

Bingley Parish
Neighbourhood Plan

Natural Environment

This page deliberately left blank

DRAFT

Bingley Parish – Natural Environment

Green Belt

The built-up area of Bingley is surrounded by Green Belt.

The Green Belt serves five purposes; to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land¹.

In preparing the Local Plan, Bradford Council has assessed the district's housing needs over the period to 2030. It has been concluded that to meet this identified housing need in full, the use of Green Belt land will be required in addition to reusing previously developed land within the existing urban areas.

It is for local planning authorities to define and maintain the Green Belt in their local areas. Although it is intended that the Green Belt land has a degree of permanence, it is possible for a local planning authority to conduct a review of Green Belt land and consider redefining boundaries which add or take away Green Belt land in order to meet local planning requirements. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF states "*Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans*". Adding, "*Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period*". The NPPF (para 145) provides the following elaboration on "*exceptional circumstances*", for example, "*buildings for agriculture and forestry*".

Bradford Council is undertaking a review of the district's Green Belt as part of the Local Plan process. The aim of the review will be to assess the areas of the Green Belt against the purposes set out in national policy to determine how it is contributing to those purposes.

The consultation shows that the community strongly believes that the Green Belt continues to have a pivotal role and function in the Parish. Its importance to the community cannot be over stated. They wish to see it protected and maintained.

POLICY NE1: GREEN BELT

The Plan supports the continued designation of the open land surrounding the built-up parts of Bingley as Green Belt. Within the Green Belt, there will be a strong presumption against development that would conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt or adversely affect its open character in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

Locally important habitats and species

Bingley incorporates several statutorily designated environmental assets. There are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The South Pennine Moors located in the north of the Parish. In addition to its status as an SSSI Special, it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The moors are important because of the presence of upland dry heath, blanket bog and old sessile oak woods habitats and they support a rich invertebrate fauna, especially moths and important bird assemblages.

The Leeds-Liverpool Canal SSSI runs east to west through the Parish. The reason for its designation includes the presence of rich aquatic flora, some of which are nationally scarce or have a restricted distribution in the county. Aquatic fauna includes pike, roach and gudgeon and both common frog and common toad. The canal is the best example of slow flowing fresh-water in the county.

Bingley South Bog SSSI is located between the canal and the River Aire. The habitat of neutral grasslands and transitional fen supports large quantities of a number of sedges, some of which are regionally uncommon.

UK BAP priority species and habitats are those that have been identified nationally as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).

The town supports many BAP priority species and habitats. Priority species present include otter, Noctule bat, Pipistrelle bat, kingfisher, lap wing, brown hare, crayfish, marsh fleawort, green hairstreak, and common blue butterflies. Priority Habitat includes Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture, Lowland Meadows, Upland Heathland, Lowland Fens, Blanket Bog and Deciduous Woodland. Cottingley Wood and Bell Bank Wood are Ancient Replanted Woodland and Old Wood an Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland.

Bradford Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan includes action plans to protect and enhance the status of upland oak woodland, river corridors, in-bye grassland and hedgerows.

Bingley also includes several Local Wildlife Sites (LSW). These are areas which are locally important for the conservation of wildlife. They are identified and selected for the significant habitats and species that they contain. They can be found across the town.

Figures 1 & 2 shows the boundaries of the internationally designated sites (SPA/SAC), nationally designated sites (SSSI) and locally designated sites (LWS) in Bingley.

The River Aire Corridor is a local priority habitat, which has improved in quality in the past few decades and is home to small sticklebacks, minnows, roach and brown trout. Otters and water voles live in the banks. The Leeds-Liverpool Canal support a large number and dragonflies (need to confirm). Recreational pressures, pollution and introduced species are issues that particularly affect wildlife in these habitats.

St Ives Estate is a country park of 500 acres that falls partly within the parish of Bingley, but is predominantly within the parish of Harden. It is an asset that is highly valued by the residents

of Bingley parish, both in terms of its recreational amenities such as walking, cycling, bird watching, fishing and its expansive children's play area, and in terms of the views and vistas it provides. These views and vistas are further described in Appendix X and consist of both panoramic views from the Estate (down into the valley where the main town is situated and across to the moors above) and the views of the Estate that can be seen from the town, providing a rural outlook to the parish. The Estate provides important habitat for wildlife, including extensive woodlands, Coppice Bog and Pond. Wildlife present in the estate include birds (including locally rare species), water birds, several species of owl, five of the seventeen species of British bat, crayfish and butterflies.

Hedgerows are a valuable habitat for butterflies, mammals (including bats) and nesting birds such as tree sparrow and song thrush, all of which are present in Bingley. Bats, in particular, rely upon hedgerows for navigation during flight. Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows are particularly valuable for wildlife.

