

**Design Guide**  
**For the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan**



March 2024

The Danbury Design Guide is presented as an annex to the Neighbourhood Plan to which all applicants for new development in Danbury are referred.

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**Key:** Each point has a reference number followed by ♦♦ for Essential or ♦ for Desirable  
The Design Guide has been informed by Building for a Healthy Life, Essex Design Guide, Livewell Development Accreditation, Living with Beauty, Locality: Neighbourhood Planning and we would expect developers to refer to these source documents or their revisions.

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### Introduction

This document has been developed to support the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, bringing together the best elements of existing design throughout Danbury whilst allowing for future sustainable and innovative homes.

Danbury has evolved over time from scattered settlements with small infills as 'plotlands' which were developed, to larger, single design concept estates. The architecture of these reflected the prevailing design trends of the time. Danbury has an historic character with designated and non-designated heritage assets and a core conservation area (See map following Section 1.10)

Results from the two questionnaires, elements of the Danbury Planning Framework and Heritage Assessments of Danbury highlight the need to:

- Retain and protect the rural character and key views in the area
- Conserve and protect heritage assets and their settings
- Respect the Open Spaces throughout the village that relate to the historic and distinct settlement areas.
- Embrace the opportunities that green energy offers

New developments within Danbury should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. They should create desirable places in which to live and work.

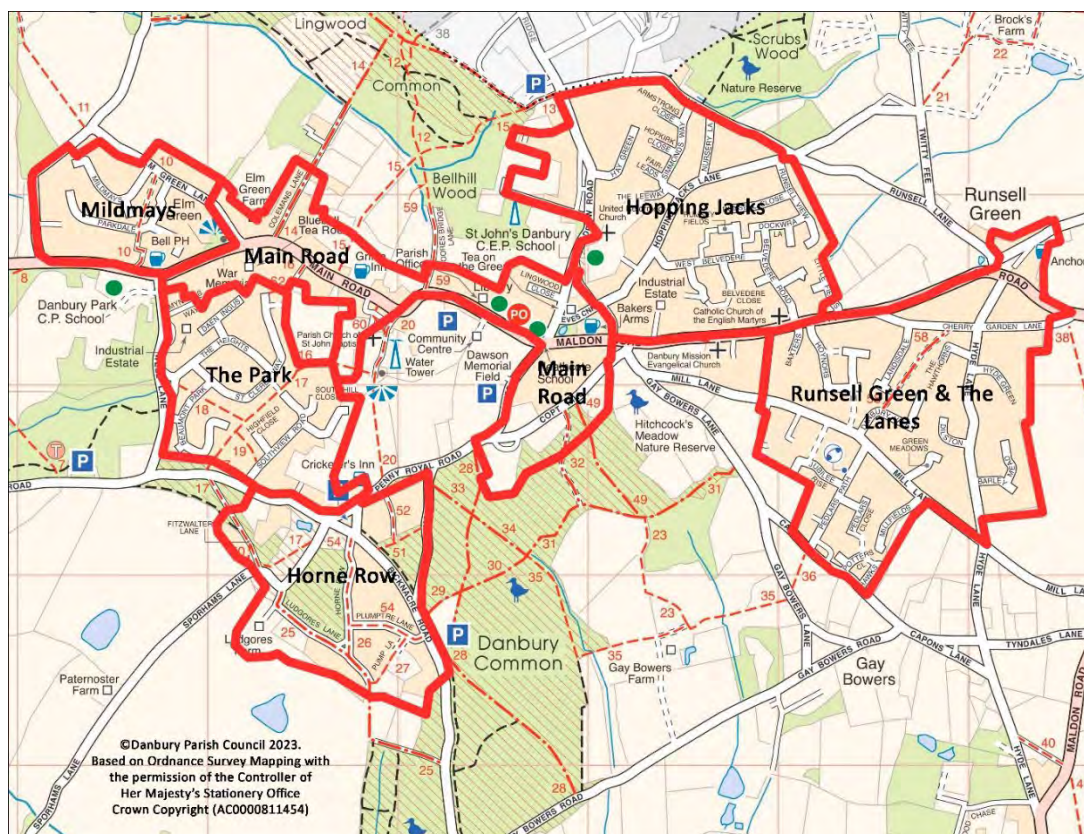
All new buildings should form a harmonious union within their site, add to the quality of the area and incorporate sustainable design features.



