

Detailed guide: Planning and transport authorities: get environmental advice on planning

Updated: Guidance includes spatial development strategy considerations.

This guide explains what consultations you must do with the Environment Agency and Natural England. It applies to:

- local planning authorities
- combined authorities (Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West of England and Greater London)
- transport authorities
- elected mayors

Spatial development strategies, local plans and neighbourhood plans

Before you start your plan, you must consult the relevant agency if you think it affects their environmental interests.

Use this table to find out which agencies you must consult:

Your plan	Consult Natural England	Consult the Environment Agency
requires a sustainability appraisal	Yes	Yes
requires a strategic environmental assessment	Yes	Yes
affects protected sites and areas , such as sites of special scientific interest, national parks or marine protected areas	Yes	No
affects the best and most versatile agricultural land	Yes	No
includes reclaiming land previously used for mining or waste management to agricultural use	Yes	No
affects protected species	Yes	No
affects ancient woodland and veteran trees	Yes	No
affects flooding and coastal erosion	No	Yes
affects waterbodies identified in river basin management plans by including plans to develop next to water bodies, restore water bodies to a more natural state or increase water efficiency	No	Yes
involves land that may be affected by contamination from a previous use such as disused railways	No	Yes

Your plan	Consult Natural England	Consult the Environment Agency
affects land for waste management or mineral extraction	No	Yes
includes sites that the Environment Agency regulates, such as intensive agricultural activity	No	Yes
identifies environmental opportunities that could be achieved such as ‘green infrastructure’ and biodiversity improvements	Yes	Yes

Check the impact risk zone (IRZ) around a protected site to help you assess potential effects that the development proposal may have on the site. You can:

- download the [SSSI Impact Risk Zones \(England\)](#) dataset for geographic information systems (GIS)
- use the government’s [Magic website](#)

See the [Magic map to show the location of protected areas](#) such as national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Spatial development strategies and local plans

What you need to send and how soon you’ll hear back will vary depending on your situation.

What you’re doing	What you need to send	When you’ll get a response
Deciding on the extent of the issues to be assessed in a sustainability appraisal (known as ‘scoping’)	Details on scope and level of detail of information to be included in sustainability appraisal	5 weeks
Doing a sustainability appraisal for your plan	Draft plan Environmental report Draft Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment (if required)	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually 5 weeks
Preparing your draft local plan	Information about the content of the plan Draft local plan Environmental report with evidence such as a strategic flood risk assessment	Minimum 6 weeks
Asking for comments on your early draft local plan	Draft Habitat Regulations appropriate assessment (if required)	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually 6 weeks

What you're doing	What you need to send	When you'll get a response
Asking for comments on your final draft plan (known as the 'publication stage')	local plan Environmental report with evidence such as a strategic flood risk assessment Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment (if required)	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually 6 weeks
Asking for comments on your draft spatial development strategy	Draft plan Environmental report Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment (if required) Draft spatial development strategy	12 weeks
Asking for comments on proposed modifications to your plan	Details of proposed changes	6 weeks

Neighbourhood plans

What you're doing	What you need to send	When you'll get a response
Giving an opinion on a plan's environmental effects (known as 'screening')	A map of the plan area and the purpose of the plan	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually 6 weeks
Asking for comments from the agencies about a new plan	The plan	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually 6 weeks
Strategic environmental assessment (if required)	Evidence as an environmental report	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually 5 weeks

Considering planning applications, permission in principle, technical details consent and development orders

Use this table to find out which agencies you must consult. You can consult the agencies on issues not covered in this table if the proposals affect their environmental interests.

The proposal	Consult Natural England	Consult the Environment Agency
requires an environmental impact assessment (EIA)	Yes	Yes
requires a habitats regulation appropriate assessment of the effect it may have on European protected sites	Yes	No

The proposal	Consult Natural England	Consult the Environment Agency
is in or likely to affect a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), check the impact risk zone around an SSSI to help assess potential impacts that the proposal might have on the site	Yes	No
will result in a loss of over 20 hectares (ha) of the best and most versatile agricultural land , unless the land is included in policies or proposals in a local or neighbourhood plan	Yes	No
reclaims land previously used for mining or waste management to agricultural use	Yes	No
is for development involving hazardous substances in a naturally sensitive area, such as an SSSI	Yes	No
is for development that will be used to handle, produce, use or store hazardous substances and is within the area at risk if a major accident happens nearby (see the Health and Safety Executive guidance on development near hazardous sites)	No	Yes
is in flood zones 2 and 3 (first read the Environment Agency's flood risk guidance, known as 'standing advice')	No	Yes
is in flood zone 1 – with critical drainage problems (the Environment Agency will have told your LPA if this is the case)	No	Yes
is for a cemetery or cemetery extension	No	Yes
is for mining or mining exploration	No	Yes
is for storing oil and fuel and their by-products like petrol station	No	Yes
is for major development that doesn't use existing sewerage infrastructure for sewage treatment	No	Yes
is in or likely to affect waterbodies identified in river basin management plans	No	Yes
is in or likely to affect groundwater in source protection zones	No	Yes
includes land affected by contamination from a previous activity such as a former power station or disused railway	No	Yes
is for the storage of sludge or slurry	No	Yes
is for storage, transfer or treatment of waste products or refuse	No	Yes
is within 20m of the top of the bank of a main river	No	Yes
is for intensive pig, poultry or dairy units	No	Yes
is in or likely to affect areas identified in local plans (as coastal change management areas) to be affected by coastal erosion	No	Yes
is for 'permission in principle' (PIP) and the proposed site meets the criteria in this table	Yes	Yes

