of those already in existence, make a positive contribution to the street scene and do not harm the existing character of towns and villages in the District. The intention of this policy is not to entirely exclude individual shop front design solutions which may be appropriate, neither should it be seen as a call for some kind of "standard neo-vernacular" proposal. All well designed, high quality sympathetic schemes are to be encouraged, provided these reflect good architectural practice.

Environmental Assessment

- 3.90 ***Environmental assessments of a high standard will be required as part of a planning application for the types of development defined in the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988.*** It is important that the District Council ensures that high standards are maintained in the preparation of environmental statements. Guidance set out in the Government Regulations and explanatory Circular 15/88 on the coverage needed in environmental assessments, will be considered to be a minimum requirement. Where necessary, information additional to that contained in the statement may be requested from developers and/or their agents.

District Countryside Strategy

- 3.91 The Special Landscape Area established by the County Council has been defined on the basis of largely subjective assessment. The Countryside Commission in association with English Nature strongly recommend that landscape conservation should be based on landscape character. This is the characteristics and features which make one landscape different from another, rather than necessarily better or worse.
- 3.92 Assessment of landscape character allows each landscape to be treated on its own merits and avoids the devaluation of areas not designated within the present Special Landscape Area classification. An overall assessment aids decisions on land use, conservation and land management and will help to identify and maintain the diversity of landscape character.
- 3.93 Landscape assessment is the practical technique for classifying and evaluating the whole landscape present in any area or District. It enables subdivisions to be made into distinctive landscape character types, based on the repetition of characteristics and features and their significance overall. In addition, it will provide the basis for making judgements about areas to be conserved and the nature, location and form of any enhancement which is desirable. It will also provide the background to decisions about forms of development and land use change which would be detrimental to each landscape type. Conclusions drawn in respect of all these matters will assist in the development of landscape management guidelines and policies.
- 3.94 It is a proposal of this Plan, therefore, that the District Council will co-operate with the County Council, Countryside Commission, English Nature, the National Rivers Authority (N.R.A.) and other local amenity bodies in the production of a District Countryside Strategy. Among other matters, this strategy will investigate policies for nature conservation and make an assessment of the landscape character of the whole area of the District.

Environmental Audit

- 3.95 Recently there has been a growing awareness of environmental issues on a local, national and international level. It is now generally accepted that the lifestyle we choose and the items we buy can have wider implications for other people, habitats and natural resources around the world.
- 3.96 Global environmental issues can only be resolved through international co-operation and legislation. Guidance is drawn up both by the Government and the European Community and this can be translated into action at a local level by County and District Councils.
- 3.97 In recognition of the impact that "thinking globally, acting locally" can have in working towards a solution for environmental problems, the District Council intends to carry out an Environmental Audit of its own practices and purchases.
- 3.98 The District Council is a major employer and a large user of various products, for example paper, cars and weedkillers. It can set an example to individuals and the community as a whole. The Environmental Audit will identify the products the District Council uses and whether there are opportunities to cut waste by using some things more efficiently. It will also examine whether "environmentally friendly" alternatives exist. The District Council will then develop and implement a purchasing policy which reflects the findings of the Environmental Audit.
- 3.99 The Audit will in time be extended to an appraisal of the whole District, from which it is hoped a strategy will evolve which will form an input to the continued monitoring and review of this Plan.

Conservation Areas Strategy

- 3.100 It will be the District Council's intention to prepare schemes for the enhancement of the Conservation Areas in the District. It is a statutory duty for local authorities to bring about the enhancement of designated Conservation Areas.
- 3.101 A key component in securing the enhancement of Conservation Areas is to ensure that all forms of development are designed and implemented in a sympathetic manner. To assist in this, it is the intention of the District Council to prepare statements which offer design guidance and advice to facilitate development and selective renewal, in the sensitive environments of Conservation Areas.