

The Natural and Built Environment

Luton has a diverse built environment surrounded by the Chilterns AONB, which is a significant asset for the area providing an attractive backdrop to the town as well as opportunities for sustainable leisure and tourism.

Although Luton does not host any sites of international biodiversity importance within its boundary, there are several sites of national biodiversity importance immediately adjacent to the Luton periphery. Despite its lack of designated international and national sites of nature conservation value, there are 25 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within the Luton boundary, all of which provide wildlife havens and protect and conserve local biodiversity.

In the built environment, there is a need to improve its quality in order to facilitate regeneration in parts of Luton, and improvements to the public realm are discussed further in Chapter 7. Luton hosts a number of heritage assets, such as Conservation Areas, listed buildings, and Scheduled Monuments. Heritage assets may be particularly vulnerable to damage as a result of increased pressure from development and regeneration within the Borough, but regeneration is also likely to provide opportunities to enhance these historic built assets.

Appropriate planning and implementation of transport interventions can play a key role in mitigating environmental problems and in minimising the impact that new transport schemes have on the wider environment. They can also be beneficial in improving air quality.

Policy 1: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environment

We will give a high priority to conserving and enhancing Luton's natural, built and historic environment, and greatest priority to the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns AONB, when making transport decisions. When designing and implementing transport improvements we will ensure that they maintain the integrity of our historical townscape, cultural heritage assets and their settings, and protect and enhance our local landscape, biodiversity and their habitats, as well as water quality.

This will be implemented by:

- Ensuring that transport schemes avoid damage to sensitive and important nature conservation areas where possible, and compensate for any unavoidable effects by the creation and where feasible, net gain of new habitats and linkages for biodiversity;
- Minimise the impacts of transport on protected landscapes, particularly the quiet enjoyment of the Chilterns AONB;
- Avoiding damage to sensitive and important areas of archaeological interest and heritage conservation (including listed buildings), where possible;
- Ensuring that new transport infrastructure is designed to minimise the possible impact of storm water run-off on water courses, and implement Sustainable Drainage Systems in order to reduce flood risk as well as minimising diffuse pollution and maintaining natural flow regimes;

Annex C
Appendix C – Proposed new Environmental Policy

- Promoting sustainable design and construction practices, including the minimisation of construction waste and use of local materials and recycled highway materials, especially in regeneration areas.