*Scenes from top of St John the Baptist Church's tower, firstly looking north towards The Griffin Inn on Main Road and secondly looking south, over the cemetery and allotments.*

The built form in Danbury has been influenced by its geography, topography, and development character. This has led to distinctive residential areas, listed below which need to be sustained and/or improved in future development.

## The six main residential areas within Danbury



### Main Road (A414)

The main road bisects the village West to East: as an historic route, it has buildings (many listed) dating from 13th to 21st century. Hence there is no one visual style, but the spacing and often long front gardens, trees and hedging generally retain the village appearance. Visible from the main road is St John's Church and its Church green in the oldest part of Danbury at the centre of its Conservation Area. There are further green spaces abutting the main road at Griffin Meadow and the Dawson Memorial playing fields. The Eves Corner village green with duck pond gives another traditional centre. The 21st century Danbury Mission Church and Medical Centre are uncharacteristic of the general street scene in their design. Shops along the main road and local services areas such as the Danbury Business Park provide valued amenities. Although most roads are well lit, some lanes just off the main road do not have street lighting which underlines the country village nature of the centre of Danbury.

### Hopping Jacks

Hopping Jacks Lane is an old road bisecting this area, now with mostly 20th century two-storey houses and bungalows. Large front gardens with many trees and shrubs give this lane its main character. Its side roads were developed in the post war period from nursery land and are also well spaced and set behind gardens. To the south of Hopping Jacks Lane is a large area of higher density housing, built post World War II. The older properties provide insufficient parking provision for present day needs, leading to much on-road parking. There is a recently renovated children's play area. Little Baddow Road to the west of this neighbourhood has some older houses with deep plots, in some areas separated from the road by stretches of open woodland. Runsell Lane to the northeast has much woodland with 20th century housing. There is street lighting on most roads although this is variable along the older roads, maintaining the rural feel.

### **Runsell Green, Lanes and estates**

This area is a network of old narrow and winding lanes on both sides of the A414 lined with trees, hedges and banks leaving little space for pedestrians. Residential buildings have been added over the years with no single architectural style and keeping a low density. The Green with its pond is a key open area at the Eastern approach to Danbury with some listed buildings and well-spaced modern houses. The old lanes do not have street lighting though the more modern developments do. To the south of Mill Lane is an area of higher density housing built from the late 1940s to the present day.

### **Mildmays**

Roads here are largely 20th century bungalows and 2 storey houses, well-spaced and set back from the roads with large or moderate sized gardens, footways and off-road parking. Elm Green Lane is older with low density housing set back from the lane and fronted by trees and shrubs. There are no footways and there is a large village green to the Southern end around the war memorial which emphasises its rural nature. Riffhams Lane has similar well-spaced housing in large plots at its Southern end; its Northern section is bounded by open countryside. There are no footways and the lane winds. There is no street lighting along these two lanes which sustains their rural character.

### **The Park Neighbourhood**

Most housing around Danbury Country Park is 20th century and has a wide variety of design and size which contributes to an open and airy feel to the roads. Good sized gardens with trees, shrubs and hedges add to this character. The design exception is Beaumont Park which is a single style Neo-Georgian development with good size plots and open frontages. A central greensward edged with light woodland is for the benefit of residents. Well Lane is a busy lane with a Primary school and a small business park which offers employment for over 70 people. However, the woodland edges and greenswards continue the rural ambience, and variable street lighting sustains the rural character.

### **Horne Rowe**

Originally a separate settlement on the fringe of Danbury, this is an area of un-made and narrow single trackways with no footways and no street lighting. Largely 18th to 20th century houses of various styles, often edged by greenery and surrounded by woods, farmland and National Trust land. Sporhams Lane runs between farmland down to a ford. The busier Bicknacre Road has large houses set well back with front gardens but has only partial footways.

