

Date: 27 May 2020
Our ref: 312785
Your ref: Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan – REG 16



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Dear [REDACTED]

Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan - Regulation 16 Consultation

Thank you for your consultation request on the above dated and received by Natural England on 23rd March, 2020. Please accept my apologies for the lateness of this response. I hope the comments are still useful.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England does not have any specific comments on the policies in this draft neighbourhood plan.

However, we would draw your attention to the comments Natural England made on the Horsham Local Plan, and the Habitats Regulations Assessment of that Plan, as they are relevant to the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan. We have also made comment on the Gatwick Sub-Region Water Cycle Study, copied to Horsham District Council.

In particular, Natural England is concerned about the water environment in the Arun Valley.

Arun Valley Water Resources

In December 2019 Natural England wrote to Southern Water services to state that based on recent evidence review of the Hardham groundwater abstraction, an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar features could not be excluded with certainty. This abstraction is a significant contributor during certain supply conditions to Southern Water's Sussex North supply area within the Gatwick sub-region. The Environment Agency and Natural England are working with Southern Water to try to identify a long term more sustainable water supply. In the meantime, whilst the adverse effect remains or is uncertain, development in the Sussex North part of the Gatwick sub-region must be certain not to add to this adverse effect.

Arun Valley Water Quality

The condition of the SSSIs that underpin the European sites in the Arun Valley is being reviewed. At a site level these condition assessments indicate the sites' contribution to the European site conservation status which is assessed nationally. As one of only four European sites for the SAC species *Anisus vorticulus*, the condition of the SSSIs that underpin the Arun Valley SAC is of particular import. It is crucial, therefore, that development does not impact the water quality of the SAC either via surface water run-off or foul sewerage.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely


Sussex and Kent Area Team
Natural England