

Inspector's Q96

I would welcome the Council's observations on the representations commenting on the justification for a 10m buffer in policy NE3; 1821 Jonathan Liberman of Boyer Planning Limited on behalf of Wates Developments Ltd.

AVDC Response

The following in peach is an excerpt of a Draft 'Aylesbury Vale Watercourses Advice Note' which is the document referred to in para 9.19 of the VALP (page 227). This sets out why the river and stream corridors are so important justifying the approach taken in VALP.

Why are River Corridors important?

Visual:

- Rivers and river corridors are attractive in themselves;

Recreation:

- Riverside walks reduce mistreatment and encourage interest in the maintenance and enjoyment of a valuable community asset.
- In urban areas they also provide an important link between areas of open space and are interesting in their own right (simply for walking or observing wildlife).

River Ecology:

- There are important links between water and land ecology.
- Watercourses can provide a range of habitats for wildlife: within the water itself, on riverbanks and also on associated areas such as reedbeds and wetlands.
- The preservation of river corridors aids the stability of channel banks and the protection of habitats created on/ in them. This provides a natural habitat for increased wildlife species.

The 10m buffer standard in Policy NE3 is what the Environment Agency have recommended to AVDC and is what we will be embedding in the Watercourses Advice Note (reference at VALP para 9.19) currently being prepared for when VALP is adopted. The following in peach is an excerpt of a Draft 'Aylesbury Vale Watercourses Advice Note' which is the document referred to in para 9.19 of the VALP (page 227).

Buffer Zones

Buffer zones are encouraged to be as wide as possible as they create more effective "green" corridors.

The Environment Agency recommend that for ecological and conservation purposes, the requirement should be that all new development (buildings, roads, car parks, etc.) should be set back from a riverbank a minimum distance of 10 metres (measured from the top of the river bank to the development). In terms of setting, large buildings should not be closer to the river than their height, irrespective of the 10m buffer.

The buffer zone scheme shall be free from built development including lighting, domestic gardens and formal landscaping; and could form a vital part of green infrastructure provision.

It would be expected that an ongoing landscape and ecological management plan, including long- term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all public landscaped areas.

The Environment Agency recommend that for ecological and conservation purposes, the requirement should be that all new development (buildings, roads, car parks, etc.) should be set back from the bank of a watercourse a minimum distance of 10 metres (measured from the top of the river bank to the development). In terms of setting, large buildings should not be closer to the river than their height, irrespective of the 10m buffer.

The buffer zone scheme shall be free from built development including lighting, domestic gardens and formal landscaping; and could form a vital part of green infrastructure provision.

The 10m buffer standard as part of the Water Advice Note is an agreed approach between the Environment Agency, Buckinghamshire County Council and AVDC and the Water Advice Note itself is intended to be finalised and adopted in due course.

The Environment Agency confirmed their support for policy NE3 in the following representation on VALP which suggested minor modifications to the text of the policy that the council are minded to accept:

“We are pleased with and support this policy. We are happy to see that you have included some of the wording we suggested in our regulation 18 response to the draft local plan. However the following wording additions and deletions would make this policy clearer:

Development proposals adjacent to or containing a watercourse shall provide or retain a **minimum** 10m ecological buffer (unless existing physical constraints prevent) from **between** the top of the river bank and the development, and include a long-term landscape and ecological management plan for this buffer.”