



Examination Statement

**Prepared on behalf of Bellway Homes
(Representor Number #1198095 and #1194675)**

Former Thakeham Mushroom Site

Horsham District Council Local Plan
Examination in Public

Matter 8: Housing

Examination Statement

Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham



Contents

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Introduction | 1 |
| 2. | Response to the Inspectors Questions | 2 |
| 3. | Conclusion | 6 |

Appendices

Appendix A – Glossary

Appendix B – HDC Appropriate Assessment

Appendix C – Natural England Consultee Response

Examination Statement

Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham



1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Examination Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bellway Homes Ltd ('Bellway'). This Statement relates to the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site ('The Site') which is situated to the west of Storrington Road in Thakeham.
- 1.2. Prior to the submission of the Horsham District Council Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination, Bellway has participated in the formal consultation of the Local Plan at the R19 stage (January - March 2024) in respect of the Site. Two sets of R19 representations were submitted which relates to a smaller site which encompasses the built area of the Former Mushroom Site (13.45ha) and a wider site included adjacent fields (30.1Ha) This Examination Statement should be read in conjunction with the R19 representations.
- 1.3. The location of the Site, its surroundings and the vision have been set out in detail at the R19 Stage and have therefore not been reproduced in detail in this statement (Section 2 of R19 Representations).
- 1.4. This Examination Statement responds to the relevant questions raised by the Inspector within Matter 8: Housing.
- 1.5. For the avoidance of doubt, any policies referred to within this Statement relate to the emerging Local Plan unless otherwise stated.

2. Response to the Inspectors Questions

Matter 8 – Housing

Issue 1 - Whether the housing requirement is justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?

Is Strategic Policy 37: housing Provision Sound?

a) Is the requirement for 13,212 homes between 2023 and 2040, below the local housing need for the area as determined by the standard method justified? Is it clear how the figure has been calculated and should this be explained more clearly in the justification text?

b) Would the adverse impacts of the Plan not providing for objectively assessed housing needs significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of doing so when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole? Is the overall housing requirement justified?

c) With reference to evidence, are the stepped annual requirements justified (in principle and scale of the step)?

- 2.1. In response to Issue 1 parts a, b and c, it is considered that the housing requirement included in the HDLP is not sound. The HDLP fails to meet the local housing need as identified by the standard method and evidence to support this is lacking in detail, based on a position regarding water neutrality. Additional sites, such as the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site can come forward to assist in HDC delivering the full housing requirement.
- 2.2. Bellway considers that whilst Natural England's position on water neutrality has affected how HDC determines planning applications, it remains the case that the issue of water neutrality is not for the development industry and planning regime to resolve. The water industry has a statutory obligation to ensure that there is an adequate supply of water to meet the needs of the serving community. The water industry is not sufficiently meeting this requirement.

Examination Statement

Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham



- 2.3. The standard method indicates a housing need of 917 over the plan period – some 140 homes greater than is proposed and 437 dwellings greater than that proposed within the first 5 years of the Plan Period. Thus it is essential for the water industry to ensure that there is a sufficient supply for this anticipated growth.
- 2.4. Notwithstanding this position, it is not considered that HDC has sufficiently considered all alternative options in order to delivery their full housing need, including assessing sites that are able to provide their own water offsetting solution, such as the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site (see comments to Issue 2, Question 1)..
- 2.5. HDC's historic delivery rates, prior to Water Neutrality, demonstrate that HDC is capable of delivering their full housing need and their R18 sought to do so. There is no reason to divert away from meeting this need across the whole Plan Period particularly when sites such as the Former Thakeham Mushroom Farm is available for delivery in the early part of the Plan Period. Consequently, it is not considered that there would be any adverse effects of not providing for the full housing need. For this reason the HDLP is not positively prepared, justified or in line with national policy.
- 2.6. The stepped trajectory and overall housing figure proposed is flawed as there are clearly additional options to secure further housing delivery over early part of the plan period that have not been considered. These additional sites could help to ensure that housing needs for the district, above that which are currently being planned for by the plan, can also be met.
- 2.7. In this regard, Appendix 5 of the R19 Representation provided details of the water neutrality solution for the Former Mushroom Farm site. Appendix B to this hearing statement provides HDC's Appropriate Assessment of this solution, and confirmation from Natural England that it is suitable solution (Appendix C). This solution, will not only ensure that this site can come forward early in the plan period and help to address the unmet needs of the district, but can also offer an additional solution for Bellway on other sites in the district to ensure further housing delivery.

