

Topic Area: Natural/Open Environment

<i>What we sought to find out:</i>	Natural/Open Environment
Ecology, habitats and landscape	<i>What's special?</i>
	<i>What needs protecting?</i>
	<i>What needs enhancing?</i>
Connectivity within the Neighbourhood	<i>What and where are the ecological links?</i>
	<i>What access does the public have to the open environment?</i>
	<i>What needs improving or enhancing and why?</i>

Strategic Context

Biodiversity (ecology and habitats)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) defines biodiversity as: *"The variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems."*

The UK is a signatory to a number of international agreements on biodiversity, including the global Rio Earth Summit Convention on Biological Diversity and European Biodiversity Strategy. The objectives of Rio Earth Summit Convention, are to pursue, in accordance with its relevant provisions, the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding. The strategy of the European Commission is designed to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020. There are six main targets to help Europe reach its goal:

1. Full implementation of EU nature legislation to protect biodiversity
2. Better protection for ecosystems, and more use of green infrastructure
3. More sustainable agriculture and forestry
4. Better management of fish stocks
5. Tighter controls on invasive alien species
6. A bigger EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss

As a signatory, this strategy adds weight to the arguments for enhancing the wildlife value of our neighbourhood. We have, for example, alien species within the Camel Valley which threaten our ecosystems (e.g. Himalayan balsam), which will need to be controlled.

These international objectives to which the UK subscribes are reflected in our Biodiversity Action Plans¹ and the Habitats Directive, which apply both nationally and locally.

Sustainability

'Sustainability' is a key demand made in many planning documents, from global to local. Sustainability is difficult to define quantitatively and there is no universally accepted definition. However, the most quoted is that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987 which states that *"...sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*

Sustainability is the primary component of the Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2030. The vision statement for the Cornwall Local Plan is to *"achieve a leading position in sustainable living."*

¹ Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, 2011

Policy 1 states that *"When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and set out by the policies of this Local Plan. We will work with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals will be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan and supporting Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents (including, where relevant, with policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be regarded as sustainable development and be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*

Where there are no policies relevant to the application at the time of making the decision, the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

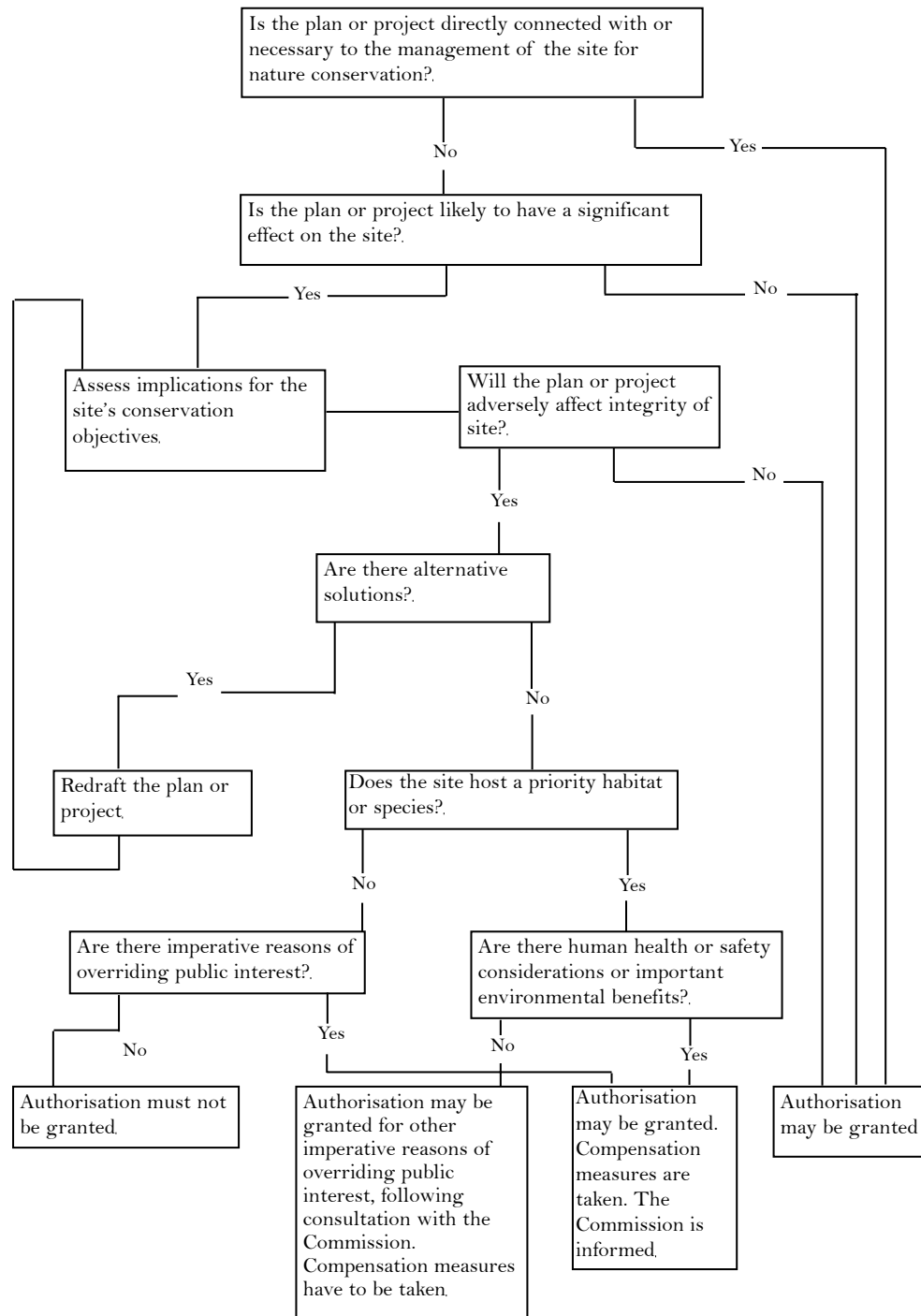
a) Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or

b) Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of defining sustainability, it is incumbent on us to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of our Neighbourhood Development Plan. In May 1992, the European Union adopted the Habitats Directive. The main aim of the Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity through the conservation of habitats and species that are important in a European context, taking account of economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics. The Directive applies specifically to protected sites and includes Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), such as those in the River Camel Valley. When compiling the Neighbourhood Plan, we are legally required to consider whether any proposed development will affect adversely the SAC. Proposed developments in the Plan should *"... not adversely affect the integrity of the site"*². This includes (among other things) causing direct or indirect change to the physical quality of the environment (including the hydrology) or habitat within the site, or causing ongoing disturbance to species or habitats for which the site is notified. According to the Directive, the competent authority (in our case, the Neighbourhood Plan Group) must undertake the appropriate assessment. The developer or proposers of the plan or project shall provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment (Regulation. 43(2)). During the appropriate assessment the competent authority must consult the Department who may advise on the scope and content of the assessment, but it is the duty of the competent authority to undertake the assessment itself (Regulation 43 (3) & (1)). The authority may take such steps as it considers necessary to obtain the opinion of the general public. The competent authority must have regard to the Department's representation and take account of public comment. The following flow diagram summarises considerations to be made when compiling the Plan and any projects that are in or adjacent to the SAC.

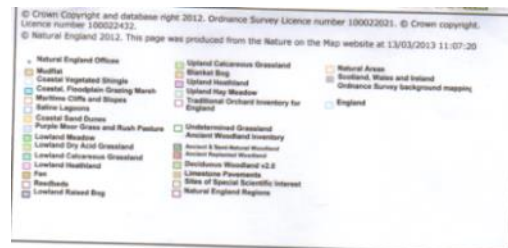
² European Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 amended by 97/62/EC

CONSIDERATION OF PLANS AND PROJECTS AFFECTING NATURA 2000 SITES



Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats

- Mudflat (in the estuary, near Amble Marshes)
- Deciduous woodland
- Lowland heathland (on St Breock Downs)
- Ancient and semi-Natural Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland



UK BAP Priority Habitats cover a wide range of semi-natural habitat types, and were those that were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).

Special Area of Conservation

The River Camel Special Area of Conservation is 621.17 hectares.

Annex I – “habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site” are:

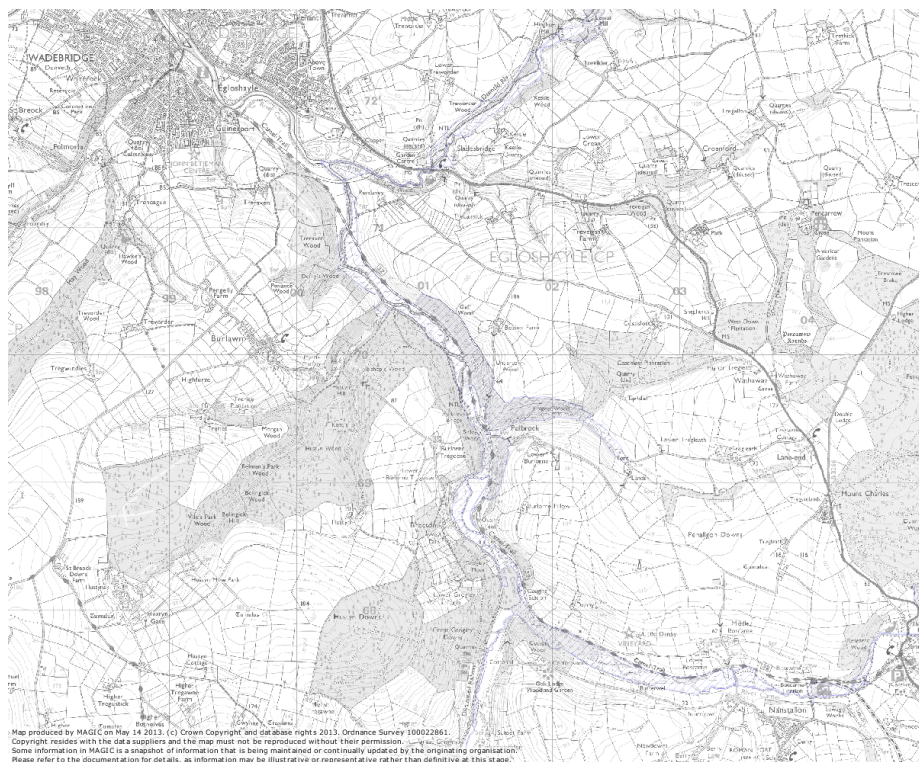
- European dry heath dominated by ericaceous dwarf-shrubs
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum*
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* (alder)

Annex II “species that are a primary reason for selection” of this site are:

- the bullhead (*Cottus gobio*)
- the otter *Lutra lutra*.

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection is the Atlantic

- Salmon, *Salmo salar*.



