

Policy E31 : Areas and features of national and international conservation importance

Development and other land use changes in areas or features of national or international conservation importance, or within their settings, and that are detrimental to their characteristics will not be permitted.

Exceptions will only be made where:

1. there is an over-riding need for development required to meet local infrastructure needs which cannot be located elsewhere and which is sited to minimise environmental impacts and meets high standards of design, and
2. in the case of nature conservation, where an over-riding public interest can be demonstrated to outweigh the international conservation interest or, in the case of European Priority habitats or species, where there are human health or safety considerations or benefits of primary importance to the environment.

Areas and features of international or national importance are defined as:

- World Heritage Sites recognised by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO
- National Parks
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- Ramsar sites
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Limestone Pavements protected by Order
- National Nature Reserves
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Statutory protected species
- Buildings or groups of buildings listed as of Grade 1 or Grade II* architectural or historic merit
- Parks or gardens listed as Grade I or Grade II* in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

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6 CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- 6.1 Cumbria is richly endowed with fine landscapes, wildlife, buildings and features of archeological and historic importance. These resources are valuable assets that underpin the tourism industry, attract business and investment into the area, and contribute to the quality of life of local communities. Environmental conservation can also generate significant economic activity. The Structure Plan protects and, where appropriate, conserves and enhances the environment and cultural heritage.
- 6.2 Conservation and enhancement of the County's environmental and cultural assets is undertaken through a variety of management plans and local partnerships, for example, the Hadrian's Wall Military Zone World Heritage Site Management Plan, Lake District National Park Management Plan, AONB Management Plans, Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Agenda 21 Groups and Civic Trusts. The Structure Plan complements this work and provides a framework that allows suitable development and land use considerations to be taken forward in Local Plans.

Protecting Environmental Assets

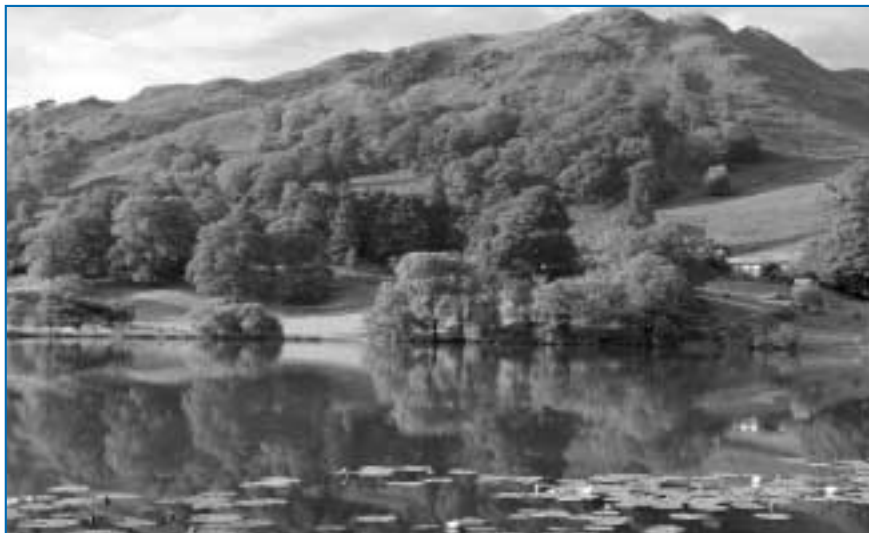
- 6.3 Areas and features designated as being of national or international importance must be afforded the strongest level of protection, in accordance with Policies ER2 and ER5 of Regional Planning Guidance. These designations cover a range of environmental assets and their conservation, protection and management will be governed by specific national or international regulations and advice.
- 6.4 Government guidance has confirmed that AONBs are equivalent to National Parks in terms of their landscape value and should be given equivalent protection. The Lake District National Park has been identified by the Government for consideration for World Heritage Site status on account of its unique cultural heritage. The County's coastal estuaries and a number of rivers and lakes are designated as Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas, owing to their being of European importance for nature conservation. St Bees is designated a Heritage Coast. There are over 50 protected limestone pavements, 800 scheduled ancient monuments and 600 Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings.

continued.

6.5 It is vital that these important assets, whatever their scale, are protected from development or changes in use that harm their special characteristics, including development outside their boundaries, that may have an impact on them. Different types and scales of development will have different impacts. Local Plans will need to define how these impacts will be assessed. **Policy E31**

- Sites of archeological or historic interest which are scheduled ancient monuments
- Battlefields included in the Register of Historic Battlefields
- St Bees Heritage Coast

Protecting both natural and built features such as.



the Lake District National Park, and



Hadrians Wall World Heritage Site is required.

