The following is a glossary of terms that you might encounter in planning applications or in conservation policy and resources. You may also find it helpful to use these terms to search for more information on the internet. Some of these definitions are taken directly from the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Affordable Housing** – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

**Aged or Veteran Tree** – A tree which, because of its great age, size or condition is of exceptional value for wildlife, in the landscape, or culturally.

**Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS)** – An independent environmental and rural consultancy that it often contracted by public bodies.

**Air Quality Management Areas** – Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.

**Ancient Woodland** – An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. Listed as a Habitat of Principle Importance in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. There are two types of ancient woodland: Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). Both receive the same level of protection under the planning system.

**Appropriate Assessment (AA)** – An assessment carried out by the local planning authority to determine what impact a plan or project will have on a Natura (European) site. AA’s are required under the Habitats Regulations.

**Archaeological Interest** – An asset that holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** – Area of high scenic quality that has statutory protection in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

**Article 4 Direction** – A direction which withdraws automatic planning permission granted by the General Permitted Development Order.

**Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE)** – The professional body that represents professional ecologists working in local government providing them with advice and promoting good principles and practice of nature conservation.

**Audit Commission** – Set up to protect the public purse. They audit a range of local public bodies in England to help them learn from one another and manage the financial challenges they face.
Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land – Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) – The outcome of a decision making procedure which emphasises the protection and conservation of the environment across land, air and water. It should be the option that most benefits or least damages the environment. Often considered when undertaking a Strategic Environment Assessment.


Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services – Sets out the government’s strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea and follows on from policies contained in the Natural Environment White Paper.

Biosphere Reserve – Nominated by national governments and designated under UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Programme. They seek to contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems and species, foster economic and human development and provide support for research, monitoring, education and information exchange.

Birds and Habitats Directives – European Directives to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.

Breach of Condition Notice (BCN) – Can be served where a condition imposed on a planning permission has not been complied with. It is a criminal offence not to comply with the requirements set out in a BCN.

Brownfield – Land that is or was previously occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings and associated fixed surface infrastructure. Often the land has become vacant, derelict or contaminated. Now known as ‘Previously Developed Land’.

Building Control – Process of ensuring Government-set Building Regulations are met.

Building Control Body (BCB) – Check that Building Regulations are being complied with. There are two types BCB, a Local Authority Building Control and a private sector Approved Inspector Building Control. Customers are free to choose which type of BCB they use on their project.

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) – National charity devoted to protecting and enhancing rural England.

Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development (CLEUD) – Legally confirms that an unauthorised development has now become lawful through the passage of time, and can be continued without the need for planning permission.

Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) – Clarifies whether a proposed use or development requires planning permission.

Change of Use – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as ‘Use Classes’. Planning permission is generally required for projects that result in a change to a different use class.

Climate Change Adaptation – Adjustments to natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic factors or their effects, moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate Change Mitigation – Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Coastal Change Management Area – An area identified in Local Plans as likely to be affected by coastal change (physical change to the shoreline through erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation or coastal accretion).

Community Forest – An area identified through the England Community Forest Programme to revitalise countryside and green space in and around major conurbations.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

Community Right to Build Order – An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.

Competent Person (to prepare site investigation information) – A person with a recognised relevant qualification, sufficient experience in dealing with the type(s) of pollution or land instability, and membership of a relevant professional organisation.

Conservation (for heritage policy) – The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Countryside Design Summary – Document sometimes produced by local planning authorities which describes the existing character of the countryside and highlights the implications of this for new development.
Decentralised Energy – Local renewable energy and local low-carbon energy usually but not always on a relatively small scale.

Department for Communities and Local Government – Government department responsible for building regulations, housing, planning and urban regeneration. Work to move decision making power from central government to local councils.

Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – Government department responsible for policy and regulations on the environment, food and rural affairs.

Design and Access Statement (DAS) – A short report accompanying a planning application that explains the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the project.

Designated Heritage Asset – A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Development Control – Process through which local government regulates land use and new buildings.

Development Control Committee – Group of elected officials (Councillors) that decide on applications for planning permission and other development control issues in accordance with the Local Plan.

Development Control Officer – Works for the local planning authority processing planning applications and making recommendations to the Development Control Committee.

Development Plan – Legal document that sets out what can be built and where. It can include adopted Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and the London Plan.

Ecological Network – This improves the way wild places link up and allows species to move and disperse. It enhances the resilience of the landscape and increases the chance of plants and animals adapting to changing conditions.

Eco-Management and Audit System (EMAS) – A management tool for companies and other organisations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performance.

England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) – A scheme to support farmers and foresters to deliver environmentally beneficial land management practices, which are not always supported by the market.

Ecosystem Services – The benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as, food, water, flood and disease control and recreation.

English Heritage – An executive Nondepartmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Officially known as the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, they are the government’s statutory adviser on the historic environment.