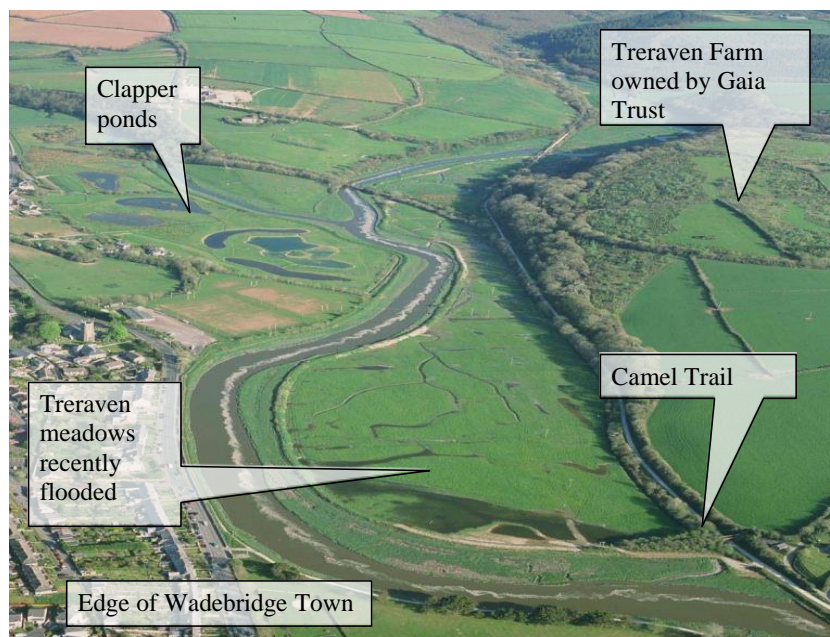
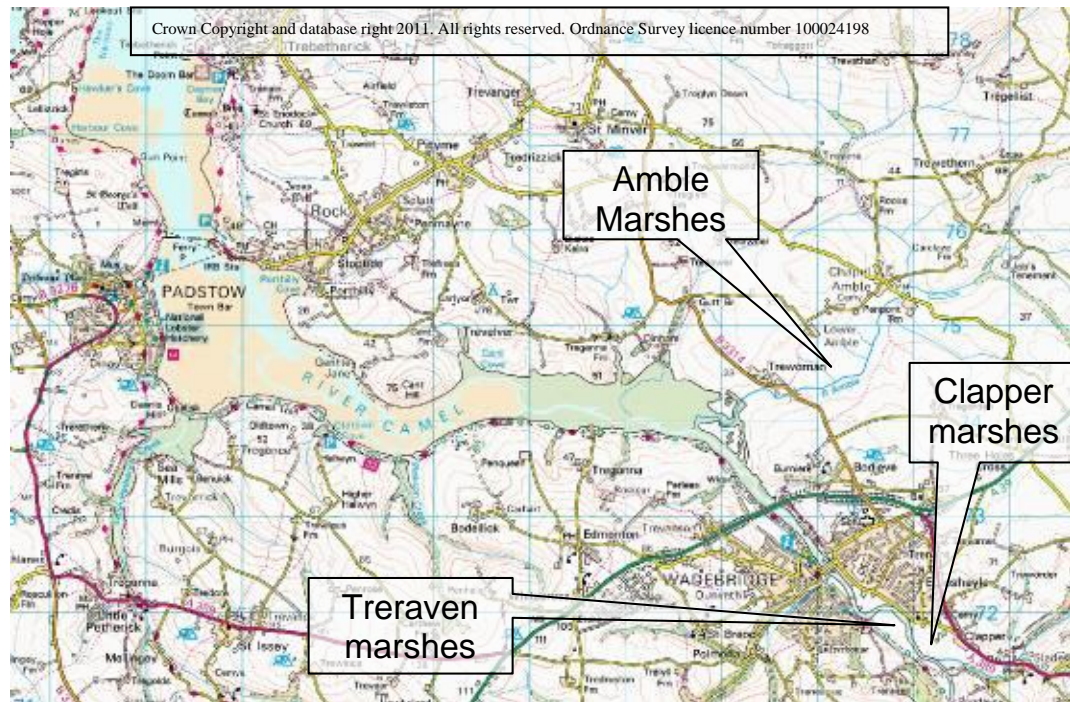
The Camel represents bullhead *Cottus gobio* in the extreme south-west of its range in England. The river encompasses a range of ecological conditions with both upland and lowland characteristics. The clean, fast-flowing, relatively oligotrophic³ waters with their stony bottoms are particularly suitable for bullhead, which forms an important part of the total fish biomass.

The Camel represents otter *Lutra lutra* in its main stronghold in England in the south-west of the country. Surveys have indicated a dense population along this river. Records show that these populations persisted even during the period when the otter was in serious decline over much of the rest of its range in England, and this area has acted as a nucleus for re-colonisation of other parts of England. The river and its tributaries represent the more upland as well as lowland habitat types utilised by otters, satisfying requirements for adequate food supply throughout the year. The wooded lower reaches of the river provide excellent habitat for resting and breeding.

³ “Oligotrophic” = lacking in plant nutrients and having a large amount of dissolved oxygen throughout

Treraven and Clapper Marshes

The marshes at Treraven and Clapper were reclaimed in a project managed by the Environment Agency between 2004 and 2011. These marshes, along with the Amble marshes, “...function together as refuges linked by the River Camel and also as wildlife corridors linking the river to inland habitats”⁴



Picture 1 A view of Treraven Marsh and Clapper ponds with the Camel Trail in 2007 shortly after capital works were completed. Stillimages.co.uk

From, Burke, James, Camel Valley Wetland Restoration.

There is currently no public access into this land. It was the wish of the landowners to restrict public access to the newly created habitat to maintain a sanctuary for the wildlife. The ponds are successful for bird life and this is attributed partly due to the control of access by the landowners. The landowners have now embraced the wetland restoration. Two landowners have entered Educational Access agreement with Natural England for guided walks in and around this SSSI. Two new bird hides have been planned and should be constructed in the coming years. The public footpath network is

⁴ Camel Wetland Restoration, Burke, Environment Agency, 2011

being improved with Cornwall Council rights of way team and the Parish Council have been stimulated to start managing and use their floodplain land adjacent to the SSSI for the benefit of the community and the local wildlife.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Other Important Sites

The Neighbourhood includes two designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): The River Camel Valley and its tributaries, and the Amble Marshes.



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1. River Camel Valley and Tributaries SSI

The River Camel Valley and Tributaries SSSI covers much of the Camel Valley between Egloshayle and Blisland, and then extends in several further sections of varying size right up to its source. This SSSI also covers much of the River Allen, a tributary which flows into the river immediately upstream of Egloshayle, and also some smaller unnamed tributaries.

The Rivers Camel, Allen and tributaries, their associated woodlands, carr, fen, heath and wet meadows are of special interest for wildlife. The system is particularly important for the otter *Lutra lutra* which benefit from some of the most unspoilt river corridors in the South West with extensive woods, excellent bank-side cover and little disturbance. The rivers are also of great value for fish such as the Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*, bullhead *Cottus gobio*, sea trout *Salmo trutta* and sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*. Rare greater and lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and *R. hipposideros* feed along the watercourses along with the kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* and water vole *Arvicola terrestris* which also breed. Some of the largest remaining ancient semi-natural woodlands in Cornwall are found alongside the Camel. They are often sessile oak *Quercus petraea* dominated but the system also supports significant areas of more recent wet grey willow *Salix cinerea* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland for which Cornwall is particularly notable. These areas support a rich wildlife including many important insect species and lower plants such as mosses. Some of the last few remaining meadows, marshes and area of fen vegetation of high wildlife value in Cornwall are found alongside the rivers. Some are rich in wildflowers.

2. The Amble Marshes SSSI



The Amble Marshes SSSI is an area of 57.3 hectares, situated on the north side of the Camel Estuary along the floodplain of the River Amble some 2 km north of Wadebridge. The main habitat is improved grassland; its assessment condition is “*unfavourable recovering*”⁵.

The marshes form a level area where water and land inter-mingle giving rise to valuable salt marsh habitats that are attractive to wildlife such as wading birds. The mudflats of the sheltered creeks and the Amble Marshes support reed beds and narrow bands of native broadleaved woodlands edge the small tributary stream valleys together adding to the sense of enclosed shelter. Away from the full force of the wind, hedges are topped by mature trees such as oaks and willows. The estuary sides and its mud and sand flats are home to a wide variety of birds including wildfowl such as widgeon, long tailed duck, golden eye, divers, grebe, and heron, little egrets, cormorants, oystercatchers and gulls along with many species of waders. Migrant birds visit throughout the year. Otters frequent the Camel and have been sighted locally.

3. Walmsley Sanctuary

This is a statutory bird sanctuary nationally important for winter waders and wildfowl. It includes 22 hectares of reclaimed flood plan between the farm at Lower Amble and the river Amble. It is owned and managed by the Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society for its members only. The sanctuary can be viewed from public footpaths that encircle the sanctuary and there is a public hide on the western corner. A members-only hide occurs inside the sanctuary, to which access can be gained by contacting the warden. The sanctuary has statutory protection as part of the SSSI.

4. Hawkes Wood

This is a local Nature Reserve under the management of Cornwall Wildlife Trust. A delightful old oak woodland near Wadebridge with two streams and a quarry, it was gifted to the Wildlife Trust in 1971 by Mrs Dorothy Stewart. The oak coppice is characteristic of many Cornish woods. This is an exceptional area for woodland birds, including nesting Nuthatches and Tawny owls, and the Pipistrelle bat (Britain’s smallest). The Reserve extends over 3 hectares (7 acres).

⁵ Natural England Assessment, 11 Aug 2010

Green Infrastructure

According to the Cornwall Local Plan, "Green infrastructure is an integrated network of multi-functional spaces within and linking urban and rural environments which collectively have significant environmental, social and economic benefits. It is a vital element of sustainable communities. Networks of green spaces and corridors provide opportunities for recreation, walking and cycling and also benefit wildlife by conserving and enhancing habitats, and providing buffers from development to important wildlife sites and watercourses.

Therefore good quality well planned and appropriately located green infrastructure is critical to Cornwall's future. Not only does it help us to live more sustainably and self-sufficiently, it helps to increase resilience and adaptation to climate change and supports ecosystems services providing for food production, flood control and wildlife and their component parts: water, soil, nutrients and organisms.

Green infrastructure can enhance the townscape and visual amenity, promote a sense of place and community identity, and improve the health and sense of well-being of people. Parks, sports fields and play space are clearly beneficial to health."⁶

Three very important components of the Green Infrastructure within our Neighbourhood are the playing fields of Wadebridge Community College, Coronation Park and Jubilee Park with Egloshayle playing fields.

School Playing Fields



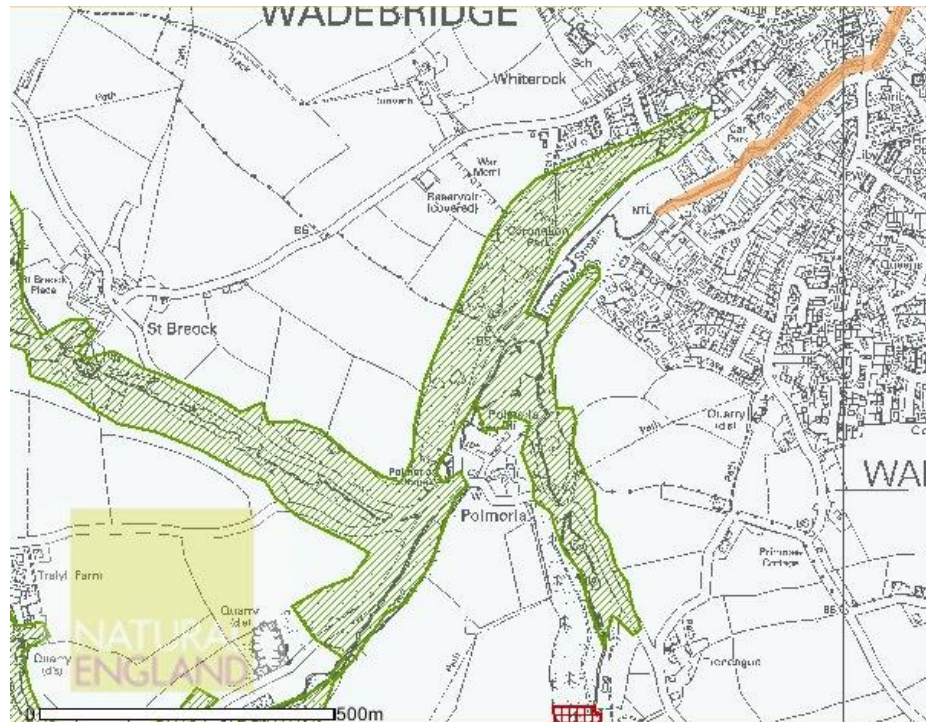
Wadebridge Community College playing fields and Wadebridge Community Primary school playing field

The sports centre uses the community college playing fields, along with the football club and (although there is no right of access) other members of the public. It is a valuable green and open space that could be threatened by any outward expansion of the College. Its importance as an open space may increase if development takes place on the adjacent field.