The biodiversity of Bingley shall be protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity

POLICY NE2: PROTECTING AND ENHANCING LOCALLY IMPORTANT HABITATS

- 1. Development proposals should promote preservation and restoration of important wildlife sites including local and national priority habitats and local wildlife sites and the protection and recovery of priority species populations where applicable.*
- 2. Restoration or conversion of structures such as mills and bridges should take into account the presence of bats, which take advantage of breeding and roosting sites close to the water.*
- 3. Development proposals associated with the water courses including the River Aire and Leeds-Liverpool Canal are, where feasible, required to retain a suitable and appropriate buffer strip to reduce soil erosion and water pollution and promote its recreational and biodiversity value.*
- 4. Incorporation of design features into development, which will increase biodiversity and encourage wildlife to live within and easily pass through the development, including porous boundaries, bat and bird boxes and native plant species, will be supported.*
- 5. Development proposals should be designed to retain, wherever possible, significant trees, trees of good arboricultural and amenity value and hedgerows.*

Landscape Character

The National Planning Policy Framework outlines that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment, through amongst other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils.

Landscapes vary because of , for example, their underlying geology, soils, topography, land cover, hydrology, historic and cultural development and climatic considerations. Landscape Character is defined as “A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”²

The Bradford Council Core Strategy sets out the strategic local planning policies that seek to protect and enhance the character of local landscapes and the setting of settlements within the district. Policy EN4 (Landscape) is particularly relevant. Proposals are required to demonstrate their positive contribution to the conservation, management and enhancement of the diversity of landscapes in the District with reference to the Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Landscape Character Assessment SPD (2008) divided the District into ten landscape character areas and a further ten landscape types. The greater part of Bingley falls within the Airedale character area and ‘wooded incline’ and ‘floodplain pastures’ landscape types. The northern part of the Parish falls within Rombalds Ridge character area and ‘gritstone moorland’ and ‘mixed upland pasture.’

At a national level, the country’s landscape has been classified into distinct ‘national character areas.’ Bingley encompasses the Southern Pennines character area in the northeast and the Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe character area in the south-west. The Southern Pennines character area is typified by Millstone Grits and substantial areas of upland heath and blanket bog, whilst the Yorkshire Pennine Fringe is a transition zone, characterised by gritstone industrial settlements in the valleys surrounded by pastoral agriculture in the foothills.

These assessments identify the broad characteristics that define the character areas and provide guidance/ opportunities to protect and enhance them.

The Plan builds on these broad landscape characterisations but seeks to add further local detail in order to ensure that those characteristics that make the Parish distinctive and unique are protected. The elements relevant to local landscape character are set out below.

The local landscape is of high quality and of varied character, ranging from the rugged moorland of the South Pennine uplands to rolling farmland and river valley to wooded hillsides, in which the town of Bingley sits.

The landscape of the area is rich in historic evidence, from prehistoric features on the moorlands, to early agriculture within the farmsteads and villages on the moorland fringes, later large-scale industrialisation with canals, mills and railways contained within the valleys. These historic features remain, to reveal the many periods of human activity in the area.

² Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England.

Local Landscape features

There are a number of significant local landscape features which together form an important part of the local landscape character of Bingley. These are especially important ones are described out below:

- **The Leeds and Liverpool Canal (1774)**

In addition to its aesthetic and recreational value, the canal is evidence of an important phase in Bingley's history, when the town prospered from the Industrial Revolution. The canal travels through the centre of the Bingley & then climbs dramatically up the side of the valley in the famous Bingley Five Rise Locks and, not quite so famous Bingley Three Rise Locks. The entire length of the canal through the District is designated as a conservation area on account of its discernible historical interest.

- **The River Aire**

The town of Bingley is set on the banks of the River Aire at the junction of two wooded valleys where the river could be crossed, making it an ideal location for habitation.

- **Mills and factories**

The mills and factories of this area are protected by the Leeds – Liverpool Canal Conservation Area designation. The Damart Mill still trades in textiles. The tannery, Bingley Mill and Andertons have all been sympathetically converted into flats. The tall mill chimneys are focal points within the valley and provide evidence of the area's association with the iron, steel and woollen industries and should be retained and interpreted where possible.

- **Woodlands**

The rising moorland, often covered by dense woodland reinforces the town's rural connections and contributes to the sense of place and feeling of seclusion. The woodlands include significant areas of Ancient Woodland and contribute to the overall wooded character in the south of the Parish.

- **Moorlands**

Like the wooded valley sides, the moorlands in the north of the Parish are important in conveying a sense of tranquillity providing open spaces with expansive views and an experience of wild moorlands.

- **Stanbury Hill**

Located on the edge of Bingley Moor, overlooking Bingley and the Aire Valley, Stanbury Hill is a distinct feature of the local landscape.

