



Urban Vision Enterprise

Town and Parish Council Planning Service

Neighbourhood Plans & Local Green Space

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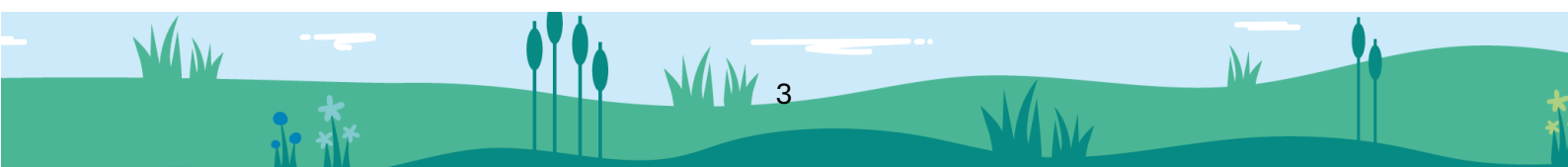
1. Introduction

Green spaces and paths contribute to the quality of life, health and well-being in many ways. This includes creating an attractive environment, creating opportunities for walking and physical activity, supporting recreation and play and contributing to biodiversity. So green infrastructure is part of good planning, with value to the local community, local environment and local economy.

Green spaces and infrastructure are diverse in character and can include formal parks, public gardens, informal grassed areas, paths, sports pitches and various other kinds of natural or landscaped area.

Neighbourhood plans can include policies to protect existing green spaces or to guide the provision of green infrastructure in new development. This includes the means to designate 'Local Green Spaces' to protect them for current and future generations.

Local Green Space is a formal designation and must meet the requirements set out Paragraphs 106 and 107 of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024. This guide deals with the designation of Local Green Space (LGS).



2. Designation of Local Green Space

2.1 National Policy Criteria for LGS

Local Green Spaces (LGS) are spaces designated through local and neighbourhood plans. National policy states that these are spaces of particular importance to local communities (Paragraph 106 of the NPPF December 2024). To be suitable for designation, Paragraph 107 of the NPPF specifies that Local Green Space should be:

- *in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- *local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

National policy also makes clear that ‘Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period’.

2.1 LGS in Neighbourhood Plans

A Neighbourhood Plan may include a policy designating and protecting LGS. Such policies would need to be accompanied by maps showing the precise boundary of each LGS being designated.

The Neighbourhood Plan should be accompanied by an LGS analysis document, describing the community value of each space, supported by relevant evidence. The document should demonstrate how each space meets the NPPF criteria for LGS.

Where the Neighbourhood Plan proposes site allocations, consideration of LGS should be done in parallel to ensure that there is no conflict between them.

3. Applying NPPF Criteria

3.1 Assessing Community Value

There are various reasons why spaces should be valued by local communities. The NPPF makes reference to 'beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife...'. Things to consider could include the following:

Quality of Place: Green spaces and paths contribute to quality of place, together with urban spaces and the wider public realm. Quality of place is a key factor in making an area attractive as a place to live, work and spend leisure time.

Amenity: Green spaces and paths add to local amenity, providing an attractive setting and outlook;

Historic Character: Green spaces can form part of the character or landscape setting of historic areas, buildings and townscape;

Community activity: Green spaces are places where social interaction can take place, like eating lunch, meeting friends or resting. This can include informal activities or organised recreation, cultural events and performance;

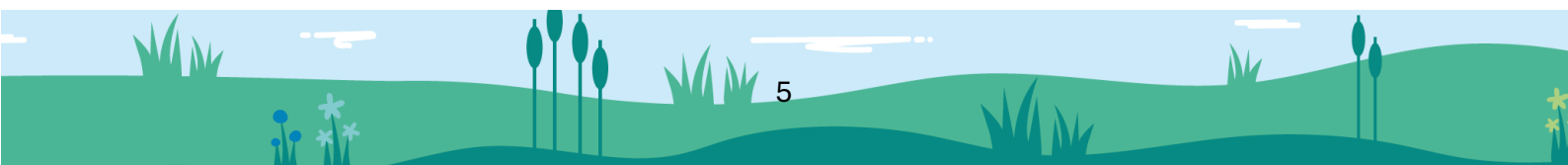
Physical activity: Green spaces and paths can accommodate a range of physical activities and support healthy lifestyles, including walking, running, playing games or sports;

Movement: The network of paths and spaces can enable ease of movement through an area;

Biodiversity: Green spaces and paths providing habitats for wildlife and natural corridors through urban areas, with a range of flora and fauna, supporting biodiversity;

Other: Community value is wide ranging, so other values may be identified.