Environment Agency (EA) – An Executive Nondepartmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Principle aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – A formal process to assess the possible positive and/or negative impact of certain types of proposed projects on the environment. The European Union has established a mix of mandatory and discretionary procedures to assess environmental impacts known as the EIA Directive.

Environmental Statement (ES) – The written report resulting from an EIA that is submitted in conjunction with a planning application. It should include an evaluation of consultations, data collection and environmental surveys and identify the possible effects of a proposed project on the environment as well as propose mitigation measures to minimise impact and to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Environmental Stewardship – A mechanism by which landowners can be incentivised to deliver effective environmental management of their land. Currently England operates Entry Level Stewardship, Organic Entry Level Stewardship, Uplands Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship all administered by Natural England.

European Site – Includes candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

Examination in Public (EiP) – A means of reviewing the development plan proposals of LPA’s. An independent inspector assesses whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is sound i.e. positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) – A national organisation that aimed to provide landowners with practical advice on methods to support wildlife, landscape, archaeology, access and other conservation issues as part of a viable farm business. A new FWAG Association was launched in December 2012.

Flood Risk Assessment – A document submitted with a planning application that outlines the risk of flooding caused by or to a development and proposes mitigation plans.

Forestry Commission (FC) – A non-ministerial government department responsible for protecting and expanding Britain’s forests and woodlands, and increasing their value to society and the environment.

Full Application (FUL) – A detailed planning application for development.
General Permitted Development Order – Sets out classes of development for which a grant of planning permission is automatically given, provided that no restrictive condition is attached or that the development is exempt from the permitted development rights.

Geodiversity – The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.

Geographical Information System (GIS) – A system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyse, manage, and present all types of geographical data.

Heritage Asset – A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Heritage Coast – Areas of undeveloped coastline which are managed to conserve their natural beauty, facilitate their enjoyment, understanding and appreciation by the public, and to maintain and improve the environmental health of inshore waters affecting the wider area within the boundary.

Highways Agency – An Executive Agency of the Department for Transport responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Historic Environment – All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Historic Environment Record – Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.

Historic Towns Forum (HTF) – Formally the English Historic Towns Forum. Set up to establish and encourage contact between local authorities having responsibility for the management of historic towns and cities. They aim to support professionals working in the historic built environment and offer a strong platform from which to lobby policy makers on behalf of historic towns and cities.

Housing Strategy – A part of the Local Plan that plans for housing in the district.

Inclusive Design – Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

Instrumentation Operated in the National Interest – Includes meteorological and climate monitoring installations, satellite and radio communication, defence and national security sites and magnetic calibration facilities operated by or on behalf of the Government, delegated authorities or for defence purposes.

International, National and Locally Designated Sites of Importance for Biodiversity – All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC) – The public body that advises the UK Government on UK-wide and international nature conservation.

Journal of Planning and Environment Law – Published monthly, providing a guide to recent and forthcoming developments in planning law, environmental law, compulsory purchase and related areas.

Lawful Development Certificate – A document that states that a building project is legal under permitted development and therefore does not require planning permission.

Listed Building – A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national historical or architectural interest. Listed buildings may not be demolished, extended or altered without special permission from the local planning authority.

Listed Building Consent – Permission required to demolish, alter or extend a listed building.

Local Development Framework – Old name for a Local Plan.

Local Development Order – An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.

Local Green Space – A new designation introduced in the NPPF that allows local communities to protect areas of green space through a local plan or neighbourhood plan.

Local Government Association (LGA) – The national voice of Local Government. It works with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

Local Government Ombudsman – Investigates complaints about councils in a fair and independent way.

Local Nature Partnership (LNP) – A body designated by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, created for the purpose of protecting and improving the natural environment in an area and the benefits derived from it.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – A site designated by local government due to its important for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. They are for both people and wildlife.

Local Plan – The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

Local Planning Authority – The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a given area.

Local Site – A site designated by local government as having substantive nature conservation or geological value. They do not have a statutory status but are protected through the planning system. Can also be known as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) and Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS).

Local Transport Plan – A forward looking plan created by strategic transport authorities that advice the local government on highway and transport matters.

Major Hazards – Major hazard installations and pipelines, licensed explosive sites and nuclear installations, around which Health and Safety Executive (and Office for Nuclear Regulation) consultation distances to mitigate the consequences to public safety of major accidents may apply.

Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) – A new designation under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. MCZs form part or a wider group of marine designations commonly known as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Minerals of Local and National Importance – Minerals which are necessary to meet society’s needs.

Mineral Safeguarding Area – An area designated by Minerals Planning Authorities which covers known deposits of minerals which are desired to be kept safeguarded from unnecessary sterilisation by non-mineral development.

National Biodiversity Network (NBN) – A UK-wide public/voluntary sector partnership committed to making biodiversity information available to everyone. Including via the NBN Gateway, an online tool to help share information about wildlife in the UK.