Policy E32 : Sub-regional nature conservation interests

Development and other land use changes that are detrimental to sub-regional nature conservation interests will not be permitted unless the harm caused to the value of those interests is clearly outweighed by the need for the development. Where development is permitted the loss of nature conservation interest should be minimised and, where practicable, mitigation should be provided.

Sub-regional nature conservation interests are defined as:

- County Wildlife Sites (CWSs)
- Regionally Important Geological or Geomorphological Sites (RIGGS)
- The UK Biodiversity Action Plan Key Habitats that occur in Cumbria
- Species of Conservation Importance in the North West Region that occur in Cumbria
- Landscape features of major importance for wild fauna and flora, which are essential for migration dispersal and genetic exchange

6.6 Cumbria is noted for a wealth of nature conservation interests. Some of these may be particularly rare or form part of wider biodiversity networks important on a more than local scale. A number of species of national and regional scarcity or importance have been identified in the Biodiversity Audit of the North West. Key habitats, which are functionally critical, important for key species, or at risk, have been identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Some will have been designated as County Wildlife Sites. Other habitats, such as rivers, woods and hedgerows, which help sustain biodiversity have been recognised by the Habitats Directive 1992. Regionally Important Geological or Geomorphological Sites also provide valuable educational assets. These resources require careful management, protection from harmful development and where possible measures secured to enable their enhancement. **Policy E32**

6.7 Landscape change needs to be controlled and managed to ensure that the County's distinctive character is retained. The County has been divided into 37 landscape types or sub types⁹ based on methodology published by the Countryside Commission in 1992. These are shown on Figure 8. Each of these areas has characteristics that make its landscape distinctive. No detailed classification has been carried out for the National Park, as hitherto the Lake District National Park Management Plan has addressed these issues.

6.8 A 'character based' approach will be used when assessing development proposals outside the National Park. This involves assessing the effect on the character and distinctive features of the particular landscape. Such features include built features such as traditional farmhouses, barns and walls and natural features such as hedges, woodlands, hay meadows or wetlands. Proposals will be judged to ensure that they enhance or are in sympathy with local character. Further information on landscape character has been published and should be incorporated into Local Plans¹⁰. The Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme should also be used to help understand the historic character and local distinctiveness of the landscape across the whole County. Within nationally designated landscapes such as the National Park or AONBs, development proposals will be tested against Policies E31 and ST8.

Landscape Types and Sub-types (Cumbria Landscape Classification 1995)

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Estuary and Marsh | 7b Drumlin Field |
| 1a Intertidal Flats | 7c Sandy Knolls and Ridges |
| 1b Coastal Marsh | 8 Main Valleys |
| 2 Coastal Margins | 8a Gorges |
| 2a Dunes and Beaches | 8b Broad Valleys |
| 2c Coastal Plain | 8c Valley Corridors |
| 2d Coastal Urban Fringe | 8d Dales |
| 3 Coastal Limestone | 9 Intermediate Moorland and Plateau |
| 3a Open Farmland and Pavements | 9a Open Moorlands |
| 3b Wooded Hills and Pavements | 9b Rolling Farmland and Heath |
| 3c Disturbed Areas | 9c Forests |
| 4 Coastal sandstone | 9d Ridges |
| 5 Lowland | 10 Sandstone Ridge |
| 5a Ridge and Valley | 11 Upland Fringes |
| 5b Low Farmland | 11a Foothills |
| 5c Rolling Lowland | 11b Low Fells |
| 5d Urban Fringe | 12 Higher Limestone |
| 5e Drained Mosses | 12a Limestone Farmland |
| 6 Intermediate Land | 12b Rolling Fringe |
| 7 Drumlins | 12c Limestone Foothills |
| 7a Low Drumlins | 12d Moorland and Commons |
| | 13 Fells and Scarps |
| | 13a Scarps |
| | 13b Moorland, High Plateau |
| | 13c Fells |

6.9 Outside nationally designated landscapes some landscapes have such distinctive character that they are considered to be of particular importance to the County. Whilst a wider variety of development is likely to be permitted within these County Landscapes than in nationally designated landscapes, particular care is needed in assessing proposals for new development within them. Such development must not threaten or damage the particular characteristics that make these landscapes significant. **Policy E33**

Policy E33 : Landscape character

Development and land use change should be compatible with the distinctive characteristics and features of Cumbria's landscapes as defined by the 'Landscape Map' in Figure 8 and the 'Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme'. Proposals will be assessed in relation to:

1. locally distinctive natural or built features,
2. visual intrusion or impact,
3. scale in relation to the landscape and features,
4. the character of the built environment,
5. public access and community value of the landscape,
6. historic patterns and attributes,
7. biodiversity features, ecological networks and semi-natural habitats, and
8. openness, remoteness and tranquillity.