⁶ Cornwall Local Plan, pre-submission version, Cornwall Council, Mar 2013

Coronation Park

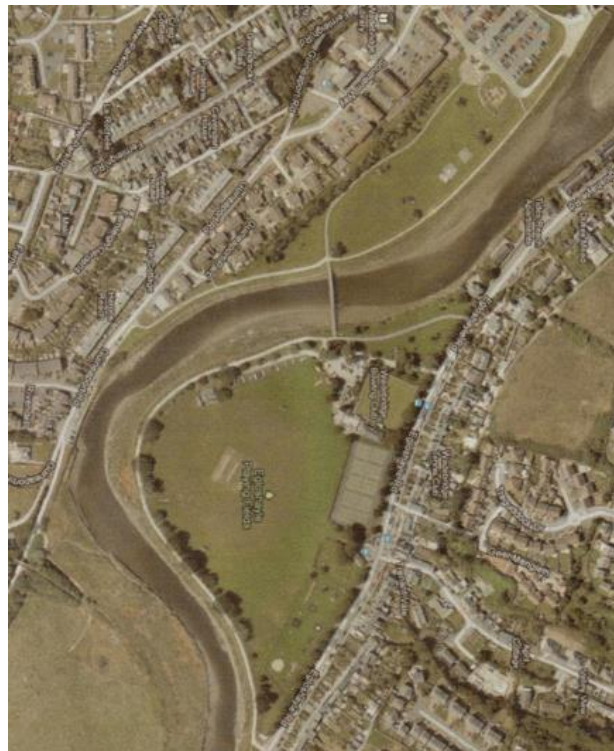
This is owned and managed by Wadebridge Town Council. This is a parkland area occupying the wooded slopes on the St Breock side of the town. It contains an abundance of trees and bushes, and a network of paths. It provides a valuable green space on the border of the town. It also contains deciduous woodland which is designated as a Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat.



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Jubilee Park and Egloshayle Playing Fields

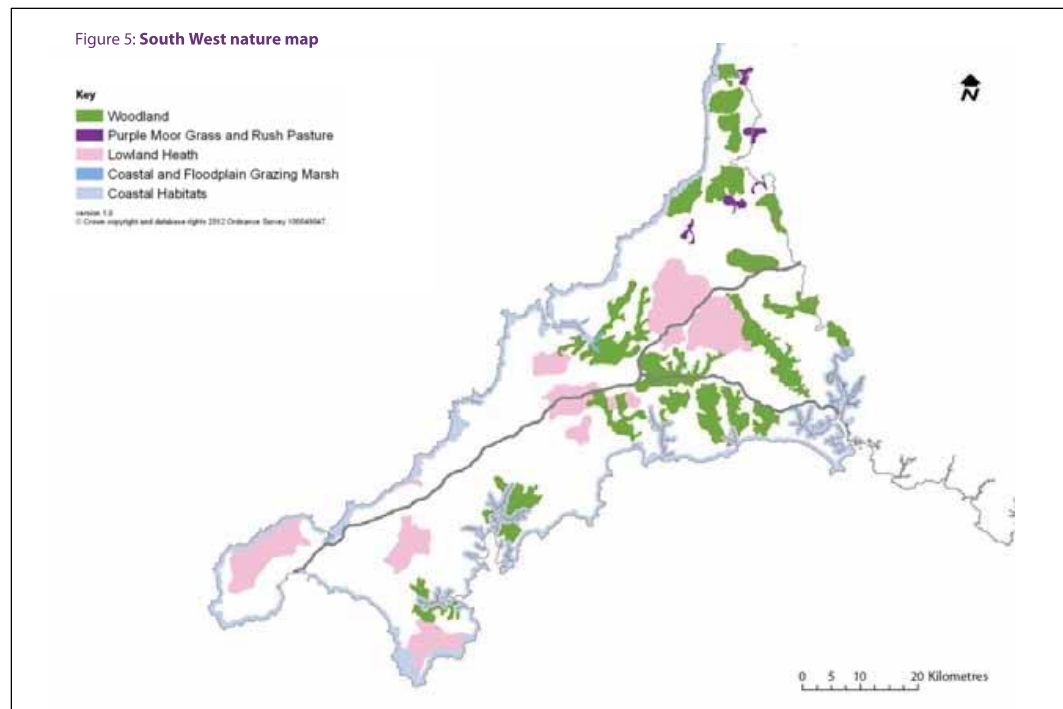
This is a magnificent area of green space with good recreational facilities. The area accommodates buildings for Wadebridge Cricket Club, Tennis Club and courts, and Bowling Club. It is also the site for the Toy Library. The playing fields contain a well-equipped children's play area where children can play and exercise, and where families can meet and make friends.



Woodland - not in a designated area

Cornwall is a poorly wooded county (7.5% compared with the national average of 8.4%). The diagram below shows that the Camel Valley has a significant proportion of this woodland.

Cornwall Council recognises that the trees and woodlands are a precious component of the landscape. The ancient estuarine oak woodlands, the windswept hedgerow trees lining our winding country lanes or the specimen trees in our parks and gardens, all trees and woodlands help define our sense of place as well as supporting a wide range of species. The woodland brings significant amenity value to our area. In addition to the natural woodland, the new woodland in Trenant Valley and the highly managed trees along the river in the park are of high urban value.

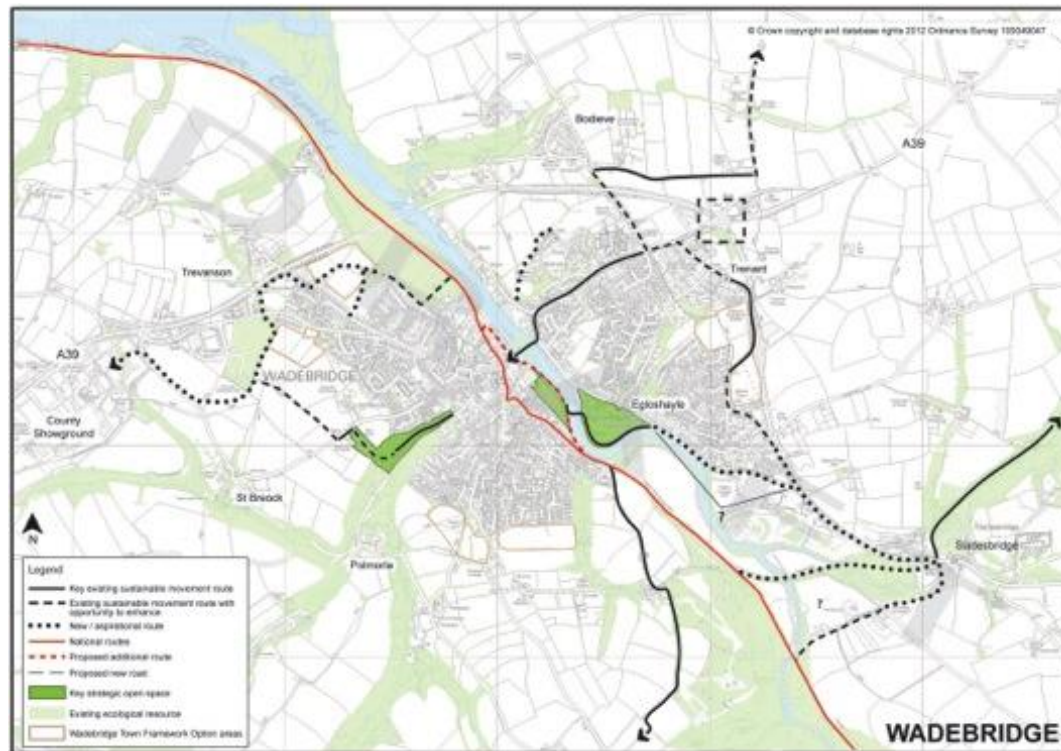


From: Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2030

Connectivity within the Neighbourhood Area

Highways and Non-Vehicular Access

Roads and paths lined with hedges or with grass verges can provide good connectivity for wildlife as well as humans. The grass verges along the A39 Atlantic Highway are a good example. The following map shows existing key ecological links in Wadebridge which act as wildlife corridors⁷.



The river valleys or hedgerow systems provide valuable ecosystem services. This can be a mix of habitats and with different designations but they are all linked and provide permeability for plants and animals in a cohesive resilient network. The map identifies the following as key existing Green Infrastructure links:

- The River Camel and tributaries including the SAC and associated habitats of the River Allen, the ancient woodland of Hill Wood Penance Woods and through the town out to Padstow
- The A39 Atlantic Highway road verges, dominated by grassland, from Trevanson across the River Camel and circumventing the town via Ball until reconnecting with the River Allen at Sladesbridge
- The Bodieve Valley with woodlands and good hedgerow systems that connect to the River Camel
- The extensive woods and rivers of the St Breock/Polmora Valleys, many of which are CWS and some, such as Hay Wood, are ancient woodland
- From Egloshayle around the edge of town through wetlands, woods and meadows to the ancient woodland and CWS, Penance Wood
- Tenant Vale in the centre of town with steep-sided woodlands, fields and hedgerows of high urban value

The map does not identify specific features such as hedgerows, trees, drains which will be part of any detailed reports submitted to Planning.

⁷ Wadebridge Town Framework Study, Cornwall Council, 2012

Public Rights of Way

A public right of way is a route over which the public have a legal right under highway law to pass and re-pass. The next set of maps shows the Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the Neighbourhood. In addition to being wildlife corridors, PROWs on the Definitive Map (compiled by Cornwall Council and available from Wadebridge Town Hall) act potentially as constraints to development.⁸

The following is taken from Development and Rights of Way - Good Practice Guide⁹:

“Development often affects public rights of way. It is accepted that development has to take place, but how it takes place and how it is planned can materially affect the quality of life for people who will live and work in the buildings and those who will use the right of way.”

There are many examples of rights of way that have been hemmed in by development, poorly surfaced or radically changed in character because of the impact of the planning process. Failure to consider them at all can lead to them being built on with consequent enforcement problems.

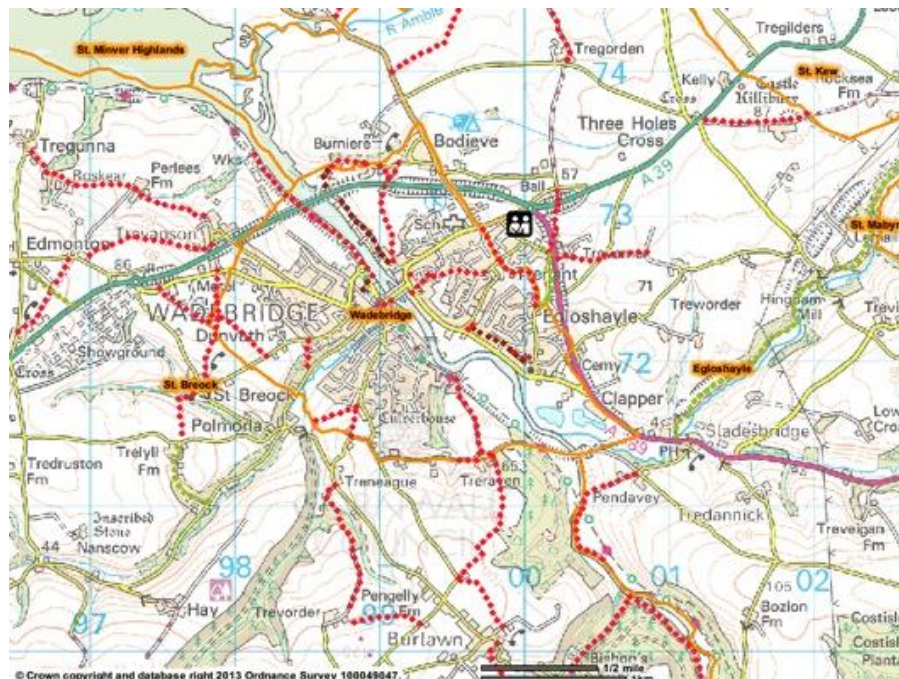
Sometimes the existence of a right of way under a building is only discovered several years after the building has been erected; this can lead to virtually insurmountable problems for the owners of the property and the highway authority.