An LGS analysis document should describe the community value of each space proposed for LGS designation, and apply the other NPPF criteria.



3.2 Assessing Proximity

To be eligible for designation for LGS, the NPPF requires a space to be ‘in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves’.

There is no fixed figure for how close a green space should be to the community it serves, and the distance may vary according to the nature of the space. For example, a small informal grassed area would serve very nearby properties, whereas a formal park may serve people over a wider area. So judgment is involved. Spaces within easy walking distance could normally be considered to be in close proximity, whereas space requiring a car journey to reach them would be unlikely to be eligible. So, proximity should be considered in terms of providing a reasonable justification, rather than a specific distance.

3.3 Assessing Whether a Space is Local in Character

The NPPF also requires a space to be ‘local in character and is not an extensive tract of land’. This is intended to prevent misuse of LGS, such as using it as a green belt ‘substitute’.

Whilst there is no specific maximum area, larger spaces would require especially rigorous justification. For larger spaces, there may be other ways of securing protection. For example, a specific policy could be drafted to identify and protect a local green common or country park.

Large areas, such as the landscape setting of a town, would be very unlikely to be eligible. There may be alternative ways of addressing landscape settings, for example through a policy relating to the landscape character and setting of historic towns.

3.4 Considering Sustainable Development

One of the basic conditions for neighbourhood plans is achieving sustainable development. The social, community, economic and environmental benefits of green spaces help to make local places sustainable.

National policy states that:

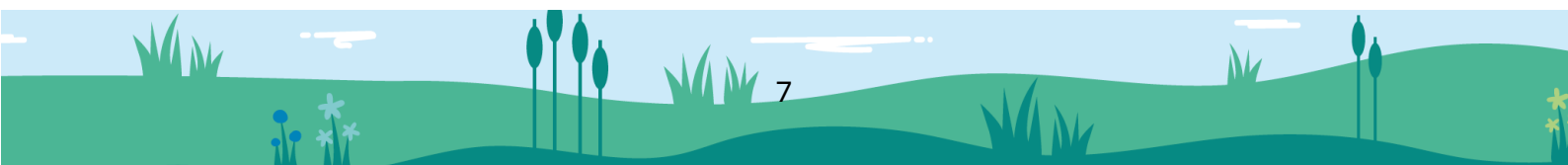
‘designation of Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services’.

In practice, this means that Local Green Space designation should not result in there being insufficient land to support development now and in the future (housing, employment and other uses and facilities).

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This may be an issue in areas with very limited capacity to support development, however for many areas, there would be sufficient land to allow for designation of LGS and sustainable development in the right locations.

An LGS analysis document should explicitly address this issue.



4. Evidence to Support LGS Designation

4.1 Designations

Sites and areas subject to statutory designations should be identified so that they can be taken into account when developing policies or making Local Green Space designations.

Examples include:

- Public rights of way;
- Conservation areas;
- Local nature reserves;
- Registered historic parks and gardens;
- Sites already designated as LGS (for example by the Local Plan);
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Listed assets of community value.

The local authority should have records of all of these.

Existing designations may make LGS designation unnecessary. On the other hand, LGS designation could be useful, in addition to the existing designation. For example, LGS could protect an important green space in a Conservation Area. Chapter 5 considers the implications of other designations in more detail.

4.2 Sources of Evidence

Sources of evidence to support the analysis of LGS could include:

- The evidence base underpinning the Local Plan or emerging Local Plan or any special technical reports commissioned by the local authority;
- Any local authority green space studies or green infrastructure strategies or maps, including flora and fauna and biodiversity;
- Local authority data on green space provision;
- Design code documents, heritage appraisals, landscape studies or other local studies;
- Reports or studies by external organisations concerned with nature, green spaces and infrastructure;
- Observational and photographic evidence of how spaces are used;
- Local authority data on tourism and visitors;
- Local Sport strategy and others where green space is mentioned.

The local authority should be approached in the first instance to provide or signpost existing evidence.

A photographic study should be undertaken for all spaces being considered. This will help in assessing the spaces and images may be used to illustrate the LGS assessment report, using captions to explain the community value of spaces.

4.3 Planning Status

LGS designation should not be proposed for sites already allocated for development.

It is necessary to check whether there are any live planning permissions applying to the space. This would usually prevent the space from being designated.

5. Existing Designations

Other designations of land, such as green belt or conservation area status, do not necessarily preclude or support designation as Local Green Space. But it is necessary to consider whether the additional designation as LGS would be necessary and serve a useful purpose. Other designations could include:

Green Belts

Green Belts are applied to the fringe of urban areas. They do not preclude all development (appropriate kinds of development are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework). Green Belts do not recognise the landscape quality or community value of land. So, there are instances where Local Green Space designation could be useful for specific spaces within the Green Belt.

