



Core Policy C – Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

This policy is taken from the **Core Strategy and Development Policies** document which is a key part of the **Local Development Framework**. The Local Development framework consists of several different documents to guide future development in the National Park whilst ensuring that its special qualities are conserved and enhanced.

Core Policy C – Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The quality and diversity of the natural environment of the North York Moors National Park will be conserved and enhanced. Conditions for biodiversity will be maintained and improved and important geodiversity assets will be protected. Protected sites and species will be afforded the highest level of protection with priority also given to local aims and targets for the natural environment.

All developments, projects and activities will be expected to:

1. Provide an appropriate level of protection to legally protected sites and species.
2. Maintain, and where appropriate enhance, conditions for priority habitats and species identified in the North York Moors Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
3. Maintain and where appropriate enhance recognised geodiversity assets.
4. Maintain and where appropriate enhance other sites, features, species or networks of ecological or geological interest and provide for the appropriate management of these.
5. Maximise opportunities for enhancement of ecological or geological assets, particularly in line with the North York Moors Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Tees Valley and North East Yorkshire Geodiversity Action Plans and the regional Habitat Enhancement Areas.
6. Mitigate against any necessary impacts through appropriate habitat creation, restoration or enhancement on site or elsewhere.

Applicants should refer to:

- Planning Policy Statement 9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Circular ODPM 06/2005, DEFRA 01/2005 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System
- Regional Spatial Strategy – Policies ENV2, ENV3, ENV6, ENV7, ENV8, YH8
- North York Moors Planning Advice Note 2 - Planning and Biodiversity
- Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document - Part 3 Trees and Landscape
- North York Moors Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Tees Valley Geodiversity Action Plan
- North East Yorkshire Geodiversity Action Plan (to be prepared)
- Development Policy 1

For further reference:

- North York Moors National Park Management Plan

Sustainability Appraisal

This policy provides a positive contribution towards meeting environmental sustainability objectives as it will specifically protect and enhance the natural environment including protected species and habitats.

- 6.1 Protecting and enhancing the natural environment is a statutory purpose of National Park designation and not only relates to legally protected sites and species but to the Park as a whole.
- 6.2 Protected sites and areas are identified on the Proposals Maps. Over a third of the Park is protected at international or national level. Legally protected sites in the North York Moors National Park include 58 Sites of Special Scientific Interest of which five are Special Areas of Conservation and one is a Special Protection Area. These are all shown on the Proposals Maps.
- 6.3 Other sites, features, species or networks of ecological or geological interest include:
 - Priority habitats and species identified in the North York Moors Biodiversity Action Plan
 - North York Moors Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Policies November 2008 34
 - Regionally Important Geological Sites or other sites identified in the Local Geodiversity Action Plans (shown on the Proposals Maps);
 - Sites identified on the Section 3 Conservation Map (includes ancient woodland) (shown on the Proposals Maps);
 - Nature Reserves (National Nature Reserve shown on the Proposals Maps);
 - Heritage Coast (shown on the Proposals Maps);
 - Sensitive Marine Area (shown on the Proposals Maps);
 - Land subject to an agri-environment agreement;
 - Other features of ecological value such as trees, hedgerows, walls, rivers, ponds, wetlands and wild flower grasslands.
- 6.4 Legally protected species which are prominent in the Park and which could be affected by new developments include, but are not limited to, bats, swallows, house martins, swifts, starlings, sparrows, barn owls, great crested newts and badgers.
- 6.5 Any proposal likely to affect a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or RAMSAR site (which is not directly connected with its management) will require an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations to determine whether or not it will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the site(s). Candidate Special Areas of Conservation and potential Special Protection Areas will be afforded the same level of protection as those already designated. There are other situations where the applicant may need to provide a professional survey including on sites which contain or are adjacent to existing trees or where there are known to be or thought to be protected species.
- 6.6 The Authority has produced a Biodiversity Action Plan for the National Park which identifies important species and habitats and sets priorities for their maintenance, protection and enhancement. New development should not compromise the aims of the

Biodiversity Action Plan and should seek to contribute to meeting them wherever possible.