However, it is also possible for rights of way to be enhanced and improved by development, with opportunities for new surfacing, boundary treatments, and so on and for a route to be utilised in new ways, such as providing safer routes to school.

The Government is very keen to support the economic recovery that development can bring, with changes to rights of way legislation to help speed the diversion process along being proposed.”

The following maps show the PROWs as indicated on Cornwall Council’s interactive mapping site. These maps are approximations. They do not show exact boundaries which are available only on the Definitive Map.

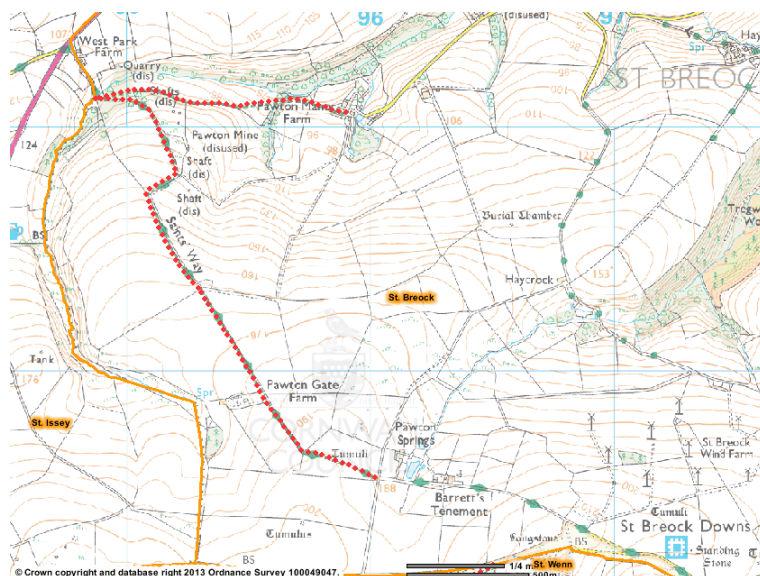
Public Rights of Way within Wadebridge



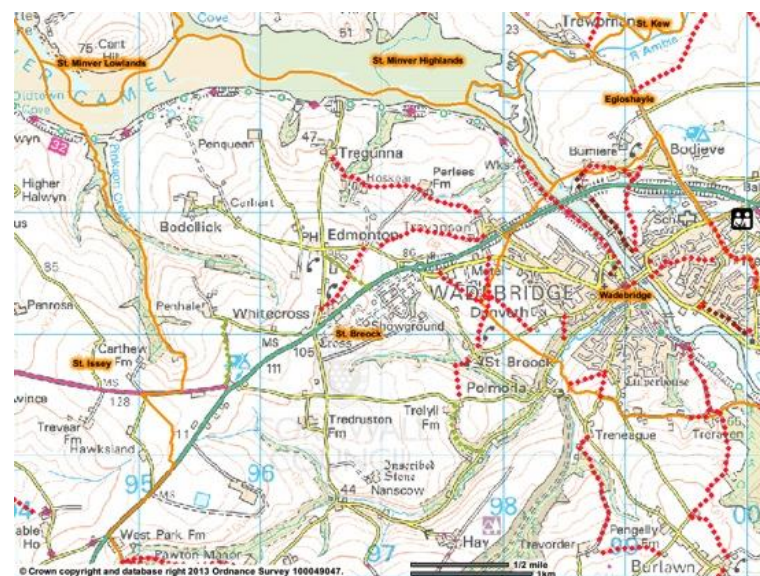
⁸ The Definitive Map was prepared under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Definitive Map and Statement provides a record of public rights of way in Cornwall and is conclusive evidence that at the Relevant Date the public had, at least, the rights shown on the Map without prejudice to the possibility of the existence of higher rights over a particular way.

⁹ Development and Rights of Way - Good Practice Guide, Institute of Public Rights of Way, 2013

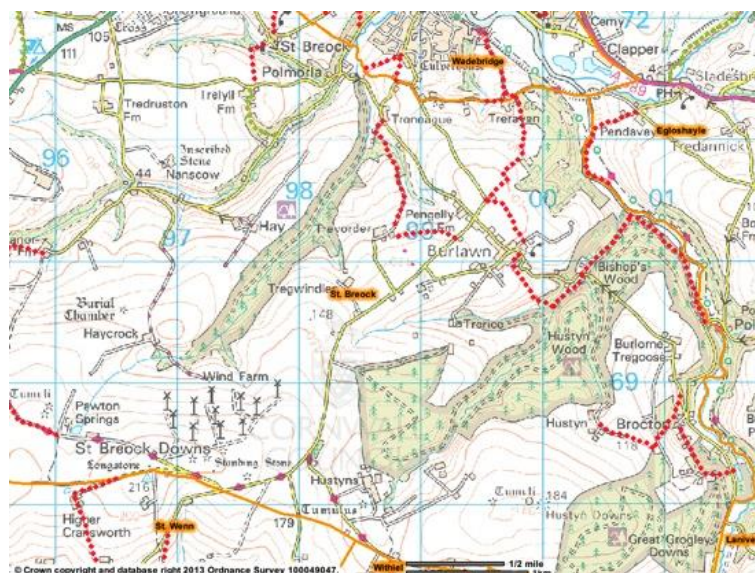
Public Rights of Way in St Breock Parish Map 1 Pawton area



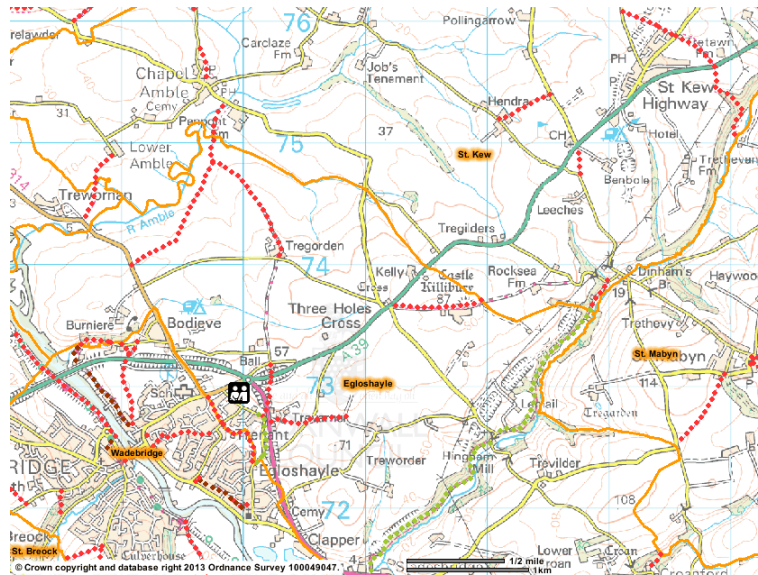
Public Rights of Way in St Breock Map 2



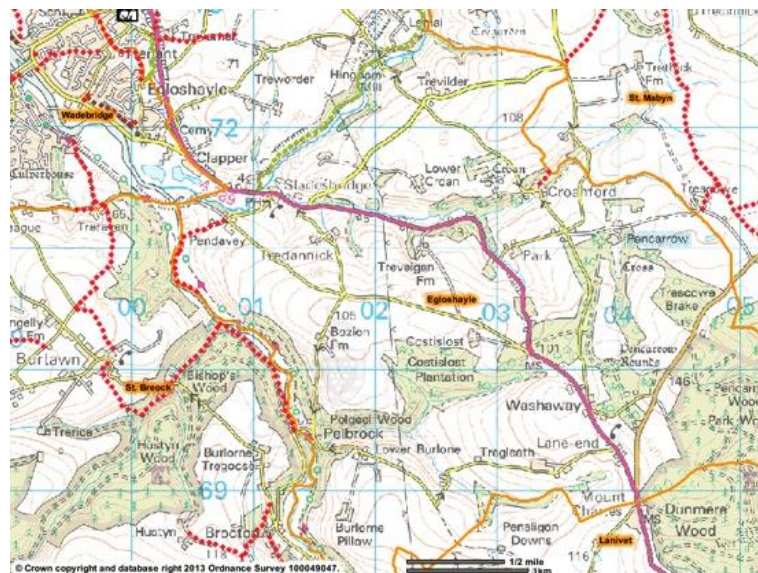
Public Rights of Way in St Breock Map 3



Public Rights of Way in Egloshayle Map 1

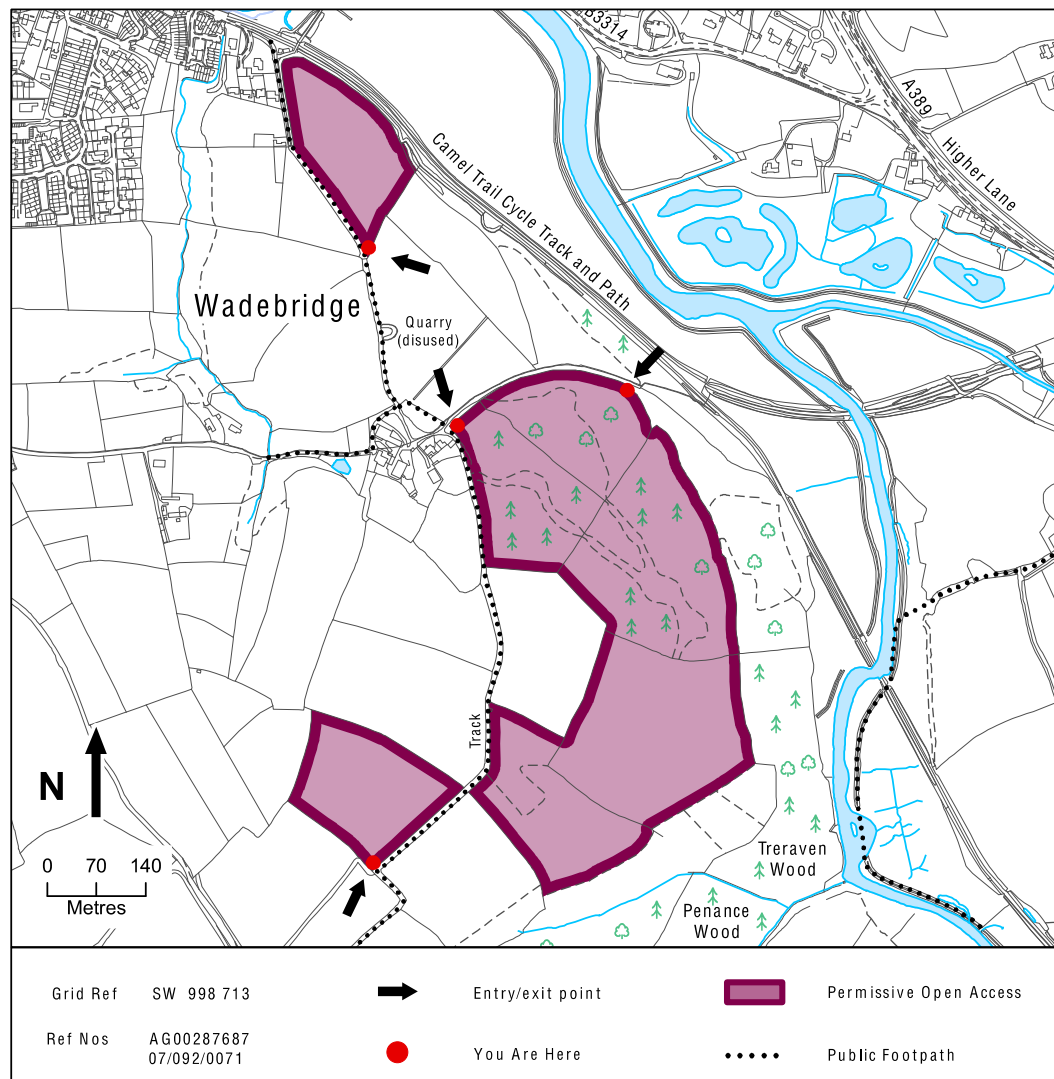


Public Rights of Way in Egloshayle Map 2



Permissive Footpaths

In addition to Public Rights of Way, there are a number of Permissive Footpaths. A permissive path (sometimes called a 'concessionary path') is that which the landowner permits the public to use, with the intention that it should not become a Public Right of Way. Until a Permissive Path becomes a PROW, it does not have the same legal protection.



