



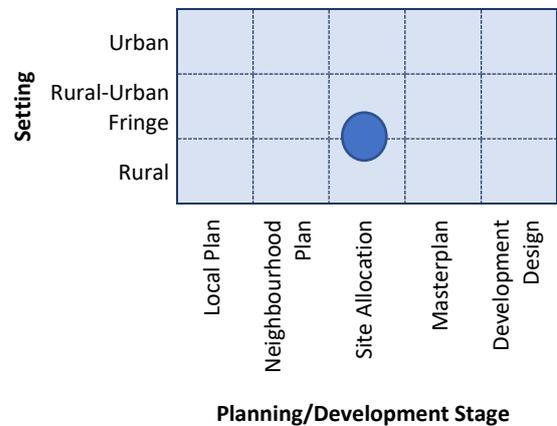
Central Bedfordshire Council

ncpt
Natural Capital Planning Tool

<p>Natural Capital Planning Tool (NCPT) Case Study Report</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Land Allocation (8 Sites)</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire</p>	<p>Case Study Partner Central Bedfordshire Council</p> <p>Case Study Report Authors Oliver Hölzinger (CEEP) & Andrew Marsh (CBC)</p> <p>Case Study Report Published May 2018</p> <p>NCPT Assessment & Report by ceep Consultancy for Environmental Economics & Policy</p>
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Central Bedfordshire Council used the NCPT to assess eight potential growth locations - predominantly housing developments of between 500 and 7,000 units on greenfield sites. The aim was to test both, the acceptability of the sites and the acceptability of the proposed design. The outcome was that all sites were in principle capable of providing natural capital net gains but the performance of the site designs varied. The Council is determined to implement the NCPT into local planning practice.

Case Study Context



Core project team & Partners:

- ceep
- UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
- Northumbria University NEWCASTLE
- Birmingham City Council
- Business Council for Sustainable Development United Kingdom

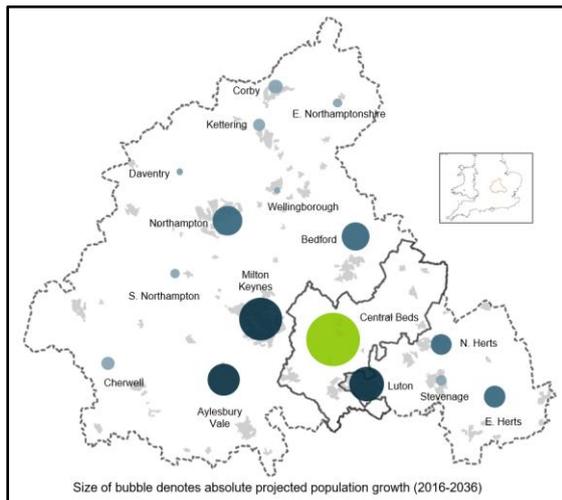
Project/Case Study Partners & Supporters (in alphabetic order):

- Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Central Bedfordshire
- CIEM
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
- Cranfield University
- Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
- Ecosystems Knowledge Network
- Environment Agency
- Lake District National Park
- UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
- GREAT LONDON AUTHORITY
- MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
- mebc
- Natural Capital Solutions
- NATURAL ENGLAND
- Environmental Change Institute
- RICS
- RTPI
- Sandwell
- Shropshire Council
- SKANSKA
- Solidwell
- SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
- South Downs National Park
- TARMAC
- URBAN GREEN
- CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL
- Funders: NERC, RICS Research Trust

Case study sites

Central Bedfordshire, located between Milton Keynes and Luton, is facing enormous development pressure. The Council's population is expected to grow by about one-third by 2036; roughly the population size of another Cambridge.

Central Bedfordshire's Population Growth



Source: Central Bedfordshire Council

The Council is planning for another 20,000 homes in the next 20 years. This is in addition to 23,000 new homes that already have planning permission.

The NCPT was used to assess 8 potential sites brought forward for development – mainly close to transport corridors.

Why using the NCPT?