## 1 Built Form

### 1.1 Materials

- a) ❖❖ Materials and finishes should be of high quality and reflect the character of the area in which they are located and be appropriate to the general village design.
- b) ❖❖ New building should complement the local palette.



*Houses facing Griffin Meadow along Main Road demonstrate the vernacular red bricks and tiles, as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century use of slate roofing.*

**The typical local palette in Danbury includes:**

**Brick (predominantly red)**

**Roofing with clay plain tiles and natural slates**

**Rendering in light, natural colours or Essex 'pink' shades**

**Weatherboarding in black, white, or cream**



*Weatherboarding in traditional colours.*



*Rendering in a traditional cream and on a commercial building in the Essex pink*



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- c) ❖❖ Paint colours should respect the style and design of the host building and adjacent properties or bring the host building into character for the surrounding area.
- d) ❖ Timber or timber effect cladding, fascias and soffits are preferred.
- e) ❖ Locally sourced materials should be used where possible.
- f) ❖ Recycled building materials should be used when appropriate and be environmentally friendly.
- g) ❖❖ Natural materials will be required in heritage settings and other sensitive locations.



*New building along Main Road that complements the local palette*

*New house (on right of picture) at Eves Corner that reflects the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century neighbouring houses with a modern interpretation.*



### 1.2 Scale, Height, Shape and Form

- a) ❖❖ New buildings or vertical extensions should predominantly be a maximum of two storeys or around 8m from ground to ridge (See Supporting Documents 11), so that the height is lower than the crown of surrounding trees, to retain the local setting.
- b) ❖❖ A limited number of 2.5 or 3 storey buildings may be permitted depending on the siting and visual impact of a proposed dwelling or non-residential building. A 2.5 storey dwelling could include an upper floor built into the roof space where a window or dormer is fully contained within the roof area and where this would not result in an unreasonable loss of light or privacy for neighbours, or future residents. A non-residential building that exceeds the indicated maximum height may be supported if larger floor to ceiling heights were required and the local character and context was respected.

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❖❖ Danbury has many traditional buildings typical of Essex generally, and some good examples of recent builds which use the traditional styling. Dwellings are “typically made up of rectangular rather than square plan forms, with pitched roofs spanning the narrower plan dimension”. To fit in with the existing built landscape of Danbury, new buildings should also use these concepts wherever appropriate (Essex Design Guide: <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk>).

*Illustration of a recent new build near Eves Corner incorporating Essex traditional pitch roofs across the narrowest plan dimension.*



### 1.3 Green Energy

- a) ❖❖ Building orientation should be considered to raise the potential for solar gain and for the optimisation of solar panels.
- b) ❖❖ Electrical vehicle charging points for all new developments to be consistent with the ECC standards developing in the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Policy.
- c) For further information on electric vehicle charging, see the Essex Design Guide at [www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/climate-change/electric-vehicles/](http://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/climate-change/electric-vehicles/).

### 1.4 Accessible Homes

- a) ❖❖ There should be mixed provision in new developments that caters for different needs at various stages in life and for those with disabilities to create a broad based community e.g. bungalows as well as two storey houses.



*South View Road showing mixed provision of bungalows and two storey houses.*

- b) ❖❖ For both new builds and extensions, consideration should be given to accessibility, or to the possibility of future adaptation for accessibility. This is particularly relevant in Danbury due to the high proportion of older residents.

### 1.5 Storage

- a) ❖❖ Provision for bins and bikes should be made at the back or side of properties to avoid street clutter. Access to storage for bins and bikes should be provided outside without the need to go through the property. Cycle storage should preferably be within the property boundary, as opposed to shared facilities, following ECC standards (Essex Parking Standards:



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Design and Good Practice (2009) or successor document. If not, parking should be provided in a separate lockable building. Individual stands should be provided within the cycle store.

For more design guidance for cycle parking see:

[www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media.1960/essex-parking-standards.pdf](http://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media.1960/essex-parking-standards.pdf)

- b) ❖❖ There should be provision for rainwater storage to reduce the need to rely on mains water.
- c) ❖ In new developments, rainwater and stormwater harvesting will be encouraged to improve water efficiency and minimise surface water run-off.
- d) ❖ All storage should be screened, (preferably by planting) if visible from the street.