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The above map shows permissive access in and around Treraven Farm. The open access land has fine views across the floodplain of the River Camel, including the new areas of wet grassland habitat which are being created under the stewardship scheme. The open access land also includes large areas of newly planted woodland, supporting a wide range of wildlife. This access has been provided under the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' farm conservation schemes as managed by Natural England, which help farmers and land managers protect and improve the countryside, its wildlife and history. It is permissive access and no new rights of way are being created. Existing rights of way are not affected. Access ends on the 30th September 2019.

Other permissive paths include those through Gaff Woods and Undertown Woods, owned and managed by the Pencarrow Estate. Also, there are many trails going through woods owned and managed by the Forestry Commission which are not public rights of way and are not on the definitive map.

What Needs Protecting?

Wild Flora and Fauna

According to the Bern Convention “*Wild flora and fauna constitute a natural heritage of great value that needs to be preserved and handed on to future generations.*”¹⁰

Wild Birds

The Birds Directive¹¹ places great emphasis on the protection of habitats for endangered as well as migratory species. The Directive recognises that habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats to the conservation of wild birds. It therefore places great emphasis on the protection of habitats for endangered as well as migratory species, especially through the establishment of a coherent network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) comprising all the most suitable territories for these species. We need to be mindful of the need to conserve the nesting sites of birds, but there are no SPAs within our neighbourhood plan area.

Hedgerows

Hedges are a valuable landscape feature and habitat in the SSSIs and the SACs. Hedgerows that are regarded as important in the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 if it, or the hedgerow of which it is a stretch,—

- (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and
- (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997

Part 2 of schedule 1 refers to the following criteria:

Archaeology and History - this is probably relevant to hedges on St Breock Downs; *Wildlife and landscape* (plants and animals, as recorded in Biological Records- especially Red Data Book¹² species).

This is a rather complicated set of criteria, but any planned development which will result in the destruction of a hedge will need to be mindful of this regulation.

Badgers

Gaff Woods and many other woodlands in the neighbourhood contain badger setts that are given some protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. It is a serious offence to kill, injure or take a badger, or to damage or interfere with a sett unless a licence is obtained from a statutory authority.

SSSIs

Legally, the SSSIs already have statutory protection. The first SSSIs were identified in 1949 when the then Nature Conservancy notified local authorities of SSSIs, so their conservation interest could be taken into account during the development planning process. Conservation of biological SSSIs usually involves continuation of the natural and artificial processes which resulted in their development and survival.

Amble Marshes

The hedges of the marshes are particularly vulnerable to development.

Coronation Park

Needs continued management and protection from development. The edges are already fully developed and the landscape has changed significantly with this development in recent years.

¹⁰ Bern Convention 1979

¹¹ Birds Directive 79/409/EEC, European Parliament, 1979

¹² Red Data List of endangered species of flora and fauna

Hawkes Wood

A woodland site owned by and managed by Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Egloshayle Playing Fields

There is a need to protect the green area and the actual playing fields while allowing for development and some expansion of the clubs that already exist there.

Woodland

The existing woodland needs continued protection. There is a Tree Preservation Order in place for an area to the north of Govenia Hill, as shown on the following map made by Cornwall Council.



A full inventory of the protection status needs to be made, and decisions made concerning future Tree Protection Orders. According to the Government guidelines, a Tree Protection Order (TPO) can be made for all trees within a defined area or woodland. However, a TPO cannot prevent approved development taking place. Therefore, it is important to identify those areas of trees and woodland in which development can and cannot take place.

Public Rights of Way

At present, any application for planning must include any public rights of way. Applicants must indicate whether any right of way or public highway crosses or adjoins a development site. Legal procedures for diversion or closures must be completed prior to works commencing on site. Extinguishment of a footpath or bridleway can only be achieved where it can be shown that there is no longer a need for the right of way. In deciding this, an authority must take into account how much the route is likely to be used by the public before extinguishment and the effect of the extinguishment on the land over which the route passes.

Future legislation may make diversions and extinguishments easier. It is therefore important for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify those PROWs which the community wishes to maintain. With reference to permissive access around Treraven, it should be noted that access ends on 30th September 2019.

What Needs Enhancing?

The Amble Marshes SSSI Water Level Management Plan (WLMP) is being implemented in partnership between landowners, the Environment Agency and Natural England through Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements and in consultation with the local community. The objective is to restore and enhance habitat conditions for wading bird species, both wintering and breeding.

Following the ecological resource survey carried out by the Cornwall Council Planning Department¹³ the following recommendations for enhancement of the ecological links in and near Wadebridge (it does not refer to the whole of the Neighbourhood Plan area):

- *“Areas that have breaks which weaken and devalue their wildlife and ecosystem service value, for example a culverted stretch of river in a dense urban area or a broken hedgerow*
- *Urban parts of the Polmorla River from Molesworth Bridge to the CWS at Coronation Park*
- *The urban edges of Bodieve to reconnect valley and hedgerow habitats*
- *Small section of poor hedgerow at Ball*
- *Parts of the A39 such as around the Garden Centre*
- *Treneague hedgerows to habitats off site”*

Egloshayle Playing Fields

The tennis, bowling and cricket clubs are valuable assets in the town. The facilities here could be enhanced by controlled development that does not reduce significantly the playing area nor detract from the open space by the river. Views concerning the skate-park and other facilities should be canvassed with the view to enhancing these, without reducing significantly the green space.

Biodiversity: Planning Objectives and Proposals

In 2012 Cornwall Council undertook a survey of the Wadebridge Green Infrastructure as part of a larger study into the ecological resources of Wadebridge. The report contains the following statements:

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that development should maintain and enhance biodiversity through the planning system. In this context the following principles should look to be adhered to in relation to the ecological resource in Wadebridge:

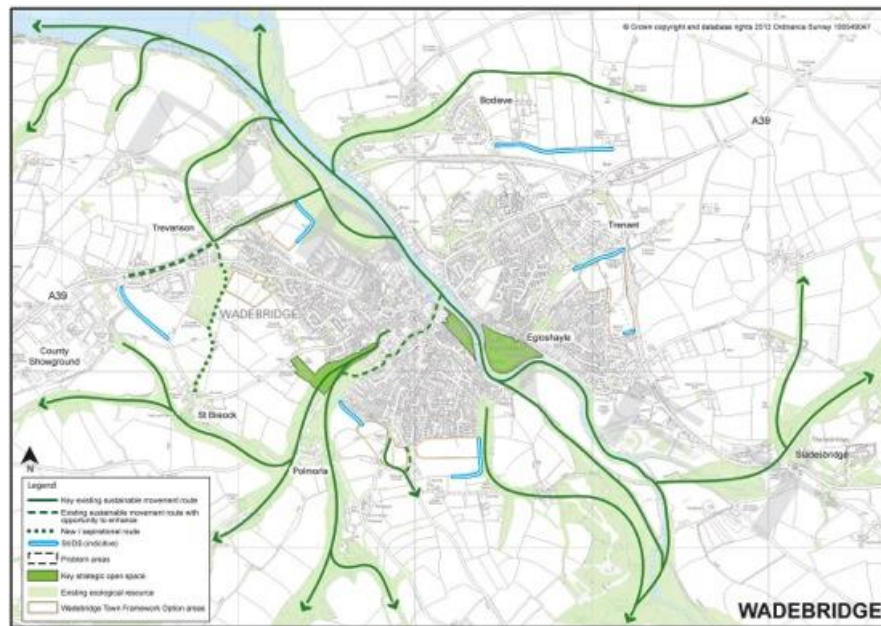
EC1 *All development design should aim to maintain and enhance the ecological resource. The ecological resource includes the following; protected sites such as SAC's & SSSI's, designated sites such as County Wildlife Sites, habitat designated under the BAP system and the semi-natural habitats of ecological value which link these sites.*

EC2 *New development should seek to de-fragment the landscape, by retaining the existing ecological resource, re-linking habitats and providing new biodiversity opportunities within proposals.*

These two principles aim to ensure that existing and new green infrastructure provides coherent ecological networks on a landscape scale in order to maintain the ecosystem services required for sustainable development and resilience to climate change.

¹³ Ecological Survey, Bernard-John, Cornwall Council, 2012

A Biodiversity map was also completed, as shown below:



The biodiversity map sets out the key existing ecological links in Wadebridge, as well as areas for enhancement and principles for creation of new ecological links. The map has been prepared within the long term growth context of the town; considering the areas that will accommodate future development within the town and urban extensions.

On completion of the survey, The Planning Department recommended that the principles should be followed¹⁴:

- *Statutorily protected sites should be protected from both direct and indirect damage. They should be buffered from development to provide multi-use green space*
- *Designated sites and all river systems should be avoided and buffered, as appropriate.*
- *All development areas should seek to create new rural urban edges on the boundary to provide replacement dark green (unlit) connected habitats to link to existing offsite habitats and buffer with other GI functions such as SUDS.*
- *Older building complexes (normally more ecologically valuable) should be retained, where possible, and linked to offsite semi-natural habitat by unlit GI.*
- *Green lanes should be provided (retaining existing or creating a second hedge) to link to public facilities such as schools and shops. These will also provide onsite habitat for more tolerant wildlife that can exist in urban areas.*
- *Biodiversity opportunities should be sought within new builds with links to off-site semi natural habitats where possible With reference to*
- *With reference to ecological connectivity, new links will be required in locations where new development is likely to occur. Some links may be physically set but most would be determined at a site master-planning stage at a later date. The actual location and design would be informed by wider masterplan issues and ecological surveys. The key aim is to provide links for both humans and wildlife from the existing urban areas to off site rural areas.*

¹⁴ Ecological Survey, Bernard-John, Cornwall Council, 2012

Environment: Strategic Planning Objectives and Proposals

In Wadebridge any planning proposals recommended in the Neighbourhood Plan must be consistent with the Cornwall Local Plan. Although it has not yet been ratified, it is assumed for the purposes of this topic chapter that the March 2013 the pre-submission version will apply. The strategic objectives and policies relating to the environment are extracted below:

