

Matter 6d: Strategic Policy HA(NP1): Land at Adversane (Kingswood)
(MM227)

The Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) does not believe that this size of allocation should be added at this late stage of the Local Plan process. We support CPRE Sussex's position on this issue and the arguments set out in their hearing statement for MM227.

However, should the allocation progress, SWT is concerned that the proposed policy will not achieve true gains to biodiversity as required by paragraph 174 of the September 2023 NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Within the evidence presented by DEFRA consulting on the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into the planning system it was made clear that an increase of 10% would be the absolute minimum necessary to ensure confidence that a net loss in biodiversity would be avoided. The statutory minimum only takes us to a place of ensuring no net loss, which is why many local planning authorities have adopted policies requiring higher levels of BNG e.g. Worthing Borough Council, Guildford Borough Council and Lichfield District Council.

SWT disagrees that there is a requirement for the Horsham Local Plan to align with the 2026 version of the NPPF. The transitional arrangements are clear that this plan should be assessed against the 2023 NPPF.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council will shortly be adopting its local plan with a requirement for 20% BNG for major development. This plan's examination continued past the recent consultation on the new NPPF and yet the Inspector found the higher percentage requirement to be sound. He stated in his report (24th August 2026) that the policy was in line with the guidance in the PPG (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 74-006-20240214) which states that plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage of BNG than the statutory minimum 10% BNG objective required by the Environment Act 2021, unless it is justified through specific evidence.

HDC have evidenced that 12% BNG is effective and justified in the Horsham BNG Assessment (EN06).

SWT acknowledges that implementation of a higher BNG requirement could be challenged at the application stage under National Decision-Making Policy N2 of the 2026 NPPF. We therefore request that a requirement for a higher percentage of BNG is included in the site policy for Land at Adversane. This would conform with the requirements of the 2023 NPPF and futureproof the policy.

Ancient Woodland

SWT is concerned that the policy does not sufficiently conform with paragraph 179 of the 2023 NPPF and the requirement to not only protect priority habitats such as ancient woodland, but also to restore and enhance them. In particular, the policy requires the retention and/or protection of ancient and mature woodland in three separate criteria: 2g, 3d and 4a, but there is no reference to enhancement or restoration.

Given that this is a new settlement, there is ample opportunity to plan in true biodiversity gains from the start including large areas of habitat creation to support the existing areas of biodiversity value.

Paragraph 179 also requires that plans safeguard areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation. Therefore, the policy should also acknowledge that land within the development boundary is identified in the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) as Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) and Areas that Could be of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB). This should inform the layout of the development and particularly the locations of the wildlife corridors to prioritise delivery of LNRS mapped measures. In particular the measure to 'Create new wildlife corridors to reduce habitat fragmentation, support specific species and (where possible) deliver wider environmental benefits and public access.'

Barbastelle Bats and The Mens SAC

SWT supports CPRE Sussex's position that the allocation policy does not sufficiently cover the issue of potential impacts on The Mens SAC and the Barbastelle Bat functionally linked habitat.

We agree that this must be addressed and as a minimum the policy should be amended to include a requirement to protect and enhance The Mens SAC Barbastelle population and the functionally linked habitat, including the retention and enhancement of identified foraging and commuting habitat.

Barbastelle Bats are also identified as a priority species within the West Sussex LNRS. The measures for this species note that 'an increase in the quality and availability of wetland and riparian habitat species-rich meadow and hedgerows is important.' They also state that creating a good network of habitats for roosting, feeding and commuting, avoiding isolating any areas currently used for feeding and ensuring good connectivity between sites is key.

Policy amendments

We believe the following policy amendments are required to make the policy sound as discussed above:

2g) Formal and informal open space, sport and recreation provision to meet the needs of the new community in accordance with standards and the respective recommendations in the Playing Pitch Strategy and Open Space, Sport & Recreation Review 2021 or any future update. Provision shall include (but not be limited to):

- i) a network of paths, integrating with existing public rights of way
- ii) accessible natural green space, including the retention **and enhancement** of ancient and mature woodland;
- iii) allotments and community orchards; and

3. Development proposals are required to demonstrate that they are landscape-led, the pattern of development enhances identified landscape and heritage features. Prior to any development a site-wide landscaping strategy shall be submitted and agreed. It must demonstrate the design and layout of the scheme minimises any adverse landscape impacts and conserves and enhances the biodiversity and green infrastructure network. In particular, it must address the following:

- a) The relationship with the South Downs National Park, including key viewpoints into and out of the designation;
- b) The relationship with the hamlet of Adversane and its Conservation Area to mitigate against harm to the historic environment;
- c) The need to maintain and increase public rights of way across the site to encourage sustainable means of connection across the new settlement;
- d) The need to retain, **protect and enhance** areas of Ancient Woodland and mature woodland;~~and~~
- e) The Archaeological Notification Area, by undertaking appropriate work to investigate the presence of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval remains and avoid harm to such assets.
- f) The need to take account of West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy; and**
- g) The need to identify, protect and enhance functionally linked land to The Mens SAC and in particular, Barbastelle Bat foraging and commuting routes.**

4. Proposals must provide a comprehensive Ecology and Green Infrastructure Strategy, incorporating a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan, to demonstrate how a minimum ~~10~~**12**% net biodiversity gain will be achieved on the site, and in particular demonstrate:

- a) that natural and semi-natural habitats, including woodland and ancient woodland, hedgerows and ponds, are retained~~and~~, protected **and enhanced** wherever possible;
- b) the creation of native species rich hedges **and other suitable habitats** through the development;~~and~~
- c) ensure the retention and creation of wildlife corridors, **in line with the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy; and**
- d) ensure the creation of dark corridors along Barbastelle Bat foraging and commuting routes**