### 1.6 Windows and Doors

- a) ❖❖ Windows and doors in all new building should complement the existing scale and design of the local character area or the host building.
- b) ❖❖ Main entrance doors should be on front elevations where possible for security.
- c) ❖❖ Dormers should be set lower than the main roof line to avoid over-dominance.



*Dormers set below the roofline*



- d) ❖❖ Garage doors should not be dominant and should be set back from the front building line where possible.
- e) ❖❖ New windows in existing properties/extensions which overlook adjoining properties should have opaque glass.

### 1.7 Style of housing

- a) ❖❖ Within new developments houses should have a variety of styles but following a general theme which complements the palette and roof styles of the village.
- b) ❖❖ There should be a mix of types of home ownership included in new developments, but their designs should be tenure blind.

### 1.8 Gates

- a) ❖❖ Any gates should be in keeping with use within the locality or adjacent area, be made of natural materials (where possible) and provide an open barrier to maintain the rural aspect.

### 1.9 Services

- a) ❖❖ Careful consideration should be given to the position and location of aerials and satellite dishes to minimise negative visual impact.
- b) ❖❖ Utilities/phone lines should be buried underground whenever possible.

### 1.10 Restorations, Conversions and Extensions

Danbury has many building styles dating from the 13th to 21st century.

- a) ♦♦ Listed buildings and heritage assets (designated and non-designated) should be sustained, and their significance enhanced whilst they are put to viable uses consistent with their conservation.



*A barn conversion at Gay Bowers repurposing a heritage asset.*

*The Chantry, Main Road, has 16th century origins and a 21st century extension mirroring the existing boarding.*



*Before and after pictures of a single storey brick extension to a listed property.*



- b) ♦ In respect of extensions, including garages, porches, and dormers, sloping tiled roofs are generally preferable to flat roofs throughout the Parish, but particularly to sustain the appearance of the conservation area (see map below on page 11).
- c) ♦ All extensions (both vertical and horizontal) should be sensitive to the general scale, height, shape and form of the surrounding area.

**Danbury's Conservation Area shown outlined in black**



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## 2 Street Scene

### 2.1 Building Line and Position within the Plot

- a) ❖❖ New properties should be set back from the road to maintain Danbury's existing spacious and open character.



*Street scenes: firstly, the Mildmays character area respecting the distant views and secondly, the Hopping Jacks Lane locality showing housing set back from the road, allowing for green frontages.*

- b) ❖❖ Future development and changes to buildings should respect the position of existing or adjacent buildings relative to the street scene, their situation within the plot and allow for adequate frontage.
- c) ❖❖ Where properties are terraced, there should be provision for residents to access their rear garden without having to walk through their home.

### 2.2 Density and Views

- a) ❖❖ An area's prevailing character, setting and density should be respected. See descriptions of Danbury's residential localities in the Introduction.
- b) ❖❖ New building should not obscure the Key Views of Danbury that are designated for protection within the Neighbourhood Plan.
- c) ❖ Gaps between buildings should be used to create framed views or a visual break in the developed appearance of the area.
- d) ❖ The splitting of residential gardens for new building should be avoided because it can reduce the sense of spaciousness and can lead to an unsuitable suburban character.
- e) ❖ Backland development should be avoided where this would destroy the essential character and landscape of an area and the open contribution which gardens make to the local environment.



*Main road looking towards Chelmsford*



*View over Runsell Green*

### 2.3 Connectivity

- a) ❖❖ Safe pedestrian and cycle friendly routes should be developed to reduce the need to travel by car and to provide connectivity to the local area.
- b) ❖❖ Sufficient width and access for services, emergency and delivery vehicles should be allowed, even when roads are used for parking.
- c) ❖❖ Footway design should consider the needs of all age groups and be suitable for users with a range of physical and cognitive abilities.
- d) ❖❖ Footways should be of sufficient width for mobility scooters, pushchairs, and wheelchairs.