The proposal

Consult Natural England

Consult the Environment Agency

is for a site with PIP (the 'technical details consent' stage) and the agency made a written request at the PIP stage to be consulted

Yes, if you're advised in writing at the PIP stage

Yes, if you're advised in writing at the PIP stage

Use this guidance, known as 'standing advice' if planning applications affect:

- [protected species and their habitat](#)
- [ancient woodland and veteran trees](#)
- [flood risk](#)

Check if the proposed development is on or might affect any [protected sites, protected areas or marine protected areas](#) by using the Magic map guidance.

Consult the [Marine Management Organisation](#) for coastal proposals (like slipways, jetties and dredging). Find out about the [permits, consents and licences](#) that a developer might need for coastal developments.

What you need to send

You must provide enough information about the plan or proposal for the environmental agencies to comment. You must include any environmental effects in the plan or proposal. In some cases you may need to get further surveys or assessments done before the agencies can give advice.

Planning applications, PIP and technical details consent

What you're doing	What you need to send	When you'll get a response
Preparing an EIA scoping opinion, that is deciding on the issues that need to be assessed	Your scoping opinion	Within 5 weeks
Deciding on a planning application	The planning application with relevant supporting environmental information such as a draft Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment if required	Within 21 days, or longer if agreed in writing

What you're doing	What you need to send	When you'll get a response
Deciding an EIA planning application	The planning application with relevant supporting information including the environmental statement that provides an assessment of the effect the proposal may have on the environment Draft Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment if required	Within 30 days, or longer if agreed in writing
Deciding whether to give a site permission in principle and to list it in Part 2 of a brownfield land register	Details of the proposal with relevant environmental information to show that the site is suitable in principle	Within 21 days
Deciding whether to grant permission in principle for non-major development	Details of the proposal with relevant environmental information to show that the site is suitable in principle	Within 14 days (or longer if agreed in writing)
Deciding an application for 'technical details consent' after granting permission in principle	Details of the proposal with relevant supporting environmental information	Within 21 days (or longer if agreed in writing)

Local development orders (LDOs) and neighbourhood development orders (NDOs)

What you're doing	What you need to send	When you'll get a response
Working on an LDO	Draft LDO	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually within 28 days
Consulting on your environmental statement for an LDO	Draft LDO Environmental statement (only for EIA development)	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually within 30 days
Consulting on your environmental statement for an NDO	Draft NDO Environmental statement (only for EIA development)	Agencies will agree a time with you – usually within 6 weeks

You may be asked to provide extra information with the proposal, such as:

- a 'foul drainage assessment' for proposals where connecting drainage to the public sewer to carry contaminated waste water isn't feasible
- a flood risk assessment for proposals within a flood zone or at risk of local flooding
- a water cycle study to make sure the proposal is sustainable and doesn't have an impact on water supply, water quality or flooding
- water supply or water quality assessment if one or both are affected
- an assessment of the landscape and visual impacts on protected areas such as areas of outstanding natural beauty or on protected species

Environmental assessments

You must consult Natural England and the Environment Agency about plans and projects that need an environmental assessment. These are:

- [environmental impact assessments](#) for development projects
- [strategic environmental assessments](#) for plans and programmes
- [sustainability appraisals](#) for local plans
- habitats regulations appropriate assessments for plans and projects (Natural England only)

You may be asked to provide extra information with the proposal, even if an environmental assessment isn't needed.

Contact the agencies

Consult the relevant agency in writing by email or letter.

Natural England

Email consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England consultation service

Hornbeam House

Electra Way

Crewe Business Park

Crewe

Cheshire

CW1 6GJ

Environment Agency

Email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency

PO Box 544

Rotherham

Yorkshire

S60 1BY

What you'll get back

The written response you receive from Natural England or the Environment Agency will depend on the:

- level of risk the proposal has on the environment, for example you'll get a standardised response for a low risk proposal
- stage the plan, order or planning proposal has reached, for example you'll get more advice if you've sent in a completed draft plan
- environmental opportunities that could be achieved such as ['green infrastructure'](#) and biodiversity improvements of the site and surrounding area