- **Stone walls**

Field boundaries are predominantly stone walls constructed from local materials. The walled tracks lead from the valley bottoms to the fell tops, giving access to the open moorland for summer grazing are especially important. These patterns of stone walls on the moorland fringe, on upland pastures and along tracks are an important feature of the area and should be retained and, where possible, restored.

- **Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age landscape**

22 separate archaeological sites or features have been identified on Stanbury Hill, including 18 examples of prehistoric rock art believed to date from either the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, Early Bronze Age 'burial cairns, several lines of possible prehistoric walling and find-spots for Late Neolithic flint tools – all dating from 2,500-2,000 BC.

Distinctive Views

Bingley's prominent and predominately rural setting opens up views to offers attractive, long, middle and short distance views across the surrounding countryside. Looking northwards, expansive views are offered across hills and moorlands. To the west there are impressive views to the St Ives Estate and the Harden valley.

The beauty and tranquillity of these views are valued by visitors and residents alike. These provide a strong link and relationship with its predominately rural landscape setting. They are important to its sense of identity and demonstrate the diverse uses of the countryside, villages and hamlets as well as distinct landmarks. They make a significant contribution to its identity, character and distinctiveness.

Through the development of the Plan, several views and vistas have been identified as having the greatest importance. Important views have been identified and described in the [Distinctive Views and Vistas](#) document in the [Evidence Library](#).

Policy NE3 seeks to ensure that future development protects and where possible, enhance the distinctive local character of the area. The policy should be read and will be implemented in conjunction with the District Council's Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and those parts of Policy H2 that deal with the landscape aspects associated with the major Green Hill housing development.

POLICY NE3: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Development proposals should contribute to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the character of the local landscape. They should as appropriate:

- a) take every opportunity, through design and materials, to reinforce local character and a strong sense of place;*
- b) retain and conserve important local historic landscape features such as stonewalling, woodlands, mature trees, established hedgerows and existing field boundaries, especially in areas of enclosed pasture. Any additional planting should be of suitable native species;*
- c) demonstrate landscaping proposals that are suitable for the setting including the use of native tree and hedgerow species,*
- d) careful siting, design and screening of any development on upper slopes; including infrastructure and lighting;*
- e) retain and protect the evidence of past uses of historic and archaeological features, in particular the significant prehistoric rock art on Rombalds Moor and elsewhere and the early packhorse trails, medieval boundary stones and historic narrow lanes;*
- f) demonstrate they are sited, designed, and are of a scale so as not to substantially harm the significant views when seen from locations that are freely accessible to members of the general public, listed in Chapter 6.2 of the Plan, Views and Vistas; or*
- g) protect and enhance important views by limiting the height or visibility of large vertical structures. In assessing impacts on such views particular regard should be had to: i. Views of, and from (to be discussed with the Steering Group).*

Local Green Spaces

National planning policy provides the opportunity through neighbourhood plans, for communities to identify important local green space for protection. Once designated as such, local green spaces are offered very strong protection through the planning system - similar to Green Belt status.

The designation should only be used where it meets the criterion set out in the NPPF. This includes that the land is not extensive, is local in character and reasonably close to the community; and, where it is demonstrably special, for example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.

Open spaces in Bingley have been assessed against the NPPF to see which meet the definition of Local Green Space. Those sites that qualified under the criteria are outlined with justification in the accompanying [Local Green Spaces](#) in the [Evidence Library](#).

This is an approach which is supported by local planning policies. A good example, is the Bradford Council Core Strategy 2017, which highlights the issue of current and future recreational pressure on the South Pennine Moors SPA and SAC associated with residential

development. It seeks to mitigate these effects through the provision of new recreational greenspaces and improvements to existing open spaces and the identification of Local Green Spaces in neighbourhood plans.

POLICY NE4: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The spaces listed in [Local Green Spaces](#) (in the [Evidence Library](#)) are designated as Local Green Spaces on which development will only be supported in very special circumstances unless it is consistent with the function of the Local Green Space.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

National Planning Guidance (para 028) highlights the importance of Green and Blue Infrastructure³ to the delivery of high-quality sustainable development. Further, that an authority-wide assessment of current green infrastructure that identifies gaps in the network and opportunities for improvement might be used to inform the role of green infrastructure in neighbourhood plans.

The built-up areas of Bingley are generally surrounded by Green Belt. This has not only helped retain the character of the area but also contain many key Green Infrastructure Assets including rivers and Local Wildlife Sites.

Green Infrastructure (GI) is 'a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities'⁴. Blue landscape elements are linked to water. They can be pools, ponds and pond systems, wadis, artificial buffer basins or water courses. Together they form the green-blue infrastructure.

