

Policy Area	Natural Environment
Policy	Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity
Issue	There is concern locally that new development damages wildlife species and habitats, particularly Cornish hedges. Also, new developments rarely if ever achieve a net-gain in biodiversity even where this is possible, instead they only seek to minimise losses.
Objective	<p>To ensure that new developments are located on sites where they will have the least impact on biodiversity. Areas of high biodiversity value, even those without a statutory designation should be avoided. Within development sites areas of semi-natural habitat should be retained and linked to other areas of habitat off-site. Where biodiversity features such as Cornish hedges are to be lost the impacts should be mitigated and compensated for in line with the Biodiversity SPD (not yet published).</p> <p>To ensure that new developments are designed to achieve a net gain in wildlife by creating, restoring, enhancing and linking areas of semi-natural habitat. Adequate information prepared by suitable experienced ecologists should be supplied with planning applications to show that a net-gain in biodiversity is possible and is the intended outcome.</p>
Evidence	<p>The Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Landcover report (ref. ERCCIS and Cornwall Wildlife Trust, 2010, Cornwall's Land Cover 1995-2005: Summary report) documented a loss of Local Boundaries (including Cornish hedge) of 152km over the 10 year period. Whilst the majority of this was due to agricultural improvement, losses of hedges with mature trees took place in connection with the development of industrial estates at Bodmin and Falmouth together with the creation of housing estates at Launceston and St Austell. Semi-natural grassland suffered a 50hectare loss due to built development over the same period. Results for Landcover change between 2005 and 2015 are not available as yet.</p> <p>Very few developments are planned with a net-gain of biodiversity as a key principle. Smaller developments in particular are planned on a 'minimising loss' principle (Cornwall Wildlife Trust- personal communication).</p> <p>In the main St Agnes Parish NDP consultation we asked if participants supported the following statement: 'It is important to protect and enhance existing wildlife and wildlife habitats including; trees, woodland, wetland, heathland and Cornish hedges' 79.81% of people said 'strongly agree' and '19.08% said 'agree'. When we asked if people agreed with the following statement: 'It is important to create new wildlife habitats as part of new developments including; Cornish hedges, new woodland and flower-rich grassland'. 65.50% of respondents said 'Strongly agree' and 29.81% said 'agree'.</p>
Policy direction	<p>Steer development away from areas of semi-natural habitat, particularly County Wildlife Sites which do not have statutory protection.</p> <p>To make sure that existing habitat is enhanced through development and insist that developers strive to achieve a net gain in biodiversity and plan for this from the earliest stage. The enhancement can be on-site if practical or can be achieved nearby, for example in an area of Public Open Space.</p>
Policy wording	<p>Locally relevant detail from the Draft Biodiversity SPD :</p> <p>Pg 6- British Standard for Biodiversity- For developments of over 10 dwellings an Ecological Constraints and Opportunities Plan is required as is a balance sheet or table setting out quantitatively the habitats to be lost and gained.</p> <p>Pg26 Bats-1 integrated box per dwelling Pg 27 Hedgehogs- providing habitat linkage and 13cm x 13cm holes in new fencing for them to pass Birds- one integrated box per dwelling minimum for swifts/swallows or house martins. Barn owls- boxes on sites 1km from main roads Invertebrates- Bee bricks one per 2 residential unit</p> <p>Pg 28- Lighting and dark corridors</p> <p>Pg 60-Cornish Hedges 2m buffer, Woodland 10m buffer. Retain hedges in the public realm in preference to them being garden boundaries. When hedges are to be lost plant 2x as much- (check reference for this).</p>
Links to other policies	NPPF section 118, Local Plan policy 22, Local Plan Policy 23- 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e and 4 and Local Plan Policy 25 St Agnes NDP Links- Design Guide, Landscape Protection, Open Space policy.
Similar policies in other NDPs	Not fully researched for a while.
Comments	We need sight of the Habitats Regulations Assessment Supplementary Planning Document currently being produced by Cornwall Council. This contains important information on how impacts on European Protected Sites are being addressed.