<p align="center">Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2030. Pre-submission Version March 2013</p> <p align="center">Objectives and Policies</p>
<p>Objective 4 – Environment <i>Protect the various national and international designations; ensuring development does not have a negative impact on these areas. Consider coastal, tidal and fluvial flooding issues.</i></p>
<p>Vision Objective 10: <i>Enhance and reinforce local natural, landscape and historic character and distinctiveness and raise the quality of development through;</i> <i>a. Respecting the distinctive character of Cornwall's diverse landscapes;</i> <i>b. Maintaining and enhancing an effective network of open space and environmental stewardship for our ecosystems services network for food production, flood control and wildlife; and. Excellence in design that manages change to maintain the distinctive character and quality of Cornwall.</i></p>
<p>Policy 23 - Natural Environment <i>Development proposals will need to sustain Cornwall's local distinctiveness and character and protect and enhance Cornwall's natural environment and assets according to their international, national and local significance through the following measures:</i> 3. Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity and Geodiversity <i>Specifically ensuring that with direct and cumulative impact:</i> <i>a. international, national and locally designated sites for nature conservation are safeguarded from inappropriate development including appropriate buffer areas and provision made for their management based on up-to-date evidence and management plans.</i> <i>b. conserves, protects and enhances features of biological or geological interest (including Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species), and provide for their appropriate management.</i> <i>c. ensure no net loss of existing biodiversity and enable a net gain in biodiversity by designing in biodiversity, and ensuring any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated and/or compensated for.</i> <i>d. the importance of habitats identified in the South West Regional Nature Map and the creation of a local and regional biodiversity network of wildlife corridors and local wildlife sites, helping to deliver the actions set out in the Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan are recognised.</i> Mitigation <i>Where development will result in loss, the Council will seek appropriate and proportionate mitigation and/or compensation such as replacement habitats.</i></p>
<p>Policy 25 - Green Infrastructure <i>To protect and enhance a diverse, connected and functional network of open spaces and waterscapes development proposals should:</i> 1. Demonstrate that all the functional environmental infrastructure and connections have been taken into account including; ecosystem services; biodiversity; coastal processes; and recreation within and near to the application site and show how this understanding has positively influenced the proposal. 2. Retain and enhance the most important environmental infrastructure assets and connections which contribute to our Strategic Environmental Infrastructure network in their existing location. 3. Provide appropriate buffers to high value natural spaces. 4. Restore or enhance connectivity for nature and people through the site and linking to adjacent sites. 5. Provide good quality and accessible open and coastal space. 6. In exceptional circumstances where the need for the retention of the most important environmental infrastructure assets and connections is outweighed by the benefits arising from the development proposals, mitigation against the loss of such green infrastructure should be equal to or above its current value and quality. 7. Provide clear arrangements for the long-term maintenance and management that supports the green infrastructure and for transport routes.</p>

In order to determine whether the plans objectives are being achieved and therefore the vision delivered, the Local Plan gives the following monitoring framework:

Key outcome	Indicator	Targets
Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development		
<i>Planning applications determined in accordance with Local Plan</i>	<i>1: Number of applications approved as departures to the Local Plan</i>	<i>0: No applications should be approved contrary to the Local Plan</i>
Policy 25 Green Infrastructure		
<i>Provision of an integrated green infrastructure network</i>	<i>25.1: Progress in achieving the outputs of the Green Infrastructure Strategy</i>	<i>Targets identified in the Green infrastructure Plan</i>
	<i>25.2: Open space managed to green flag status</i>	<i>Maintain or improve accessibility to good quality open space</i>

Landscape Character Assessment

This section is an abbreviated version of a much fuller report that has been prepared by the evidence-gathering group and is available separately¹⁵

The landscape within our neighbourhood area is stunning, diverse, and unique. It has:

- **economic value** providing the setting for economic activity and is a central factor in attracting business and tourism. Cornwall Council refer to the landscape as Cornwall's greatest single economic asset;
- **social and community value** as an important part of people's lives, contributing to our sense of identity and well-being, and bringing enjoyment and inspiration
- **environmental value** as a home for wildlife and a cultural record of society's use of the land

"It is crucial that we understand what makes up the character of the landscape, so when we consider how it might change so that any change is for the better."

Designated Sites of Landscape

The neighbourhood plan area includes a part of the Camel Estuary AONB¹⁶. This runs from Wadebridge to Padstow. At the inland head of the main estuary near Wadebridge, it includes the Amble Marshes which form a level area where water and land intermingle giving rise to valuable salt marsh habitats that are attractive to a wide variety of birds including wildfowl such as widgeon, long tailed duck, golden eye, divers, grebe, and heron, little egrets, cormorants, oystercatchers and gulls along with many species of waders. Migrant birds visit throughout the year. Otters frequent the Camel and have been sighted locally.

The Guiding Principles¹⁷ of the AONB which relate to our neighbourhood plan are:

GP03.1 Seek the highest standards of design consistent with local vernacular in all development within, adjacent to or visible from the AONB at Wadebridge, provided that this includes enhancement of the settlement edges and conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Camel Estuary.

GP03.2 Support settlement growth to accommodate affordable housing at Wadebridge provided, where relevant, this includes enhancement of the settlement edges and also conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Camel Estuary.

GP03.3 Seek reduction of impacts on landscape character and tranquillity from major roads such as the A39, A389 and B3314 by for example reduction in street lighting, reduction in signage, less intensive management of roadside vegetation, non intrusive methods of traffic calming and local hedging styles and materials in highway works.

¹⁵ Landscape Assessment Report, Natural Environment Task Group, Wadebridge Area NP, Mar 2013

¹⁶ AONB = Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

¹⁷ Cornwall AONB Management Plan 2011-2016, Cornwall Council, 2011

GP03.4 Seek retention of the quiet rural character of small lanes such as those leading from settlement edges and off major roads to the edge of the estuary.

GP03.5 Promote the co-ordinated management of the activities taking place on the Camel Trail to ensure that they do not detract from tranquillity or visual amenity to the benefit of all users.

GP03.6 Support a reversion to marshland in the upper reaches of the Camel Estuary, for example at Amble Marshes, where drainage and agricultural improvement has taken place in order to restore to favourable condition this locally characteristic and significant habitat in the context of a landscape scale approach to the enhancement of locally significant Biodiversity Action Plan habitats

GP03.7 Support proposals for enhanced status and protection of the Camel Estuary for its wildlife and habitats.

GP03.8 Seek commitment to the protection of mature trees in surrounding settlements for example at the edge Wadebridge in order to conserve their contribution to local landscape character.

GP03.9 Encourage the management of hedges to allow elm and other hedge tree regeneration or, where appropriate, planting of native or locally naturalised tree species on hedges in order to restore landscape character following the impacts of Dutch Elm disease including raising awareness that such local hedges were previously considerably more treed.

Much of our neighbourhood plan area is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). This does not have the same statutory status as an AONB and therefore is not as important a constraint as an AONB; however, it still features in planning policy documents as a constraint.

Cornwall Council produced the first County wide landscape character assessment in 1994 which was updated in 2007. It is the first stage in developing an evidence base for future landscape policy and landscape strategies in Cornwall. Our neighbourhood plan contains parts of three of the County's 40 Landscape Character Areas: LCA 18, LCA 33 and LCA 34.

The purpose of a Landscape Character Assessment is to:

- classify the land
- describe the relationship between people and the land
- define the locality
- provide a framework to understand landscape
- allow reasoned, objective and informed judgements to be made about possible effects of planning proposals

The following is extracted from Cornwall Council's latest Landscape Character assessment¹⁸:

LCA No.CA18

The area is an elevated rounded and undulating hard rock ridge on the boundary between the districts of Restormel and North Cornwall. The area is mainly 20th century enclosed down-land with some patches of semi natural vegetation including heath remaining. There are older enclosures and wet collecting grounds around the margins. Wire fences prevail although there are some Cornish hedges on earlier enclosed land. Conifer plantations feature to the east and there are isolated broadleaved blocks elsewhere. Settlement is sparse, limited to farmsteads. The area has a large number of prehistoric sites, particularly ritual and ceremonial monuments of the Bronze Age. There are wide views north and south and two wind farms are prominent in this open landscape.

Distinctive features

The most distinctive features are the two highly visible tracts of Lowland Heathland, prehistoric ritual monuments, including barrows, a stone row and several standing stones on this open exposed landscape. Wind farms and masts are prominent features.

¹⁸ Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study, 2007

Visions and objectives

An open, upland heathland area, with a wild landscape character and sweeping views diminished by the presence of wind farms. Much of the heath has been lost to 19th and 20th century enclosure. The objective must be to conserve the open and wild landscape character of the area re-introducing heathland where possible.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- *Prepare a plan for the management of the existing heathland and create linkages between the separated areas*
- *Keep forestry to the flanks of the high ground and avoid planting the open upland*
- *Regenerate heathland on rough areas planted with conifers at Hustyns*
- *Restrain development out of keeping with the area especially large scale holiday parks*
- *Encourage the use of agri-environmental schemes to maintain traditional field boundaries and farming methods*
- *Conserve archaeological features and their settings. Encourage the creation of footpaths to link and access the open access areas*

LCA No.CA33

This area runs north and west of Bodmin. It is defined by the Camel and Allen valleys which cut through the undulating plateau. The River Camel and its tributaries are a designated SAC. The valleys are intimate and wooded, especially the Camel with coniferous and mixed woodland including Upland Oakwoods with sessile oak and Upland Mixed Ashwoods. The Allen valley has broadleaved woodland. The plateau tops are open and are dominated by estate farms with a mix of improved pasture and arable land within a medium scale field pattern of prominent Cornish hedges with few trees. The sloping lands to the south of the Camel where there is a considerably greater proportion of Recently Enclosed Land have a stronger field pattern with many hedgerow trees. Settlement is clustered in small villages on higher ground with distinctive churches.

Distinctive features

The most distinctive features are the steep valleys and rivers of the Camel and Allen and their associated woodland, wetland and enclosed pastures. These are enjoyed by cyclists on the Camel Trail.

Visions and objectives

Conserve and enhance the broadleaved woodlands in the valleys, the valley floor wetlands and the strong Cornish hedges and hedgerows whilst controlling development strictly in rural/semi-rural areas.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- *Manage the broadleaved woodland to maintain landscape character*
- *Replace coniferous planting with broadleaved over time*
- *Conserve and enhance the Cornish hedges and hedgerows encouraging trees*
- *Manage the valley floor wetlands for biodiversity*
- *Encourage appropriate planting around settlements which are expanding and are in exposed locations*
- *Protect and enhance the Beacon area in Bodmin*
- *Support the continued management of the Camel Trail*

LCA No.CA34

This embraces the estuary running west from Wadebridge to the sea with associated coastal plateau to the north. This area is focussed on the low lying Camel estuary which winds its way west and then north to the Atlantic. The area is defined largely by the ... the short tributary streams from the surrounding higher ground that form tidal creeks where they meet the river. The field pattern is medieval with a medium scale pattern generally of improved grassland and some arable with Cornish hedges the main boundary feature. This area is very open and exposed at the coast which is generally treeless with some areas of scrub, bracken, heath and sand dunes. Further inland, the area becomes more sheltered, such as around Chapel Amble where the landscape is much more intimate than at the coast, although tree cover is still largely confined to the creeks and stream valleys. Trees on Cornish hedges also become more frequent away from the coast. Settlement is dispersed with small farms.

Distinctive features

Wide open river estuary of the River Camel with its mudflats;

Visions and objectives

A generally unspoilt farming landscape, rather devoid of trees, around the magnificent Camel Estuary that has become a haven for tourism and recreational activities. The estuary has a high ecological value so the objective must be to conserve the estuarine habitat whilst integrating tourism and other development into the landscape.

