Date:18 October 2021Our ref:370698Your ref:Whitburn Neighbourhood Plan

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### Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

## Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed <u>here</u><sup>9</sup>), such as Stes of Special Scientific Interest or <u>Ancient woodland</u><sup>10</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts  $\zeta \mid \mu \mid o \circ v \quad s \mid$  showly such impracts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

## Priority and protected species

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## Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 171. For more information, see our publication <u>Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land<sup>13</sup></u>.

# Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development. Examples might include:

- x Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- x Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- x Oreating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- x Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- x Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sour4.ltivd.92/twe001 2257 21.170 ETER018

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- x Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- x Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- x Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see <u>Planning Practice Guidance on this</u><sup>14</sup>).
- x Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- x Planting additional street trees.
- x Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- x Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or dearing away an eyesore).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> <u>http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/specesportsandrecreationfacilities-public-rights-of-</u>way-and-local-green