### 2.4 Parking

Residential and visitor parking provision to be sufficient within future developments, with no reliance on nearby street parking due to the many narrow lanes of the village, and the main link roads taking heavy volumes of traffic. This would be particularly pertinent for any development in or near the Runsell Green and The Lanes residential areas, Well Lane employment area, the A414 and Woodhill Road.

- a) ❖❖ Allocated homeowner parking should be near new homes to improve security and keep footways clear.
- b) ❖❖ All development should have regard to the vehicle parking standards set out in the Essex Parking Standards - Design and Good Practice (2009), or successor document.
- c) ❖ More detailed parking design guidance (for vehicles, bikes and cycles) can be found at: <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media/1960/essex-parking-standards.pdf>

### 2.5 Street furniture and Signage

- a) ❖❖ Street furniture needs to be appropriate to the local environment and non-intrusive to the street scene.
- b) ❖❖ Signage should be kept to the minimum necessary.
- c) ❖❖ Trade signs should only be used for the period of work being undertaken.

### 2.6 Commercial Developments

- a) ❖❖ Commercial developments should be sympathetic to the existing street scene.



*New commercial building along the main road that fits in unobtrusively with the street scene.*



*Commercial Unit at the Danbury Business Park.*

- b) ❖❖ Parking provision should be sufficient within a commercial or non-residential development and allow for extra demand needed for service industries. For more details see

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Commercial Developments for non-residential uses in ECC's 'Essex Parking Standards – Design and Good Practice' (2009), or successor document.

- c) ❖❖ Business and retail windows and doors should be sympathetic to or enhance the building's design and that of neighbouring properties; this is particularly relevant in the conservation area.
- d) ❖❖ Business signs and adverts should be restrained in size and brightness.

*Shops at Eves Corner showing restrained business signs.*



## 2.7 Street Lighting

- a) ❖❖ Street lighting in rural areas should be resisted as it will diminish local character unless evidence shows a need to improve safety or encourage connectivity.
- b) ❖❖ Exterior lighting should be fitted with automatic controls such as motion sensors or timers to reduce light pollution.
- c) ❖❖ Exterior lighting on both residential and commercial buildings must be sensitively positioned to avoid dazzling road users.

### 3 Green Infrastructure

Danbury's unique character comes from its Green Infrastructure, with commanding views in all directions over the surrounding countryside. The green lanes and 'green fingers' of vegetation which separate developments give a spacious feel to the hilltop village. The village's position on the Danbury Ridge with its abundance of commons and ancient woodlands provide wildlife corridor connectivity for both flora and fauna. This is reinforced by all the green areas in gardens and along roadside verges.

This network of multifunctional green space can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits, for the local community, for wildlife corridors and for flood mitigation.

Historically, many of the hedgerows along the main thoroughfares and boundaries were comprised of Elm hedging with occasional Elm trees. Hawthorn and Blackthorn were added where control of livestock was required. Hazel, Hornbeam and Field Maple are also seen in many established hedgerows.

Unfortunately, due to Dutch Elm Disease which reached its peak in the 1970s, most of the Elm trees were felled, although the hedging remains and continues to thrive where well managed.

Danbury's elevated position and poor soils have dictated which tree species prosper. Within woodland Oak forms the main framework. Where Elms were lost, Ash replaced them but Ash Die Back has had a severe impact and they are now being superseded by Sycamore.

Trees within gardens form an integral part of the green infrastructure. In the past prosperous landowners planted numerous specimens, often non-native trees which continue to provide variety in the landscape.



*Woods near Twitty Fee, Danbury*



*Mature oaks on Griffin Meadow*

#### 3.1 Trees and Hedges

- a) ❖❖ Trees and hedges on any site should be retained wherever possible.
- b) ❖❖ The opportunity to extend the adjacent habitat of woodland or hedgerows should be taken on the edge of a site, whilst still providing accessible green space elsewhere in the site.
- c) ❖❖ Green spaces/hedgerows should connect to or form links with existing and potential wildlife corridors.
- d) ❖❖ If development proposals would result in the loss of trees, hedges or woodland, a clear commitment for replacement must be provided.