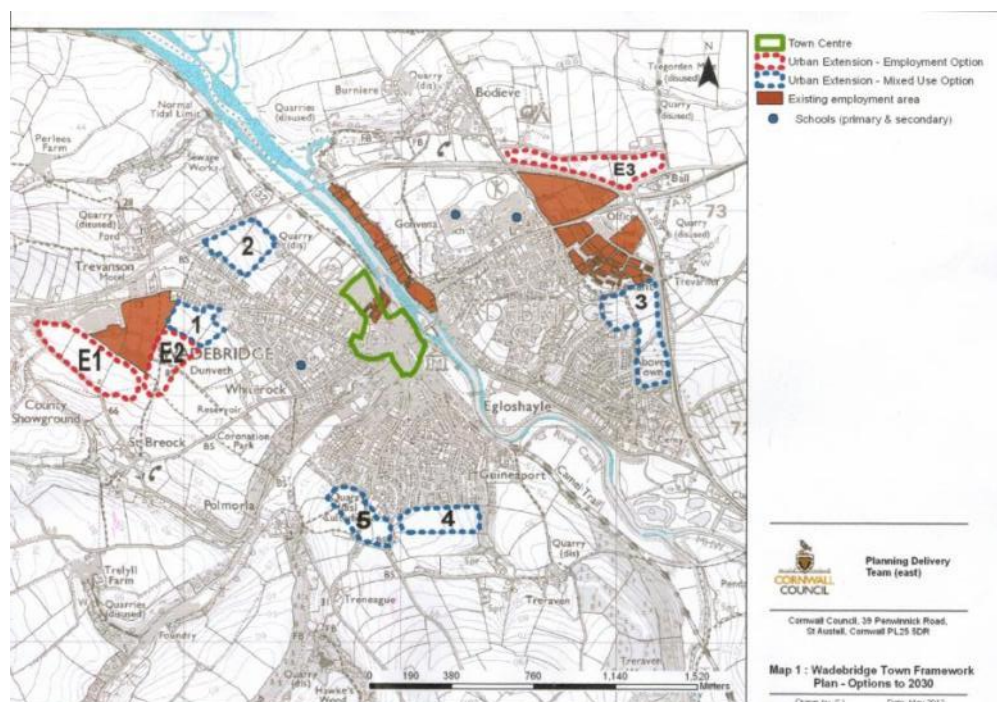
Planning and Land Management Guidelines

- *Develop a tourism and nature conservation strategy in regard to the development and use of the estuary*
- *Encourage new planting on farmland as tree lines and small blocks giving preference to the establishment of Cornish Elm*
- *Prepare design guides for new development*

Wadebridge Town Framework Plan and Landscape Character Assessment

When Wadebridge Town was being considered as a site for a Town Framework Plan¹⁹, studies were undertaken to assess the impact of an urban extension into thirteen areas with theoretical potential for development. These areas are shown on the plan below. After the initial assessment, for an urban extension, the original 13 'cells' was changed to the following cells:

- Town Centre
- Urban Extension- Employment option, identified as cell E1 and cell E2
- Urban Extension- mixed use option, identified as identified as cells 1- 5
- Existing employment area



¹⁹ Wadebridge Town Framework Study, Cornwall Council, 2012

The overall conclusion for the Urban Design Assessment suggests:

Cell No 1

This cell is well located for employment and the town centre and could provide opportunities for a modest urban extension to Wadebridge. Pedestrian access to the town centre from the north east boundary of the cell is possible. Landscape impact is likely to be more modest. Re Movement infrastructure implications outside the cell - there would be a need for local highway improvements. Score DARK GREEN

Cell No 2

This cell could provide opportunities for modest urban extension to Wadebridge. Pedestrian access to town centre from north east boundary of cell is possible. Landscape impact is likely to be more modest but LVIA²⁰ work would inform the extent of development and impacts. It requires new junction works and traffic calming and improvements for pedestrian safety. Score DARK GREEN

Cell No 3

This cell is well located to employment and a range of local facilities. It is prominent in local landscape. Improvements to the local footpath network would be necessary to enhance safety and quality of pedestrian connectivity to wider town. Vehicular access is possible from the north and south of cell. Local highway improvements and traffic calming measures required. Score DARK GREEN

Cell No 4

This cell is too remote from the town centre and does not have safe pedestrian access. There is reliance on a main route into town centre that does not have pavements in parts. Cell would have landscape impacts, but LIVA work would need to test views and impacts accordingly. Vehicular access is possible via connection with estate roads. It requires local highway improvement. Score YELLOW

Cell No 5

This could possibly be a small extension to the existing housing estate. There is potential visual impact but LVIA work would be necessary to establish extent of impacts. Access arrangements rely on a main route without pavements. It requires local improvements to highway and pedestrian routes. Score ORANGE

Cell E1

This cell is isolated from the town and range of local facilities, but in close proximity to a supermarket and adjacent to existing employment areas. Prominent in landscape (A careful assessment of the impacts is required). Good road access. There is a pedestrian route to town centre via West Hill. Score LIGHT GREEN

Cell No E2

This cell is isolated from the town and range of local facilities, but in close proximity to a supermarket. It is prominent in landscape (careful assessments of impacts required). Good road access. There is a pedestrian route to the town centre via adjacent sites and down West Hill. It requires highway and pedestrian link upgrades. Score LIGHT GREEN

Cell E3

This cell is too isolated from the town and range of local facilities. The existing highway network creates barriers to safe and convenient pedestrian access. Development of this prominent cell could harm the character and identity of landscape, but LVIA work would need to test views of impacts accordingly. It would require creation of safe and convenient pedestrian crossing points. Score?

Although the Town Framework Plan was not completed, this information is available as evidence for a local landscape character assessment of our neighbourhood area.

²⁰ LVIA = landscape and visual impact assessment

Local Landscape Character Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan

Landscape Character Assessment is an on-going process and continues to be developed through public consultation and further data analysis. Part of that process includes Local Landscape Character Assessments (LLCAs) made specifically for our Neighbourhood Plan. These will provide more intimate details of the landscape and will be an important addition to our evidence-based report on the Environment.

Much of the information for the LLCAs can be obtained from resources that are already available. These include:

- 'Landscape character areas' (LCAs) and 'landscape description units' (LDUs) by Cornwall Council planners when compiling landscape evidence for a possible Wadebridge Town Framework.
- Local groups with specific interests, such as the Local Ramblers Group, Historic Reference Group, and Camel group of the Cornwall Wildlife trust
- Local Environment assessments used for planning- e.g. the Treworder Solar Farm, St Breock Wind Farm Environmental Impact Assessments
- Cornwall AONB Management Plan
- Biodiversity information, already compiled, that shows the Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation, Cornwall Wildlife Site, land owned by a conservation organisation
- Historical Environment Records
- Map of Conservation Area
- Definitive map of Public Rights of Way
- Map of County geological sites
- Tranquillity mapping²¹
- Cornish hedges²²

Templates for recording the Landscape Character Assessment and the Value assessments are available.

The factual evidence gathering must be completed before the value judgement is made. It is important to make sure that the gathering of the landscape information is an objective and not subjective process.

The Local Landscape Character Assessment specific to the Wadebridge, Egloshayle and St Breock area can:

- provide environmental information as an evidence base for our Neighbourhood Plan
- celebrate what is important about our landscape
- identify features and issues of key importance to our community
- help set priorities for future land management and siting of development
- objectively inform opinions on the environmental implications of proposed developments
- influence future planning and policy

If we are to carry out a LLCA for our neighbourhood area, in addition to gathering existing information, we will need to:

- engage the community, e.g. by holding an event which celebrates our landscape; displays information about the landscape; asks the public about their perceptions of the landscape, which parts of the landscape they value most and for what reasons; and invites the public to participate in our LLCAs

²¹ at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1828->

²² at <http://www.cornishhedges.co.uk/PDF/geology.pdf>

- hold a workshop to demonstrate Local Landscape Character assessment to the community
- carry out field surveys
- collate all the information and draft a Local Landscape Character Assessment

A Wadebridge, Egloshayle and St Breock LLCA can influence our neighbourhood planning policies by

- identifying green space between settlements that should be protected
- managing development in the AONB and AGLV
- ensuring that the landscape character is considered in settlement and commercial growth, tourism, and access to the countryside and estuary
- ensuring quality of design where local character and vernacular buildings are respected
- inform decisions related to climate change and renewable energy

Landscape: Strategic Planning Objectives and Proposals

Any planning proposal recommended in the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the Cornwall Local Plan. Although it has not yet been ratified, it is assumed for the purposes of this draft that the March 2013 pre-submission version will apply. Many of the planning policies have components relevant to the environment and the landscape in particular. The most relevant policies are reproduced below.

<p align="center">Cornwall Local Plan 2010-2013 Pre-submission version March 2013</p> <p align="center">Objectives and Policies</p>
<p>Objective 4- Environment</p> <p><i>Protect the various national and international designations ensuring development does not have a negative impact on these areas. Consider coastal, tidal and fluvial flooding issues.</i></p>
<p>Vision- Objective 10:</p> <p><i>Enhance and reinforce local natural, landscape and historic character and distinctiveness and raise the quality of development through</i></p> <p><i>a) respecting the distinctive character of Cornwall's diverse landscapes</i></p>
<p>Policy 23 - Natural Environment</p> <p><i>Development proposals will need to sustain Cornwall's local distinctiveness and character and protect and enhance Cornwall's natural environment and assets according to their international, national and local significance through the following measures:</i></p> <p><i>1. Cornish Landscapes</i></p> <p><i>Development should be of an appropriate scale, mass and design which recognise and respect the distinctive and diverse, landscape character and coastline as being vital to Cornwall's economy whilst having regard for the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape asset, the potential for cumulative impact and the wish to maintain dark skies and tranquillity in areas that are relatively undisturbed as set out in the Cornwall Landscape Character Assessment and supported by the descriptions of Areas of Great Landscape Value. In areas of undeveloped coast, outside main towns, only development requiring a coastal location, and that cannot be achieved elsewhere, will be acceptable.</i></p> <p><i>2. The Cornwall and Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i></p> <p><i>Ensuring that any proposals within the AONB or affecting its setting, conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB, is appropriately located to address the AONB's sensitivity and capacity and delivers the objectives of the Cornwall and Tamar Valley AONB Management Plans including the interests of those who live and/or work in them.</i></p> <p><i>3. Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity and Geodiversity</i></p> <p><i>Specifically ensuring that with direct and cumulative impact:</i></p> <p><i>a. international, national and locally designated sites for nature conservation are</i></p>

safeguarded from inappropriate development including appropriate buffer areas and provision made for their management based on up-to-date evidence and management plans.

b. conserves, protects and enhances features of biological or geological interest (including Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species), and provide for their appropriate management.

c. ensure no net loss of existing biodiversity and enable a net gain in biodiversity by designing in biodiversity, and ensuring any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated and/or compensated for.

d. the importance of habitats identified in the South West Regional Nature Map and the creation of a local and regional biodiversity network of wildlife corridors and local wildlife sites, helping to deliver the actions set out in the Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan are recognised.

Mitigation

Where development will result in loss, the Council will seek appropriate and proportionate mitigation and/or compensation such as replacement habitats.