- 6.7 Policy ENV8 of the Regional Spatial Strategy identifies Habitat and River/Floodplain Enhancement Areas and sets out the ways in which decisions should contribute to ensuring that important habitats are maintained and enhanced. Consideration of these should be undertaken alongside ensuring that priorities identified in the North York Moors Biodiversity Action Plan are addressed.
- 6.8 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) are important features resulting from a variety of processes including glacial, coastal or industrial. RIGS are identified as worthy of protection for either their educational, scientific, historic or landscape importance. Two RIGS groups operate in the Park – North East Yorkshire Geology Trust, which covers the majority of the Park, and the Tees Valley RIGS group which covers the Redcar and Cleveland part of the Park. There are a number of RIGS designated in the Redcar and Cleveland part of the Park and also one to the south of Great Ayton in Hambleton District. The North East Yorkshire Geology Trust is looking to identify further sites in the near future. North York Moors Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Policies November 2008 35
- 6.9 The Amendment to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1985 required the Authority to prepare a map showing areas of ‘Mountain, Moor, Heath, Woodland, Down, Cliff or Foreshore whose natural beauty is particularly important to conserve’. This is known as the Section 3 Conservation Map.
- 6.10 The Regional Spatial Strategy recognises the importance of protecting, creating and enhancing areas and networks of green infrastructure. Green infrastructure can provide many benefits including promoting sustainable and healthy travel patterns and recreation opportunities, protecting and linking important wildlife habitats and creating flood storage areas. Recognising that the Park itself could be seen as a strategic area of green infrastructure, the Authority will investigate the value of and objectives for identifying green infrastructure within the Park, particularly in terms of how this might bring together the existing work of the Authority and how it will enable linkages beyond the Park boundary.
- 6.11 The creation of and enhancements to green infrastructure in the Park will be largely beyond the role of the planning system as levels of new development will be limited and it may be that the Authority’s Management Plan is better placed to identify, and set the framework for, green infrastructure within the Park.

Development Policy 1 - Environmental Protection

To conserve and enhance the special qualities of the North York Moors National Park, development will only be permitted where:

1. It will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on surface and ground water, soil, air quality and agricultural land.
2. It will not generate unacceptable levels of noise, vibration, activity or light pollution.

3. There will be no adverse effects arising from sources of pollution which would impact on the health, safety and amenity of the public and users of the development.
4. Land stability can be achieved without causing unacceptable environmental or landscape impact.
5. There is or will be sufficient infrastructure capacity to accommodate the demand generated by the development.

Applicants should refer to:

- Planning Policy Statement 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
 - Planning Policy Statement 23 - Planning and Pollution Control
 - Planning Policy Guidance 14 - Development on Unstable Land
 - Planning Policy Guidance 24 – Planning and Noise
- 6.12 The special qualities of the Park are susceptible to damage by pollutants, such as lighting and noise, and its ecosystems can be vulnerable to air and water pollution. Whilst the North York Moors is regarded as being generally unpolluted the National Park Management Plan aims to ensure that the Park is protected from such impacts. Bodies such as the Environment Agency, the Environmental Health Department of the relevant District Council and Yorkshire Water / Northumbria Water will advise the Authority on whether any development is likely to be acceptable in terms of pollution.
- 6.13 The best and most versatile agricultural land is defined as that of grades 1, 2 and 3A and whilst much of the land in the Park does not fall within these categories there are pockets around Whitby and the western and southern fringes which are of a high quality.
- 6.14.1 The Park has areas of cliffs and steep slopes, particularly around its periphery, which may be affected by landslip, historical mine workings, coastal erosion or the compression of soft upland peat. In some coastal locations erosion is taking place very rapidly. Ground stability can be a material consideration in determining a planning application. Detailed information is not available on where unstable land exists in the Park but in some cases the Authority may request the applicant to demonstrate that the land is stable or that any instability can be overcome. In coastal locations and on inland cliffs applicants will be required to demonstrate that the rate of erosion will not exceed the design life of the building (assumed to be 75 years for substantial development, but could be less in the case of less substantial development).

*For further information please refer to the complete **Core Strategy and Development Policies** document in the planning section on the website.*