Where there is no Green Belt, it would not be appropriate to try to use Local Green Space designation to attempt to impose Green Belt type protection of land around an urban area. This would be a misuse of the designation and would be likely to result in the neighbourhood plan running into difficulties in meeting the Basic Conditions at the Independent Examination stage.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Conservation areas sometimes include green spaces, such as formal parks, village greens or urban green spaces.

Conservation areas do not preclude new development. Indeed, some conservation areas are a focus for regeneration. LGS designation may be useful in identifying green space of value to the community in conservation areas and this could include the landscape settings of historic buildings or key spaces like village greens.

Parks and Gardens

Inclusion on the register of historic parks and gardens does not afford much protection in itself, though it is a material consideration in planning decisions. Protection would normally be conferred to historic parks and gardens by conservation area designation or listed building status for buildings and structures. By their very nature, many historic parks and gardens would be likely to meet the NPPF criteria for LGS designation.

LGS designation could also be useful for parks and gardens that are not on the register, but have other community values. LGS designation could be a useful means to protecting parks and gardens, but could be over-restrictive,

depending on the nature of the park or garden. Some development may be necessary in parks to enhance community value, for example by providing new changing or storage facilities for sports pitches or cafes and refreshment kiosks. A parks and gardens policy, or a policy relating to a specific park or garden, could be a more pragmatic approach.

Natural Environment Designations: Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other landscape and natural environment designations recognise the scientific, ecological landscape character, wildlife or other value of land. They can be a significant factor in determining whether SEA (strategic environment assessment) is required for a neighbourhood plan. Many landscape designations would be too large for LGS designation, and in many instances LGS designation would add little in terms of protection.

Tree Preservation Orders: Local Green Space designation does not prevent the felling of trees. Tree preservation orders (TPOs) do provide such protection and can apply to single trees or groups of trees. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 protect important countryside hedges from removal, without the permission of the local planning authority. Local Green Space designation could protect the wider green space around TPOs or protected hedges, where the space meets the NPPF criteria.

Assets of Community Value: Designation of a green space as an asset of community value may be a material consideration in making planning decisions, and could create a pause if the site is being marketed. The characteristics of a green space that justify it being an asset of community value could also be relevant in meeting the criteria for LGS designation, and this could provide an additional and more specific protection for the space.

6. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

6.1 Community Engagement

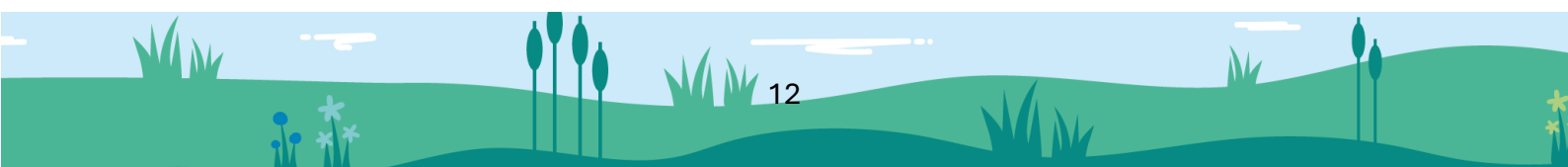
In addition to robust analysis and evidence to support LGS designation, it is necessary to engage with local communities and stakeholders. The local community could be asked to help identify green spaces of value to them. The spaces proposed for designation could then be tested, prior to formal Regulation 14 consultation.

6.2 Stakeholders

Key stakeholders could include local residents' associations, sports and health bodies, canal and river bodies, conservation groups, the local authority (which often manages and maintains many local facilities) and other relevant local bodies. Such bodies could provide useful data, suggest spaces for LGS designation or advise on the quality and deficiencies of local spaces.

6.3 Land Owners

Where Local Green Space designations are being considered, it is necessary to engage with those controlling the land, before engaging with the wider community engagement or formal consultation stages. Some spaces may be owned by the Local Authority or other public bodies.



7. Policies for Green Spaces and Infrastructure

7.1 National Policy and Guidance

National policy states that

Policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts set out in chapter 13 of this Framework

This can be confusing, as the five purposes for greenbelts are quite different to the purposes for LGS designation. However, a sensible interpretation would be that development would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Neighbourhood Plan Policies

An LGS designation policy should state explicitly that the spaces listed are designated as LGS.

In terms of protection, it may be best to develop policies relating to green space and green infrastructure in general, rather than being specific to LGS. Some examiners have deleted protection policies relating specifically to LGS.