In addition, development and land use change detrimental to the distinctive character of landscapes designated as of County Importance will not be permitted, except where required to meet local infrastructure needs, which cannot be located elsewhere and which is sited to minimise environmental impacts and meets high standards of design.

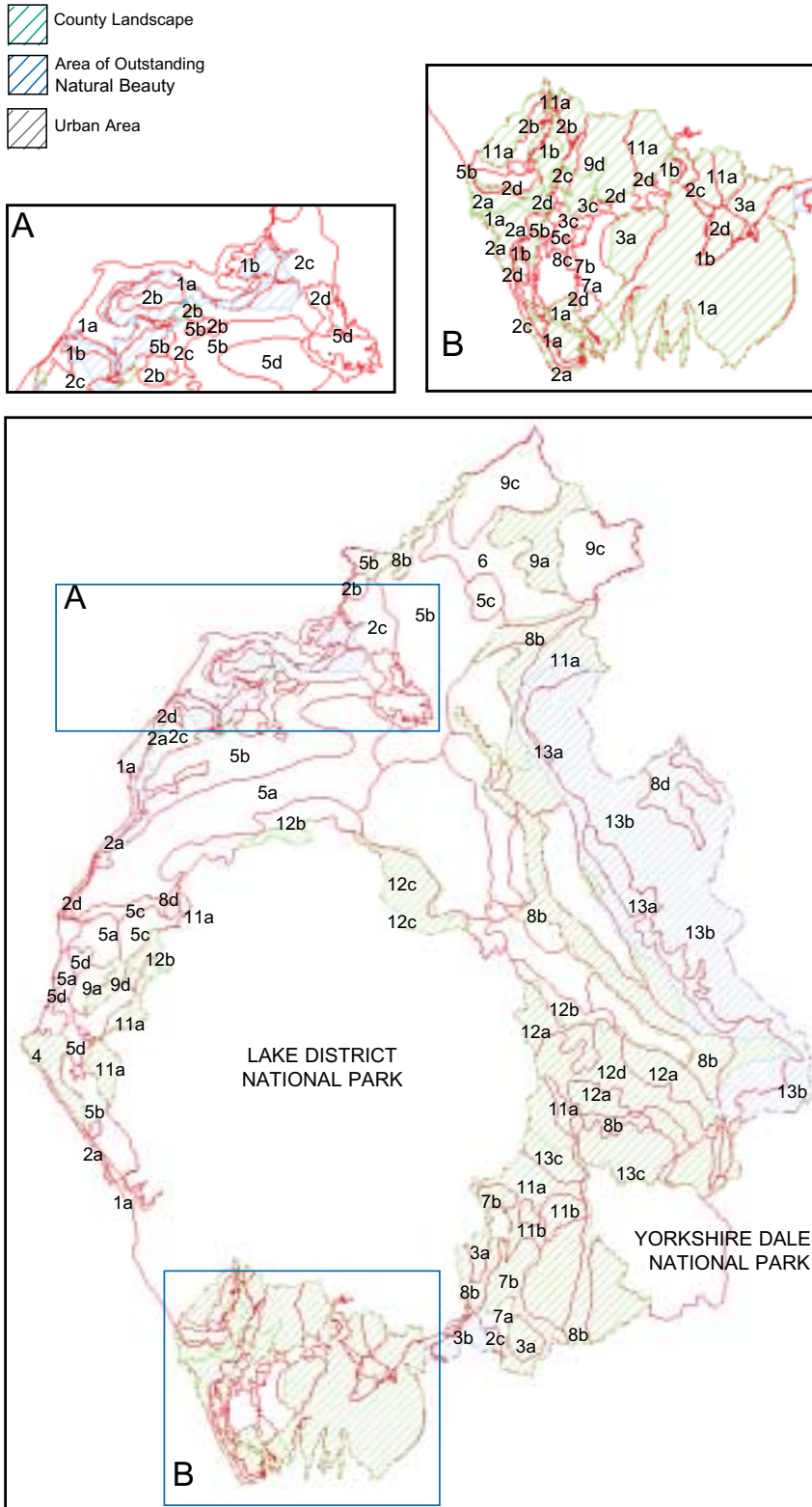


Figure 8 Landscape Map: Landscape types and Designated Landscapes

Policy E34 : Historic environment

Measures will be taken to identify, record, protect, conserve or enhance areas, sites, buildings and settings of archeological, historic and architectural importance. Proposals which fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas or which damage, obscure, or remove important archeological sites or other historic features or are detrimental to the character or setting of a listed building will not be permitted unless the harm caused to their importance and intrinsic interest is clearly outweighed by the need for the development.