National Park – An extensive tract of countryside designated to both conserve and enhance its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage as well as the opportunities it affords for open air recreation. The only National Park in Sussex is the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

National Nature Reserve (NNR) – A statutory designation that covers a selection of the very best parts of England’s SSSI’s. They are declared by Natural England and the majority of NNR’s also have European nature conservation designations.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Published in March 2012, this document sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied by Local Planning Authorities.

National Trails – Long distance routes for walking, cycling and horse riding.

National Park Authority (NE) – An Executive Nondepartmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Principle aims are to protect and improve England’s natural environment and encourage people to enjoy and get involved in their surroundings.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) – Legislation that aims to encourage greater consideration of biodiversity within everyday decisions made by all public bodies.


Nature Improvement Areas – Inter-connected networks of wildlife habitats intended to re-establish thriving wildlife populations and help species respond to the challenges of climate change.
Open Space – All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Operations Requiring Consent (ORC) – A list of activities that legally require approval from Natural England before they can be carried out on a SSSI. ORC’s will be included in each SSSI notification package.

Original Building – A building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally.

Outline Application (OUT) – A general planning application to establish whether a development is acceptable in principle, subject to further approval of detailed matters.

Parish Council – A local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. It is the lowest/bottom tear of government and therefore the closest to the community.

Permitted Development – Derived from a general planning permission granted by Parliament rather than the local authority which allows people to undertake minor development without the need to submit a planning application.

Planning Application – A document submitted to the local planning authority requesting permission for a development of some kind.

Planning Condition – A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) – A type of enforcement notice which Council’s use to control development that they consider has been carried out unlawfully i.e. without planning permission or a lawful development certificate.

Planning Inspectorate (PINS) – An executive agency of the Department for Communities and Local Government that deals with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examinations of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework.

Planning Obligation – A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Planning Officers Society – Set up to provide a single voice for local authority planning practitioners with the aim of ensuring that planning makes a major contribution to achieving sustainable development in a way which is fair and equitable, and achieves the social, economic and environmental aspirations of all sectors of the community.

Planning Permission – Permission required in the UK in order to be allowed to build on land or change the use of land or buildings.


Pollution – Anything that affects the quality of land, air, water or soils, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health, the natural environment or general amenity.

Previously Developed Land – Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. Exclusions apply.

Priority Habitats and Species – Species and Habitats of Principle Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Public Local Inquiry – An examination conducted by an Inspector into a local plan or planning application with the aim of setting forward the case for and against a decision. This is an opportunity for local people to make their voice heard in local decision making.

Public Right of Way (PRoW) – A pathway that is designated as legally open to everyone. This can be a road, path or track and can run through a town, the countryside or a private property.
Environment Agency, who investigate local flooding issues and identify options to mitigate and manage for them.

In a given location. Plans are informed by stakeholders such as local authorities, internal drainage boards and the Surface Water Management Plans (SWaMP). Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design.

Programmes Regulations 2004 which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes of the development plan. Strategic Environmental Assessment – A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Supplementary Planning Documents – Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Surface Water Management Plans (SWaMP) – A plan which outlines the preferred surface water management strategy in a given location. Plans are informed by stakeholders such as local authorities, internal drainage boards and the Environment Agency, who investigate local flooding issues and identify options to mitigate and manage for them.
Sustainability Appraisal – An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a local plan to allow decisions to be made that accord with the NPPF’s definition of sustainable development.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) – A technique that manages surface water and groundwater sustainably by mimicking natural drainage as closely as possible.

Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) – Our local recording centre which collects, manages and disseminates biodiversity data for East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) – Largest conservation charity dedicated to conserving the natural heritage of Sussex.

Sustainable Transport Modes – Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) – A charity made up of 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK, that are working to create an environment rich in wildlife for everyone.

Transport Assessment – A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies what measures will be required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and what measures will need to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

Transport Statement – A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising out of development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.

Travel Plan – A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives through action and is articulated in a document that is regularly reviewed.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) – A legally enforceable order made by the Local Planning Authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity.

UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA) – A forum which aims to make the law work for a better environment and to improve understanding and awareness of environmental law.


Urban Sprawl – The uncontrolled expansion of cities and their suburbs into rural areas.

Village Design Statement (VDS) – A document that describes the distinctive character of a village and helps influence decisions on design and development. It focuses on how planned development should be carried out so that it is sensitive to its setting and contributes to the conservation and enhancement of the local area.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Legislation that forms the principle mechanism of wildlife protection in Great Britain. It is divided into four parts which cover areas such as the protection of wildlife, the countryside and national parks, designation of protected areas and public rights of way.

Wildlife Corridor – Area of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

Windfall Sites – Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

World Heritage Site – An ICOMOS designation for places of international importance of the conservation of our cultural and national heritage.