Various policies could include reference to green spaces (including LGS). These could include:

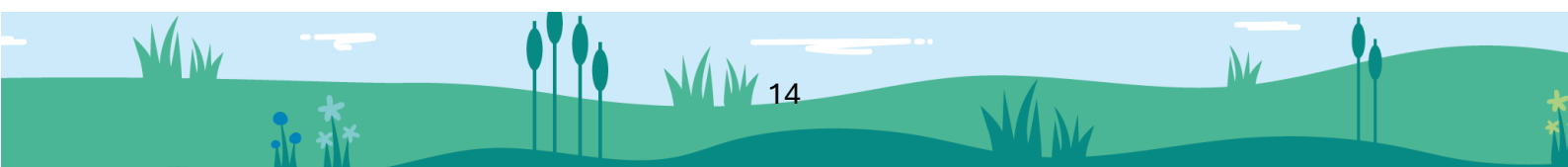
- Specific green space or design policies on the impacts of development on green spaces and infrastructure, for example relating to use, safety, amenity and accessibility.
- Policies to protecting the character of conservation areas, including green spaces and landscape;
- Policies to protect green corridors, spaces and linkages in terms of their wildlife and biodiversity value (please note, there are now statutory requirements for development to achieve biodiversity net gain);
- Setting out design requirements or site briefs relating to links and access into green space, where appropriate;
- Enabling development that supports the use and management of green spaces and infrastructure;
- Design policies relating to provision of new green infrastructure in new development, such as street trees;
- Promoting opportunities for development to create linkages between green spaces and address gaps in existing green networks (green connectivity).

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Green spaces could provide an ideal setting for creative modern buildings on adjacent sites. Site briefs could be prepared for development sites adjacent to green spaces (including LGS), highlighting things like access points and sensitive boundaries.

The Neighbourhood Plan could identify enhancements necessary for specific green spaces, supported by evidence. Open space financial contributions required as part of granting planning permission could be used to help fund such enhancements.

Sites adjacent to Local Green Space could be allocated or identified as opportunities for complementary development, for example to provide community facilities associated with the recreational or sports use of the space.



8. Alternatives to LGS Designation

8.1 Suitability of LGS Designation

Local Green Space designation may not be the best approach for all kinds of green space and the implications for the use of each space should be considered carefully. It may be too restrictive for some kinds of space.

For example, sports and play spaces may be better addressed through a sports pitch or play facilities policy. Churchyards may be best addressed through a heritage protection policy (for example relating to a churchyard part of the setting of a listed church).

Highway verges would usually be unsuitable for LGS designation, as works in the highway would often not require planning permission. Preserving highway verges may be more about trying to influence the local highway authority.

However, there may be grassed areas adjacent to highways which did not form part of the highway and which would meet NPPF criteria.

In addition to designation of Local Green Space, Neighbourhood Plans could seek to protect or enhance green spaces and other green infrastructure by:

- Recognition of, and policies relating to, other designations involving green spaces and infrastructure, such as footpaths or local wildlife areas;
- Policy or guidance on provision of green infrastructure as part of new development.
- Identification of green infrastructure deficiencies, which may then be addressed through use of planning infrastructure monies.

9. Summary

9.1 Key Points

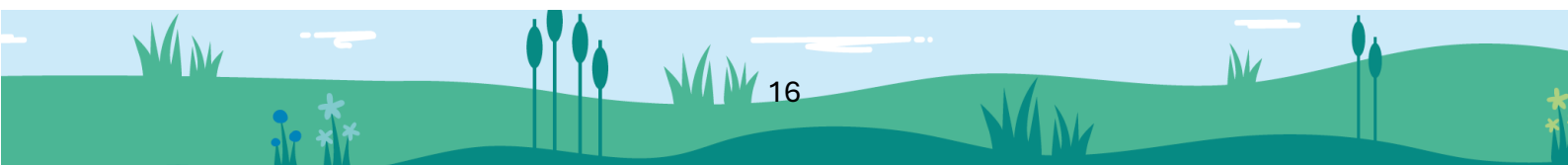
Green spaces provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. Considering green space is part of ensuring that development is sustainable, one of the basic conditions for neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood plans can designate Local Green Spaces. They can include policies relating to protection and enhancement of green spaces (including LGS) and green infrastructure.

Local Green Space designations must be made in accordance with the criteria contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and take account of National Planning Practice Guidance.

Designations and policies should be based on robust analysis and evidence and community and stakeholder engagement. An analysis document could accompany the Neighbourhood Plan, demonstrating how each space meets NPPF criteria.

Local Green Space designations can complement other kinds of designation, such as inclusion on the register of historic parks and gardens.