A SWOT²³ analysis for the Landscape of Wadebridge, Egloshayle, & St Breock²⁴

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wadebridge town remains a largely self-contained settlement with defined boundaries and is still surrounded by attractive predominantly rural landscape The Area is defined by the Camel and the various tributaries which constitute a spine for a more wooded and intimate hinterland The areas around the Camel estuary and the Allen valley enjoy AONB protection and provide great tourism and recreational potential; adjoining hinterland areas have local AGLV designation giving more limited protection Much of the higher parts of the Area comprises treeless arable farmland offering attractive, largely unspoilt sweeping vistas The Area contains important vestiges of ancient woodlands (some in SSSIs) along the river valleys and vestiges of heathland on St Breock Downs Rural settlements across the Area are still based mainly on scatter of medieval farm settlements with only restricted modern development (30 farms) The Camel Trail has a national reputation as a multi-use trail and is a focus for attracting visitors to Wadebridge The Area contains various listed and designated buildings & prehistoric monuments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the immediate surroundings of Wadebridge are characterised by signs of incipient ribbon development and the retail (Tesco) and commercial park is a widely visible eye-sore on high ground The busy main roads, A39 and A38 create noise and pollution in otherwise peaceful areas In places conifer plantations have replaced deciduous planting to the detriment of natural landscape (eg Hustyn Downs) Electricity pylons run through the Allen & Camel valleys and are prominent The about to be repowered St Breock wind farm can be regarded as an intrusive prominent industrial-scale feature which contrasts with its otherwise rural setting as does the nearby single turbine at Pawton The existing large Solar PV installations at Benbole (just outside Egloshayle Parish), Middle Treworder and Hal's grave clash with the normal tapestry of farming. Significant infestation of banks of River Camel by invasive plant species – especially Himalayan Balsam.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work to preserve the distinctive character of Wadebridge and to prevent its setting from becoming suburban in character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creeping urbanisation outside strictly and carefully defined boundaries – the challenge of accommodating 800 new dwellings

²³ SWOT = Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

²⁴ by Jeremy Varcoe, on behalf of the Environment Topic Group, 2013

- To expand tourism and walking by providing new access routes to the Camel Trail from adjoining settlements; also the Saints Way. Both could offer opportunities for small-scale commercial enterprises
 - The fact that most of the existing hamlets are in valleys makes it easier to accommodate a limited number of additional dwellings outside the immediate vicinity of Wadebridge without unacceptable visual impact
 - Areas close to Wadebridge and not really suitable for other development could be adapted for better public access
 - The grants available for SSSI areas could help to ensure better and more active management of ancient woodlands in the river and stream valleys
 - More recreational use of the river – improved access points
 - Better promotion of the rural parts of the area which has some of Cornwall's most diverse, attractive, and sparsely populated landscape in the vicinity of the important visitor resorts of Padstow, Rock and Polzeath.
 - Potential to work with agencies to reduce mono-cultural landscape (eg Forestry Commission & Hustyn Downs
 - Opportunity to promote industrial heritage (Allen Valley railway / Grogley Mine)
 - To get young people and the community more involved with environmental projects
- Topography, geography and climate lend themselves to renewable energy projects

- The valley bottoms and wetland areas are especially vulnerable to pollution and conservation damage
- Given the existing renewable installations in the area there is now little scope for all but a few very small further developments without the cumulative impact becoming intolerable (in some people's view)
- Further planting of conifers, the removal of hedges and the cultivation of mono-crops all threaten the special character of the area
- The current lack of regard for the considerable industrial relics and ancient monuments in the area threatens the survival of valuable evidence of important aspects of Cornwall's industrial and social history.
- Maintenance of Camel Trail threatened by reduction of full time rangers in Council cuts.
- Further out of town, elevated, illuminated-at-night retail development in pipeline – Sainsbury at Trenant + 6 units on West Hill
- Pollution threat of further increases in traffic
- Lack of funding in local and central government

Conclusion

The main purpose of this section has been to compile objective, technical evidence on the Natural Environment of Wadebridge town and the parishes of Egloshayle and St Breock, which should be consulted and carefully considered when making the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NPD). Before presenting detailed evidence, it is important that we have a clear and precise understanding of what we mean by the term 'natural environment'.

Johnson et. al. (1997)²⁵ identify the 'natural environment' as a problematic expression in that it varies widely in usage within and between disciplines. In an attempt to correct the problem and standardize its usage, they define it on the basis of what is meant by *natural* as reflected by common usage and dictionary entries. According to their definition, the natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally on Earth or some region thereof. It is an environment that encompasses the interaction of all living species. The natural environment is contrasted with the built environment that comprises areas and components that are strongly influenced by humans.

It is difficult to find absolutely natural environments anywhere on Earth. The degree of naturalness varies from completely natural in one extreme to completely man-made in the other. This difficulty is recognised in the Government White Paper: The Natural Choice²⁶. In this White Paper, 'natural environment' is given a broad meaning. It covers living things in all their diversity: wildlife, rivers and streams, lakes and seas, urban green space and open countryside, forests and farmed land. It includes the fundamentals of human survival: our food, fuel, air and water, together with the natural systems that cycle our water, clean out pollutants, produce healthy soil, protect us from floods and regulate our climate. And it embraces our landscapes and our natural heritage, the many types of contact we have with nature in both town and country. The White Paper recognises that In England our natural environment is the result of thousands of years of interaction between people and nature. It continues to be shaped through the care and attention invested by the individuals and organisations who actively manage it. In a section entitled natural networks, the White Paper states that the natural environment is sometimes seen as a series of disconnected places: gardens, parks, farmland, forests, coastland, wetlands, rivers and seas. The White Paper goes on to state that "*We should be thinking not of isolated spots of green on a map of England but of a thriving green network linking wildlife sites with farmland, forestry and urban parks and gardens across the country.*" In another section, the White Paper states that "*Nature is sometimes taken for granted and undervalued. But people cannot flourish without the benefits and services our natural environment provides. Nature is a complex, interconnected system. A healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing.*"

What can be construed in planning as 'natural' is clarified in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. In a section on Natural beauty in the countryside, it states that:

"The fact that an area in England or Wales consists of or includes—

- (a) land used for agriculture or woodlands,
- (b) land used as a park, or
- (c) any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, does not prevent it from being treated, for the purposes of any enactment (whenever passed), as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty)."²⁷

²⁵ Johnson, D. L.; Ambrose, S. H.; Bassett, T. J.; Bowen, M. L.; Crummey, D. E.; Isaacson, J. S.; Johnson, D. N.; Lamb, P.; Saul, M.; Winter-Nelson, A. E. (1997). "Meanings of Environmental Terms". *Journal of Environmental Quality* **26** (3): 581–589.

²⁶ White Paper: The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, June 2011

²⁷ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

A written response to a consultation evening by representatives of WREN (Wadebridge Renewable Energy Network) highlights some of the difficulties that we will need to resolve when preparing our Neighbourhood Development Plan. The response states that:

*"Within reason we should not be too precious about the surrounding landscape which is fundamentally man-made. What we now perceive as natural is the end product of several thousand years of deforestation and agriculture. We may subjectively experience this as beautiful and so value it, but this is different in kind from asserting that we have a natural landscape that must be protected at all costs. Having said that the Camel Estuary is a magnificent 'natural' environmental system and should be protected."*²⁸

Before we finalise the Plan we will need to ascertain from the community:

- how precious to them are specific areas of the surrounding landscape?
- what value do they place on specific areas of landscape?
- which areas of landscape would they like to protect from building and business developments

Natural England is the Government body whose purpose in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 is 'To ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development' Therefore, Natural England has the statutory duty to scrutinise any proposals in our Neighbourhood Development Plan that affect Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Special Area of Conservation, or Sites of Special Scientific Interest. However, Natural England's obligation does not extend to an Area of Great Landscape Value, a designation given in Cornwall Council planning documents to a substantial proportion of our neighbourhood. Consequently, given the extent of the AGLV in both of our rural parishes, before finalising our NDP it is imperative that we ascertain from members of our community how much protection the Plan should give to specific parts of our AGLV.

Summary Conclusions

Clear facts (from the Evidence):

1. Our neighbourhood has a wealth of important natural habitats which contribute to the health and economic well-being of the community.
2. The neighbourhood has a rich biodiversity; the importance of which is recognised nationally in a number of SSSIs and internationally in the Special Area of conservation.
3. The rivers Camel and Allen are the dominant features that run through our landscape. Species such as the otter and giant bullhead indicate the health of these rivers.
4. At present there is still a reasonably distinct boundary to the town with little development having been permitted to creep beyond this.
5. Despite tourism and population increase the potential for growth in access for recreation and leisure in this beautiful area remains largely untapped save for the Camel trail.

Main problems/issues (from the Evidence):

1. New building, houses and business, will increase demand for water and sewage treatment, both of which could have a detrimental effect on the environment
2. Growth of the town will inevitably entail building on green field sites and disrupting the present green infrastructure
3. The pressure for more large scale renewable energy could spoil the visual impact of the landscape which is important to our tourist trade and which attracts so many people to reside in the neighbourhood

²⁸ Jerry Clark and Tony Faragher (2013) written response on behalf of WREN to consultation event held in the Town Hall, Wadebridge on Thursday November 9th, 2013.

4. A significant part of the neighbourhood area is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value; as this has little statutory significance as a planning consideration, the community will need to decide what value should be accorded to it
5. Notable landscape features such as Cornish hedges, ancient woodlands, indigenous trees and special habitats face a growing risk of being lost as development occurs which is not conditioned so as to afford proper protection to such features

Trends - What has changed significantly over the past 10 years?

- The town's population has grown significantly in the last 10 years
- On shore wind turbines have become a prominent and controversial feature along the skyline
- Perhaps remarkably, little development (other than 3 above and two large solar PV 'parks') has impacted on the main green infrastructure of the neighbourhood

What is most needed?

- A coherent neighbourhood development plan which recognises the high value of the natural landscape and biodiversity, with an appropriate green infrastructure strategy
- Appropriate development in appropriate places that minimises harmful effects on our natural environment
- The prevention of urban sprawl that would detract from the present trait of a characterful town in an attractive setting
- Additional PROWs including new route for cyclists from the Camel trail to pass either through or around the town without reducing business for local traders

What messages have local people sent?

- Local people wish to protect the countryside against unsightly developments including more wind turbines
- An inevitable split between urban residents and the smaller number of rural residents who place greater value on the need to protect the countryside
- A wish to concentrate most additional housing in and adjacent to the town itself
- Concern about traffic congestion in and around the town which may necessitate an alternative route for Camel Trail cyclists and, possibly, to Rock/St Minver

What are the obvious 'development' opportunities?

- To develop the upper Camel estuary so as to protect the special habitat whilst increasing its use for marine leisure activities and to open up part of the riverbank below the town as a recreation park or similar
- To capitalise on the Camel trail by providing links to it and a new accessible multi-user circular trail connecting it to Sladesbridge and the PROW to Hingham Mill
- To provide firm protection to habitats of protected species and to increase wildlife corridors between these areas both in the countryside and in and around Wadebridge itself. Some of these areas might also be suitable as new green spaces for dog-walking, exercise and sports activities
- To identify a limited number of sites suitable for additional housing and, if needed, a new commercial/industrial area outside the present development boundary which would have an acceptable minimum environmental and landscape impact

What is the most interesting finding?

- The extent of the 'area of great landscape value' and the lack of information on its importance in planning

Key Neighbourhood Planning Questions Going Forward:

- What can be done to enhance and protect the special areas?
- How can we maintain and increase the bio-diversity of the neighbourhood area?
- How should we value and protect open land that has no official designation?
- Do the Local Plan's policies, alongside current environmental designations, provide sufficient protection?
- Can we increase the green infrastructure and the many and varied linkages between them?
- Can we accommodate more tourism in our natural landscape?
- How can we encourage and facilitate more use of public rights of way and other footpaths?
- How can we best accommodate population growth whilst protecting our most precious and vulnerable natural landscape and habitats?
- How do we ensure that any development does not permanently despoil that which the community regards as most precious?
- How do we ensure that our neighbourhood plan is based on sustainable criteria and is the most sustainable solution we can devise?

What must we try to find more about?

- The attitude of landowners near to the town to selling their land for development where this would be acceptable on other grounds
- A detailed assessment of character and sensitivity of selected 'landscape description units' (LDU's) near Wadebridge to determine which areas might be most suitable at lowest environmental detriment for possible development
- What ancient' features of the landscape such as Cornish hedges, field patterns, ancient woodland and design integrity require additional specific protection