

Neighbourhood Planning A Guide for Hedgehog Conservation

In 2011 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced via the Localism Act. It enables communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for their area as part of a suite of new community rights.

A Neighbourhood Plan is designed to enable local people and communities to influence how development will occur locally. It has the potential to give communities a greater say over the type, location, size, pace and design of development within their designated Neighbourhood Area.

Neighbourhood Plans provide a mechanism for local people to:

- influence where new homes, shops, offices and open space are to be located.
- have a say on what new buildings and the spaces around them should look like.
- identify existing/new wildlife areas, hedgerows and wildlife corridors linking them.

When complete, they form part of the statutory development plan for your area, and can carry considerable weight. Although they cannot suggest less development than set out in the Local Plan, they can suggest alternatives or higher design standards.

Neighbourhood Plans should be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out how the Government are planning and applying policies for England.

Over the last decade, an average of 159,500 new dwellings have been built each year in the UK. If the garden of each house built was connected to its neighbour's there would be enormous net gain of greenspace available for hedgehogs.



The relevance for hedgehogs

It is thought that one of the main drivers for hedgehog decline is the disjointed nature of the built environment.

Walls, fences, roads and buildings all serve to interrupt the flow of green space. This lack of continuity prevents hedgehogs and other ground-dwelling animals from accessing these green areas, reducing available habitat to nest, forage and find mates in.

Neighbourhood planning could play an important role in ensuring that these vital connections are kept open, allowing local people to clearly state in the plan that both the presence and continuity of green space is a priority for local people and local wildlife.

Our suggested statement to include

“Hedgehogs have much declined in recent years and are now a priority concern for nature conservation as defined in the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Hedgehogs have been reported within the Neighbourhood Area. Development plans will be supported when features to help the species are incorporated into new developments. Boundaries and barriers should be made permeable, for example through the use of fence panels with 13x13cm hedgehog holes at the base. Connectivity and shelter for ground-dwelling wildlife should be encouraged in the Neighbourhood Area, through features such as native species hedgerows and grassy margins. The local community values the presence of hedgehogs and other wildlife within the neighbourhood and is keen to ensure that they are protected and encouraged.”

If your Neighbourhood Area falls within a Solihull or Rugby Hedgehog Improvement Area (HIA), you may also wish to include that. These areas have been created to help conserve our iconic prickly species. Find out more about our HIAs at www.helpforhedgehogs.co.uk.

By requesting hedgehog records from the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre, you can add information about where hedgehogs have been reported: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/biologicalrecords.



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Find out more

Information about the Neighbourhood Planning process: www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2

A forum for Neighbourhood Planning from Planning Aid England: www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk

An online map of Neighbourhood Planning activity: <http://www.neighbourhoodplanner.org.uk/>

A copy of the NPPF: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

The latest updates to the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Action Plans: <http://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/LBAP>

Habitat data at Habitat Biodiversity Audit: www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/habitat-biodiversity-audit

Information about hedgerows: www.ptes.org/get-informed/publications/guidance-leaflets/. Apply as a community for free hedgerow trees from the Woodland Trust: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/community-tree-pack/