10. Model LGS Assessment Pro-forma

Site Details	
Site name and address	The name of the space and the address (roads flanking the site), together with the grid reference, will identify the site. A map showing the site boundary is necessary.
Grid Ref.	
Purpose/nature of the space	This should include the primary purpose/nature of the space (for example informal grassed area, park or football pitch) and any other occasional or secondary uses.
Site area (ha)	
Statutory designations	
Existing designations	All designations should be listed, e.g. conservation area, register of historic parks and gardens, TPO. The local authority should provide details of designations.
Planning Status	
Site allocations (give details)	Site allocations would preclude LGS designation.
Planning permissions (give details)	Any valid planning permissions for a site should be identified and would be likely to exclude that site from consideration for LGS designation.
NPPF Criteria	
Close to the community it serves	The proximity of the green space to the local community. The space should be within walking distance, though the size and nature of the space may be relevant to the distance considered as 'close'.
Demonstrably special to local community (beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, wildlife, or other)	Describe the ways in which the space is used or enjoyed by the community. This includes consideration of beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, wildlife, or other values. The outcomes of community engagement should be useful in demonstrating that a space is special to the community. All relevant evidence should be referenced. Photographs with captions could be included to help demonstrate community value.

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Local in character and not extensive tract (including site area)	The site area should be referred to. Text should demonstrate that the space in question is a local facility and not, for example, green space in the countryside. The purpose of Local Green Space designation is to protect local spaces. Containing urban sprawl or protecting open countryside would not be proper uses of the designation.
Conclusion	
Is the space suitable for LGS designation?	To be eligible for designation as Local Green Space, the space in question would need to meet all of the NPPF criteria.

11. Further Information

National Planning Policy Framework:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

Planning Practice Guidance:

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk>

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/green-infrastructure/>

Sport England - Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance:

<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/assessing-needs-and-opportunities-guidance/>

Urban Vision Enterprise Neighbourhood Planning Guide

[http:// https://urbanvisionenterprise.co.uk/guidance-and-training](http://https://urbanvisionenterprise.co.uk/guidance-and-training)

Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/40004?category=47004>

Fields in Trust FIT Standard

Fields in Trust guidance for assessing outdoors sports and play space.

<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance>

Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results>

12. About Urban Vision Enterprise

12.1 Experience and Services

Urban Vision Enterprise (UVE) is a professional planning consultancy providing services in planning, regeneration, economic development and third sector organisational development.

UVE provides a Town and Parish Council Planning Service in England.

UVE has supported well over 200 neighbourhood plans and can provide support at all stages of the process. This includes drafting of effective policies, site allocations, designation of Local Green Space and advice on legal compliance at all stages.

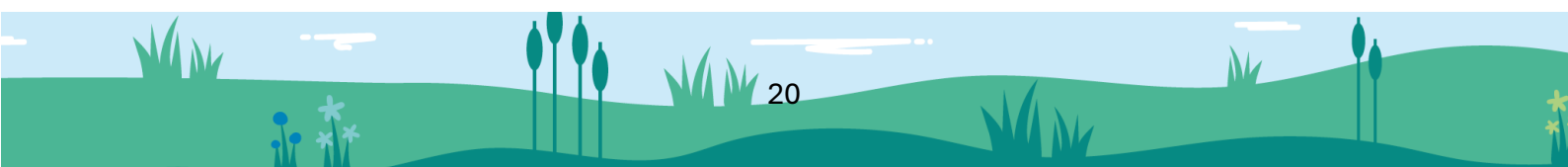
UVE specialisms include:

- mediation and complex negotiations;
- neighbourhood planning;
- regeneration and economic development;
- town centres and high street recovery;
- housing growth, site selection and masterplanning;
- heritage-led regeneration and conservation;
- natural environment and blue and green infrastructure;
- urban design, including strategies, policies, guidance and design review;
- community and stakeholder engagement;
- statutory consultation (legal compliance);
- technical reports including housing need, site assessment and heritage studies;
- feasibility and viability studies and project business plans;
- training, continuing professional development (CPD) and education;
- preparing guidance and briefings;
- in person (verbal) and written evidence for Parliamentary committees;
- third sector (not-for-profit) organisational development, including strategy, operations, governance and business development.

Urban Vision Enterprise is ISO 9001 Registered. The practice is an IHBC recognised historic environment service provider (HESPR) and CPD provider.

12.2 Our Clients

Current and past clients include government and funding bodies, UK and national professional bodies and membership organisations, local authorities, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums and third sector (not-for-profit)



organisations. These include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Locality, Royal Town Planning Institute, Institute of Historic Building Conservation, and the National Trust.

12.3 Contact

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