

Review of local landscape designations and the protection and enhancement of Green Infrastructure, including Green Wedges, Special Landscape Areas and Amenity Open Space

Special Landscape Areas

Important landscapes in the United Kingdom have been recognised as necessary to protect and enhance since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

About one third of Harrogate District is recognised as a nationally important landscape through its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is the Nidderdale AONB. (The Yorkshire Dales National Park lies immediately to the west of the Nidderdale AONB, but is located outside Harrogate District).

In the existing Harrogate District Local Plan, locally important landscapes around Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon, known as Special Landscape Areas, are protected by Policy C9 of the Harrogate District Local Plan.

Existing national planning policy, published since the adoption of the Harrogate District Local Plan, advises that such local landscape designations need to be robustly justified and should only be maintained in the development plan only if criteria based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection.

The Borough Council is in the process of reviewing Special Landscape Area (SLA) designations in the light of this national planning policy. In January/February 2008 the Council published a review of local landscape designations for consultation. Since then, the Council's forward planning resources have been focussed on

- Servicing the public examination into the Core Strategy (2008)
- Arrangements for the adoption and operation of the Core Strategy (first half of 2009), and
- The review of site options for housing and employment necessary following the adoption of the Core Strategy, culminating in the October/November 2010 Rural Areas Consultation (late 2009/2010).

Work on the review of Special Landscape Areas has not yet progressed to the next stage. This work will be completed in time for the Urban Areas Consultation programmed for Summer 2011.

When this work on the review of Special Landscape Areas is completed, the Council will need to take account of its conclusions and balance the need for new housing and new development against any harm to, or loss of land worthy of designation as Special Landscape Areas. In the meantime, Site RL2073b, Leeds Road, Pannal, currently lying within the Crimple Valley Special Landscape Area, has been included within the rural areas consultation as a preferred site option for housing.

Amenity Open Space

The Council's review of the need to protect amenity open space is also 'work in progress'. A significant amount of work and community involvement has already been undertaken through the Conservation Area Appraisals. Important open space within the District's Conservation Areas has been identified through these appraisals and these have been marked on the settlement maps supplied as part of the rural areas consultation.

An important part of this consultation is to publicise the potential for the Council to mark these open spaces on the Harrogate District Local Development Framework (LDF) Proposals Map as protected open space.

The Council is also seeking views on whether there are any other open spaces outside Conservation Areas, but within the main built up area of settlements that should be protected.

Green Wedges in the town of Harrogate

Green Wedge in the town of Harrogate do not form part of the rural areas consultation. The potential for protecting 'green wedges' on the LDF Proposals Map will be dealt with during next years 'urban areas consultation'.

Note: dated 28 September 2010.