

## **Policy E2: Protect, Conserve and Enhance the Landscape Character of the Borough**

To ensure the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the Borough development will be permitted provided that:

- a) it does not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the immediate area and the landscape character of the area within which it is located;
- b) it is designed and located to ensure that the health and future retention of important landscape features is not likely to be prejudiced;
- c) the existing and proposed landscaping and landscape features enable it to positively integrate into the landscape character of the area;
- d) arrangements for the long term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping have been made; and
- e) it conserves the landscape and scenic beauty of the New Forest National Park or the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where applicable; and
- f) does not result in the loss of important local features such as trees, walls, hedges or water courses.

7.17 The landscape is the most readily appreciated feature of Test Valley's built and natural environment. The Borough's landscape varies from chalk downland in the north to the heathlands and woodland of the south. The River Test and its tributaries are a prominent feature in the landscape. These features help shape the settlements of the Borough.

7.18 It is important to conserve and, where possible, enhance the various landscape character areas within the Borough. Any new development should be in keeping with the character of the local landscape in terms of its location, siting and design. The Landscape Character Assessment 2004<sup>1</sup> was prepared jointly with the County Council and former Countryside Agency. It is an important tool to inform decisions on the impact of development and ensure that development will not be an anomaly in the local landscape. The merits of updating the Landscape Character Assessment will be considered by the Council. This will include the possibility of working jointly with neighbouring authorities.

7.19 Certain areas such as the New Forest National Park<sup>2, 3</sup> and North Wessex Downs AONB<sup>4</sup> receive special protection. The New Forest National Park Authority is the planning authority for that part of the designation which falls within Borough.

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1 Test Valley Community Landscape Project: Landscape Character Assessment, 2004

2 A landscape character assessment is available for the New Forest National Park Authority

3 The statutory duty is provided via the Environment Act 1995

4 A landscape character assessment is available for the North Wessex Downs AONB

- 7.20 The Council has a duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to the purpose of the AONB designation in making decisions as the local planning authority. The purpose (Section 82(1) of the Act) is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. A Management Plan<sup>5</sup> for the AONB has been prepared by the Council of Partners on behalf of the constituent local authorities. The Council has adopted the Management Plan and will take account of it in its decision making.
- 7.21 Within nationally designated areas the Council will expect particularly high standards of overall design including landscaping. The setting of nationally important landscapes need to be taken account of when assessing proposals for development outside of these designated areas.
- 7.22 Smaller, individual features can combine to establish a character and identity of an area. These elements, such as trees, hedgerows and water courses often provide recognisable boundaries to settlements help establish an identity of that area. These features should be protected as their loss either individually or cumulatively, could have a potential impact on both the immediate and wider character of the landscape.
- 7.23 Development should be designed to ensure the health and future retention of existing trees, including veteran trees, and hedgerows are not compromised<sup>6</sup>. Proposed development should be designed to avoid the future need to fell trees or otherwise impede their growth. On housing developments, buildings should be placed sufficiently far away from trees to allow adequate daylight and sunlight to reach the proposed properties. Based on past experience a distance of approximately 15 metres should be provided between the dwelling and the outer edge of any mature canopy or canopies of trees.
- 7.24 The provision of landscaping can visually enhance an area and support local biodiversity. In considering any proposals, the Council will need to be satisfied that they have been informed by and taken into account the Test Valley Biodiversity Action Plan and the Landscape Character Assessment.

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5 North Wessex Downs Management Plan 2014 – 2019, The Council of Partners, 2014.

6 BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations

7.25 Attractive landscaping and boundary treatment help a development to integrate successfully with the wider area. To ensure this is achieved and continued the future management of landscaping, including the maintenance regime, needs to be agreed prior to permission being granted. Proposed landscaping and boundary treatments which would introduce unnatural features e.g. bunds, or inappropriate vegetation e.g. fast-growing conifers, or are out of character would not be appropriate. The species and location of vegetation included within landscaping schemes and boundary treatments should be appropriate for its location having taken into consideration growth of the vegetation and its impact on neighbouring land uses.