

## Living Landscapes and Neighbourhood Plans

***“Now we need to turn every neighbourhood into a living landscape” Chris Baines vice-President of The Wildlife Trusts.***

A Living Landscape is a recovery plan for nature that will allow wildlife to flourish, move around and become more widely present. The aim is that the whole country, rural and urban, will become a single Living Landscape as individual schemes are linked up. The new **Localism Act** gives us all the opportunity to influence the way the landscape is managed for wildlife, within our local neighbourhood. The Act introduces a new voluntary planning process aimed at the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. Typically initiated at Parish Council level, **the Plan has real legal force when approved by a referendum following consultation with residents.** The enhancement of the natural environment is a core national planning objective. If we can ensure that measures to achieve this are included in our own neighbourhood plan it will help to create a denser network of wildlife flourishing areas and hence, to achieve the national Living Landscape.

If you want to influence your neighbourhood plan the following check list might help.

### **Three components of a Living Landscape:**

1. *Green Space:* natural or semi-natural woodlands and open spaces including farms and reserves; amenity space: parks, commons and sports grounds; private and public gardens. Are all mentioned? Is there a principle of no net loss of green space? The largest element of green space may be private gardens. Will this be safeguarded?
2. *The Built Environment – new and existing:* Is high quality wildlife habitat (on roofs, facades, terraces) specified? Are the needs of bats, specific bird species and invertebrates covered?
3. *Corridors and Stepping Stones:* roadside trees, hedges, river, road and path verges linking the other components and with adjoining neighbourhoods. Will a green space network be planned, ideally first, with new build locations then added?

**Improving the habitat:** adding insect attracting plants, shrubs and refuges, to amenity spaces and other public areas; ensuring sufficient large trees; planting up odd spaces, e.g. with caterpillar host plants, to complement private garden greenery; ensuring developers' Land Value Uplift benefits wildlife.

**Seeing ambitions realised:** involving people in monitoring and physical work, gaining co-operation of private landowners, managing the different components. Is there a plan for this?

(References:

- The Wildlife Trusts: Natural World - Winter 2012 – One day, all gardens could be like this – Chris Baines' introduction.
- The Wildlife Trusts: Web-site – Living Landscapes
- Locality: Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide
- Town Country Planning Association/The Wildlife Trusts: planning for a healthy environment – good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity )