

Farming, Environment and Countryside

1. To conserve and protect our distinctive landscape including natural features such as hedges, ditches, verges, trees and green spaces, which contributes to a sense of place and community.
2. To protect and respect the village character and its setting within a beautiful AONB rural environment and ensure that the existing open countryside between the village and neighbouring settlements is maintained.
3. To conserve and enhance the environment, ecosystem and biodiversity, ensuring that new development gives protection to habitats and provides appropriate movement corridors for wildlife.
4. To improve the safety and quality of footpaths and bridleways.
5. To recognise the ecological importance of the flood-plains surrounding Etchingham, and to minimise building in the flood-zones.
6. To protect our dark skies by minimising lightpollution.
7. To conserve and enhance any sites of archaeological significance, sensitive ecology and landscape designation.
8. To conserve and enhance the historic environment in relation to buildings, landscapes and places of local cultural value.
9. To protect and enhance our existing and future open and local green spaces.

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Policy FEC1: Natural environment

Planning permission will not be supported where development would result in an unacceptable threat of seasonal flooding, loss, or damage to, hedges, ditches, verges, trees and green spaces during or as a result of development unless the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the amenity value of the trees or hedgerows in question.

Development proposals must be designed to retain hedges, ditches, verges, trees and green spaces of good arboricultural value and/or amenity wherever possible.

The Etchingham Character Appraisal (see evidence base) will be used as a reference to assess the impact of the proposals.

5.1.1 Policy intent:

The High Weald possesses “one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in Northern Europe”, and its distinctive features should be conserved.

Protection of ancient woodland should be enforced; old boundary hedges preserved and replanted where lost.

Flower-rich meadows are relatively scarce and should be protected.

Further wetland habitat management, creation and restoration should be encouraged.

Conformity list of references:

- NPPF 2018: Para 170
- NDP objective: To conserve and protect our distinctive landscape including natural features such as hedges, ditches, verges, trees and green spaces, which contributes to a sense of place and community.
- RDC policy:

Key Evidence base reference: Etchingam Environment Study

Policy FEC2: Countryside Protection

All development will be considered with regard to the need to protect the landscape character of the countryside. Proposals which preserve and enhance the open character of the important gaps between settlements and which are not detrimental to the Green Infrastructure Network (as identified by the Local Planning Authority) will be supported.

Development will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances the natural beauty of the village character of Etchingam.

In particular it will:

1. take opportunities to restore the natural function of all watercourses to improve water quality, to recognise and maintain the current system of flood plains and enhance wetland habitats to protect Etchingam and settlements down-river;
2. reflect the settlement pattern of the neighbourhood, use local materials that enhance the appearance of the development and support woodland management;
3. relate well to historic route ways and not divert them from their original course or damage their rural character by loss of banks, hedgerows, verges or other important features;
4. not result in the loss or degradation of Ancient Woodland or historic features within it and, where appropriate will contribute to its on-going management;**and**
5. conserve and enhance the ecology and productivity of fields, trees and hedgerows, retain and reinstate historic field boundaries, and direct development away from medieval or earlier fields, especially where these form coherent field systems with other medieval features.

5.1.2 Policy intent:

Future development should fit within the natural beauty of the landscape: Etchingam should follow the East Sussex County Landscape Assessment of the High Weald, and “maintain and preserve the historic building environment and settlement pattern”. Our outstanding views should be protected. No ribbon development between villages should be allowed. Design should guard against “suburbanisation”, Surrey-style ‘executive homes’ should not be allowed to take precedence over rural and local housing. Power cables should be buried wherever possible.

Conformity list of references:

- NPPF 2018: Paras 79 and 170

- NDP objective: To protect and respect the village character and its setting within a beautiful AONB rural environment and ensure that the existing open countryside between the village and neighbouring settlements is maintained
- RDC policy: Rother District Core Strategy Policy EN1 (Landscape Stewardship)

Key Evidence base reference: Etchingham Environment Study