Policy E35 : Environmental enhancement

Development that includes measures to regenerate and upgrade rural, urban and urban fringe environments will be supported, particularly where this protects, enhances or restores biodiversity, landscape and amenity value. A priority will be given to schemes that promote:

1. economic and physical regeneration, or
2. the attractiveness of approaches into key service centres, important transport corridors and entry points to the county, or
3. reuse of previously developed land with the emphasis in rural areas on forestry, woodland, agriculture and other uses which respect the character of the countryside, or
4. restoration and remediation of derelict or contaminated land.

- 6.10 Cumbria's historic environment provides it with a unique cultural heritage. This includes archeological remains, structures, buildings and other elements of the landscape. Cumbria's maritime heritage, the influence of extractive industries and the Anglo-Scottish border disputes contribute to a distinctive man made landscape. The layout, date or design of individual components and the use of traditional materials, in a traditional way, help to give an area its character. It provides a sense of identity to its inhabitants and can also be a valuable stimulus for economic regeneration.
- 6.11 Development proposals must avoid damage to and, where possible, should enhance the overall quality of the historic environment. In determining the impact of proposals, reference should be made to the Cumbria Sites and Monuments Record, the Cumbria Extensive Urban Survey and the Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme (see also Policy E33). On sites of potential archeological interest Local Planning Authorities may need to ensure that an archeological field evaluation is carried out before an application is determined. Where development is then permitted, conditions may need to be imposed to enable the sites to be recorded, protected or rescued. **Policy E34**

Enhancing the Environment

- 6.12 As well as protection, positive measures are needed to conserve and improve the landscape, particularly where these are derelict, contaminated or run down or locations where visual enhancement will assist economic regeneration. Utilising previously developed land may also help reduce the need for the development of green field sites consistent with Policy ST1. However, not all derelict or previously developed sites will be in appropriate locations or need reuse. This will particularly be the case in the open countryside. In these instances softer uses such as woodland or community forests consistent with Policies E36 and L54 and Local Nature Reserves consistent with L53 may be more suitable. In some cases nature itself may have produced valuable wildlife habitats and intervention will not be required. **Policy E35**
- 6.13 The woodlands and forests of Cumbria contribute to the character and qualities of the landscape, provide important wildlife habitats, areas for recreation, and raw materials for industry. Policy ER6 of Regional Planning Guidance seeks to increase the level of tree cover across the region by at least 10% by the year 2010 and by at least 15% by the year 2020. It particularly stresses the need for a sustainable expansion of woodland supporting native species.



Woodland can provide opportunities for recreation, Visitor Centre, Whinlatter Forest.

The planting of new woodlands will be encouraged where they are compatible with landscape character and avoid loss of important habitats or archeological and historic features. Priority will be given to schemes that:

1. promote local amenity, public access or enjoyment,
2. provide benefits for the environment, wildlife and biodiversity,
3. support existing agriculture and rural diversification, or
4. provide benefits for economic regeneration.

- 6.14 Forestry and woodland operations are not subject to control under the planning system, except, for the creation of forest roads and any new access onto the highway. Well designed planting of forests and woodlands can enhance landscape and wildlife value. The County Council and the National Park Authority are consulted on planting schemes and long term forest management plans. Consideration will be given to the impacts of forestry and woodlands on the existing landscape, wildlife or historic interests and ensuring schemes are not harmful to these interests. Where possible schemes should make a positive contribution to other activities, such as recreation.
- 6.15 When considering new schemes for planting, particular emphasis will be placed on proposals that are consistent with the England Forestry Strategy's four programmes which give priority to rural development; economic regeneration; recreation, access and tourism and environment and conservation. Support will be given to the Cumbria Woodland Vision¹¹, which identifies West Cumbria and the Solway Plain as potential areas for woodland expansion on derelict and rundown land to enhance the environment and improve opportunities for recreation, (see Policy L54). The potential to develop energy crops as an alternative to agriculture will also be encouraged (see Policy R41). The Lake District National Park Management Plan gives further guidance on forestry strategy within the National Park area. **Policy E36**