Opportunities exist to maintain and enhance Green Infrastructure in the Bingley Area and where possible link fragmented habitats to the district and regional network for the benefit of the environment, the health and well-being of people and to further enrich the local landscape character.

GI networks, corridors and linkages are widely seen as a key mechanism for reversing the effects of fragmentation on biodiversity. They also deliver a range of other social and environmental benefits, including enhancement of local landscape character, and greater opportunities for public access and recreational use.

Natural England⁴ identified several GI corridors that run through Bingley. The River Aire corridor is regionally important, following the course of the river in a broadly east-west direction. The corridor creates greenspaces through the heart of urban areas such as Bingley. Open space in the Parish which is incorporated in this corridor includes St Ives Estate, Prince of Wales Park, Myrtle Park and Hirst Wood. The corridor includes a number of important

³ The Plan use the official definition of Green and Blue Infrastructure, which is, "*the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities*".

⁴ Yorkshire and the Humber GI Corridors Report 2010, Natural England

ecological sites including Bingley South Bog SSSI, Leeds-Liverpool Canal SEGI/SSSI, Bradford Wildlife Areas (third tier sites) at Prince of Wales Park. The corridor includes nationally and locally important BAP habitats including Blanket Bog, Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Fens, Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture and Ancient Woodland.

In addition to the environmental value, the River Aire Corridor is part of a national network of greenways, providing opportunities for walking and cycling. Airedale Greenway (National Route 696) follows the Leeds and Liverpool Canal connecting Keighley, Bingley, Saltaire and Shipley and connects to The Aire Valley Towpath between Leeds and Bingley.

The River Aire Corridor has been highlighted by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust as an important wildlife corridor and identifies it as Aire Valley Living Landscape. In Living Landscape areas, the aim is to restore, recreate and reconnect wildlife-rich areas. The Plan supports these aims.

Harden Beck is a District scale corridor running from the Aire at Bingley to Cullingworth to the south-west, effectively linking the Great North Trail corridor to Airedale. Wildlife and leisure are important in this corridor. Open space includes St Ives Country Park. Important ecological sites include Bradford Wildlife Areas (third tier sites) at St Ives. Deciduous Woodland (BAP habitat) and Ancient Woodland are both present in this corridor.

The Bradford Core Strategy seeks to maintain, enhance and extend Green Infrastructure networks through planning policy (Strategic Core Policy 6 Green Infrastructure). It identifies the River Corridors of the Aire and Wharfe and South Pennine Moors as strategic GI assets and states that further work to define GI will be carried out through the preparation of the other Local Plan documents.

In accordance with National Planning Guidance (Para 028) and having regard to good practice methodology endorsed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust⁵, the Plan has sought to identify the ecological network at the Parish using the services of the West Yorkshire Ecology Service who have mapped the Parish to show the two main GI corridors of the River Aire and Harden Beck plus others. Their maps are shown as:

[Bingley NP Nature Conservation Sites and Notable Species 31/01/2019 Map 2 South](#), and
[Bingley NP Nature Conservation Sites and Notable Species 31/01/2019 Map 1 North](#).

These maps are in the [Evidence Library](#).

Policy NE5 seeks to protect, promote and manage the extent and quality of, and access, to the Bingley's network of GI. In addition to contributing to the broader strategic sub-regional network, the policy aims to enhance habitats, encourage sustainable transport and healthy living, sustainable flood management and ultimately provide an attractive place to live.

In particular, the Plan supports and seeks to contribute to maintaining and enhancing the two GI corridors identified within Bingley and where possible, connect or identify stepping stones

⁵ A Living Landscape Yorkshire and the Humber. The Ecological Network Approach to Rebuilding Biodiversity for the 21st Century, 2009.

to other GI in the Parish. It supports the provision of multi-functional green spaces, providing for flood alleviation, recreational and aesthetic value as well as a net gain in wildlife habitats.

POLICY NE5: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Development proposals should ensure that existing Green infrastructure is protected and, where appropriate, enhanced to provide a high quality and accessible network of well-connected multi-functional spaces for the benefit of wildlife, residents and visitors.

Where appropriate, they should incorporate the following:

- a) Improved access to the existing network of green infrastructure, including watercourses. River Aire Corridor and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal;*
- b) Links to encourage walking and cycling to Bingley Town Centre, key local community facilities and major employment areas; and*
- c) Within the urban area, new tree planting and other planting, of suitable native species along roads and streets.*

Development proposals within or adjacent to the River Aire and Harden Beck Green Infrastructure corridors; (shown in the Bingley NP Nature Conservation Sites and Notable Species 31/01/2019 Maps in the [Evidence Library](#)) should especially seek to support and enhance their operation as multifunctional corridors for the movement of wildlife and people and the provision of biodiversity.