Central Bedfordshire Council wants to ensure that necessary housing is developed in a sustainable way. In its new Local Plan, the Council acknowledges that *“Central Bedfordshire’s environment is key to its identity and widely valued by our residents, visitors and businesses. [...] We also depend on the ecosystem services, which are services*

*provided by the natural environment that benefit people.”*¹

The plan also makes explicit reference to tools for analysing the impact of development proposals on natural capital and ecosystem services and the NCPT has the backing of the councillors because it can be used to efficiently assess if a new development contributes positively to natural capital and the Council's policies for the natural environment.

How was the NCPT used?

The NCPT was used to assess all sites proposed for development where at least an initial sketch/draft masterplan was available – 8 sites together. The aim of the assessments was:

- To test if the proposed growth locations are acceptable for development, and
- To test if the proposed designs were acceptable.

One of the objectives of the Council, as outlined in the new Local Plan, is to *“create additional environmental enhancement”* or ‘environmental net-gain’ as promoted by Central Government. The locations and designs were assessed against this policy goal.

What were the NCPT findings and impact of the NCPT assessment?

For the first test, the acceptability of the sites, the focus was on the minimum/maximum possible scores (see figure below). Less negative minimum possible scores indicate that a site has less Natural Capital (to lose) in the first place. Higher positive maximum scores on the other hand indicate that there is greater potential on the site to create additional Natural Capital. The NCPT outcomes indicated that, in principle, all assessed sites

¹ Central Bedfordshire Pre-submission Local Plan 2015-2035. Available from

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning/policy/local-plan/pre-submission.aspx>

were suitable for development from a Natural Capital point of view as all sites offer opportunities for Natural Capital enhancement (high maximum possible scores).

Initial NCPT findings for one of the sites

Development Impact Score			
Average Per-Hectare			
Ecosystem Service	Max Possible	Adjusted Scores	Min Possible
1. Harvested Products	+0.2	-2.33	-3.0
2. Biodiversity	+4.6	+0.27	-0.4
3. Aesthetic Values	+6.6	+0.98	-3.4
4. Recreation	+10.0	+4.68	+0.0
5. Water Quality Regulation	+2.3	+0.02	-2.3
6. Flood Risk Regulation	+3.0	+0.51	-0.0
7. Air Quality Regulation	+0.8	+0.11	-0.4
8. Local Climate Regulation	+5.4	+0.79	-2.7
9. Global Climate Regulation	+4.0	-0.32	-1.0
10. Soil Contamination		+0.00	
Development Impact Score		+4.71	

For the second test, the acceptability of the design, the impact scores (white cells) were the focus. They indicate if the proposed design actually would enhance or deteriorate ecosystem services. Here, the outcomes were mixed with most designs having a negative impact on natural capital and ecosystem services at this stage even if the sites would generally be suitable to provide a positive.

Next steps and the future of the NCPT

Central Bedfordshire Council is using the NCPT outcomes to negotiate better designs to achieve 'additional environmental enhancement' for the proposed sites and asked developers and investors to improve their designs towards more positive natural capital creation. The Council aims to re-assess updated designs with the NCPT and these outcomes will then inform the final site allocations.

The Council is also keen on further implementing the NCPT into their everyday planning practice in the future.

The Council's feedback on the NCPT

The toolkit has provided us with an objective and simple means of assessing both, the location and design of development proposals put forward for consideration through the emerging Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire.

We have found it especially useful in working collaboratively with site promoters - negotiating enhancements to masterplans, and giving us a tangible way to measure whether proposals are capable of achieving a net gain in natural capital. This will ensure that we get the very best out of our sites.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Central Bedfordshire Councillors, and in particular Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Regeneration and Business, for supporting the project.

We would also like to thank Laura Kitson, former Green Infrastructure coordinator at Central Bedfordshire Council (now Environment Agency) for her invaluable contributions to the project, and Andrew Marsh (Principal Planning Policy Officer) for presenting a case study at the EcoBuild Seminar in March 2018.

Last but not least we like to thank the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) for funding this project.

About the NCPT

The NCPT was released in March 2018. To access the tool, guidance, case studies and related services visit www.NCPTool.com or contact the tool developer Oliver Hölzinger directly: oliver.h.ceep@live.com.