

Assessment Checklist For Applications Affecting Ancient Woodland

Planning applications should seek to identify and protect ancient woodland from adverse effects to comply with PPS9. Natural England advises that the following checklist is included for all applications affecting ancient woodland:

	Subject to be assessed	Included Y/N?
1	<p>The size of area of the woodland affected.</p> <p>Advice: The importance of small woods must not be underestimated for their function as stepping stones for the dispersal of species. Small ancient woodland may also be the remnants of formerly larger areas, and thus have a higher biodiversity importance than might be assumed. Ecological diversity in woodlands is not solely linked to the size of a woodland, as it is also dependent on factors such as the range of habitats, different species, and soil conditions found within a woodland.</p>	
2	<p>Will an area of woodland be lost? See section below on ancient woodland loss.</p> <p>Has the nature of the woodland to be affected been established.</p>	
3	<p>Is the application within the AONB/National Park?</p> <p>Advice: Consult the appropriate AONB unit, or National Park authority. If this is a major new development within the AONB/National Park you should have already consulted Natural England regarding landscape impacts.</p>	
4	<p>Has a survey for protected species been included in the application?</p> <p>Advice: Natural England has issued Standing Advice on protected species and this should be referred to.</p>	
5	<p>The connectivity of the woodland – is it isolated or connected to other woodland blocks? Will connectivity be damaged?</p> <p>Advice: connecting habitat such as hedgerows and copses should be maintained and enhanced and long term protection secured in a Section 106 agreement.</p>	
6	<p>Has an Impact Assessment for pollution (air and water) been conducted and mitigation secured?</p> <p>The Impact Assessment should cover any change in hydrology (quality and quantity of water) and any potential effects. This is of particular importance to ancient gill woodlands as they often contain important communities of lower plants (mosses, liverworts, and lichens). Industrial developments will also require a strict and tailored assessment.</p>	
7	<p>Will access to the woodland increase? Potential for remaining woodland to be damaged by visitors and domestic pets.</p> <p>Advice: If access is included it should form part of an ongoing management plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for visitor access. • Areas in which access is zoned to allow minimal disturbance to wildlife and potential for deterioration and ground disturbance of 	

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	<p>ancient woodland in designated areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretative material to inform local residents of the importance of the valuable wildlife resource on their doorsteps and encourage protection and involvement in any management or enhancement activities. 	
8	<p>What is the function of the land to be lost to development?</p> <p>Advice: It is important to fully assess the land to be lost for its function in enhancing and or supporting the adjacent ancient woodland. For example, is the proposal located in a network of ancient woodland blocks? Could the development have a knock-on effect on a number of ancient woodlands?.</p> <p>Its loss could incur a deterioration in quality of the adjacent woodland and this should be considered and mitigated for. For example, the application site could include areas of scrub and grassland which contribute to supporting species within the ancient woodland and thus contribute to its biodiversity.</p>	
9	<p>Does the landscaping scheme include native species preferably of local provenance?</p> <p>Advice: Landscaping should involve native species preferably of local provenance. Exotic species can escape from gardens into the adjacent woodland and compete with native species. This degrades the woodland over time. Landscaping should be in keeping with the surrounding habitats.</p>	

Ancient woodland loss

Ancient woodland, the product of centuries of habitat continuity and undisturbed soils, is an irreplaceable resource. As such, its loss cannot be compensated for by creating a new woodland – an irreplaceable habitat cannot, by definition be replaced. Though the following will not compensate for the ancient woodland lost, they can, if well designed and implemented, provide compensation for the loss of biodiversity in due course. It can take tens or hundreds of years for biodiversity compensation created in the ways suggested below to become effective.

Where the benefits from a development are deemed to outweigh the value of the ancient woodland to be lost, despite the policies lending protection to ancient woodland, then the following measures should be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- **Beneficial management of alternative sites**
A proposal may be put forward to secure a long term management agreement on an area of unmanaged habitat (often another ancient woodland nearby).
- **Planting of a much larger, new woodland area.**
- **Translocation of woodland soil and some of the vegetation to an alternative site**
Mature living trees cannot be moved, nor can the complex array of site features (wet flushes, hollows, etc.).