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- e) ❖❖ Ensure that appropriate measures are in place to secure long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and discussions held with highways officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards (to be consistent with NPPF. Paragraph 136).
- f) ❖❖ Any new tree planting should ensure that there is no future negative impact on Danbury's Key Views (See Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, section 6 Environment).
- g) ❖❖ Tree preservation orders (TPOs) are much in evidence within the parish and extension of TPOs to protect and enhance the existing arboriculture will be encouraged.

### 3.2 Boundaries

- a) ❖❖ Shrubs and hedges to be encouraged to reflect and enhance the existing green infrastructure of the village.
- b) ❖❖ Where new domestic access points are required, small-scale features such as fencing, entrance gates and hedgerows should comply with the local vernacular to promote and enhance local distinctiveness.



*Scene along the main A414 at Griffin Meadow showing the Elm, Field Maple, and Hawthorn hedgerow*

- c) ❖❖ The use of hedges, to form boundaries or supplement fencing, is to be encouraged.

*A typical established boundary*



- d) ❖ Consider planting a hedge when replacing fences or walls to encourage and support wildlife and to enhance the green environment.



*Scene in the Belvedere area where hedging enhances the green environment*



- e) ❖ On main routes and more frequently used roads, larger hedges interspersed with trees are needed to reduce traffic pollution, to screen the development and to preserve the rural aspect of the village.
- f) ❖ Careful consideration should be given to the selection, positioning and maintenance of hedges. Overhanging hedges present a danger to pedestrians and highway safety beside both main roads and narrow lanes without footways. Detailed guidance about planting in sight splays can be found at: [www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/highways-technical-manual/](http://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/highways-technical-manual/)

### 3.3 Gardens

- a) ❖❖ Mature trees, shrubs and hedgerows should be retained and preserved wherever possible.

*Recent build retaining mature trees*



- b) ❖❖ New planting should be informed by local sources such as 'The Essex Design Guide'- Recommended Plant Species': [www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/landscape-and-greenspaces/recommended-plant-species/](http://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/landscape-and-greenspaces/recommended-plant-species/)
- c) ❖❖ Front and back gardens should be included in new developments for residents' wellbeing and to maintain the rural aspect of the village.
- d) ❖❖ Tree planting should be placed where future height, breadth and root growth would not endanger homes, services and highway safety.
- e) ❖❖ Careful consideration should be given to the selection of species that would be more resilient to local conditions and climate change. Advice can be found at The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). (See references).
- f) ❖❖ The highway authority should be consulted with regards to any trees to be planted in proximity to the highway. See: [www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/highways-technical-manual/](http://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/design-details/highways-technical-manual/)
- g) ❖❖ Future developments and extensions should provide that a minimum of one third of front gardens are green landscaped wherever possible.
- h) ❖ The provision of bird and bat boxes and access for hedgehogs through boundaries should be considered. For more information on developing 'highways' for hedgehogs see the Hedgehog Street section of the British Hedgehog Preservation Society at [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk)

### 3.4 Public Green Space

- a) ❖❖ In existing areas public green space should be preserved and respected.



*Penny Royal Lane triangle*



*Beaumont Park community green*



*Eves Corner green and duck pond*



*Well Lane green island*

- b) ❖❖ Public green space should be integrated into the development and its connecting routes rather than sited on the periphery.
- c) ❖❖ Any developer must have a workable scheme for the long-term management of such new green spaces.
- d) ❖ Soft landscaping should be used to demarcate what is privately owned residential space and what is public green space.

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The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

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Royal Horticultural Society, [www.rhs.org.uk/advice](http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice) e.g. planting for climate change or to combat pollution.

Woodland Trust: 'State of the UK's Woods and Trees'. Reid et al. 2021:  
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2021/04/state-of-uk-woods-and-trees-2021/>

Supporting Information referred to above can be viewed at  
<https://www.danburyneighbourhoodplan.com>  
and in paper form at the Danbury Parish Council Offices.