AMENDMENT REQUIRED:

HDC should plan to meet their full housing requirement as per the Standard Method calculations. Sites such as the Former Thakeham Mushroom site are available with bespoke water neutrality solutions and can be brought forward in the early part of the Plan Period to support the delivery of the full housing requirements.

Issue 2 – Whether the overall housing land supply and site selection process is justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?

1. Were the proposed housing allocations selected on the basis of an understanding of what land is suitable, available and achievable for housing in the plan area using an appropriate and proportionate methodology, and are there clear reasons why other land which has not been allocated has been discounted?

- 2.8. With specific regard to the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, it is considered that there are flaws in the approach taken by HDC. The site was submitted at the R19 consultation stage and should have been assessed by HDC for its suitability as an allocation. The Site Assessment report (2023) should have been updated to reflect any additional sites which were promoted to the Reg 19 consultation, however this does not appear to be the case, which has meant some sites such as the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site which is suitable, available and achievable haven't been assessed. It is recommended this evidence is updated accordingly, which would identify further sites, which provide for their water neutrality solution, helping to meet the shortfall in housing
- 2.9. This is particularly relevant, as set out above, the site has its own solution to the water neutrality issue. So the site can come forward without the need to rely on SNOWS. The site at Mushroom Farm will not only provide capacity to offset the development itself, but also to offset further sites in that are in Bellway's control in the district, enabling more homes to come forward in the short term. It is a site that is wholly deliverable and should be allocated. This would fall into part 3 of policy 37 and would increase the housing coming forward from smaller scale allocations to over 2,000.
- 2.10. In relation to draft Policy 37, part 3 there are a number of concerns. Notably, how many homes are to come forward through Neighbourhood Plans and is this reference simply to those which are already made, or that may be coming forward. in which case, surely to be planned positively in accordance with the NPPF, the allowance should be greater than currently proposed. These matters are unclear and lack certainty. Furthermore, it is concerning that the number of homes anticipated to come forward under part 3 of policy 37 is only marginally above those expected from windfall sites inside settlement boundaries. HDC should be allocating a greater number of sites including the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site to ensure certainty from housing delivery on sites that are assessed as deliverable or developable.

Examination Statement

Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham



- 2.11. Bellway considers that there are flaws in Strategic Policy 37 that are easily addressed. However at this time, given the proposed stepped trajectory, and reduced housing provision over the plan period, it is clear further sites should have also been considered in the evidence and allocated. It is concerning that HDC has not however considered the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site within its Site Assessment Report (2023). Sites such as this would provide immediate solutions to help address the known shortfall against the standard method housing figure.
- 2.12. As such, Strategic Policy 37, part 2, should be amended to include the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site as a new Strategic Site for at least 400 homes in accordance with the deliverable development across the entire 30.1 Ha site. Alternatively, Part 3 of the Policy could be increased by 247 dwellings to accommodate the proposed development for the smaller 13.45 Ha site. The entirety of these proposals would be deliverable across the Plan Period.

AMENDMENT REQUIRED:

HDC should assess all sites to identify suitable sites with bespoke water neutrality solution that can support the delivery of their full housing requirement. The Former Thakeham Mushroom Site should then be included within part 2 of Strategic Policy 37 as follows:

2. New Strategic Sites:

- a) At least 1,600 homes on Land West of Ifield (from an allocation of 3,000 dwellings)
- b) At least 735 homes on Land North West of Southwater (from an allocation of 1,000 dwellings)
- c) At least 650 homes on Land East of Billingshurst (from an allocation of 650 dwellings)
- d) At least 400 homes at the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site**

OR

3. At least **2,042** dwellings from smaller scale allocations to be allocated in this Local Plan or in Neighbourhood Plans

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. This Examination Statement has been prepared by Savills on behalf of Bellway Homes Ltd in relation to Matter 8 of the HDC Local Plan Examination. These comments should be read in conjunction with the R19 Representations (reference ID: #1198095 and #1194675) that were submitted in March 2024.

- 3.2. Bellway have raised several concerns in respect of the Strategic Policy 37 and the allocation of housing sites. It is considered that HDC should be seeking to meet its housing requirement in full as the Water Neutrality issue should not prohibit the delivery of homes across the entire Plan Period. HDC has not sufficiently considered all options to meet their entire housing requirement. This includes the assessments of sites such as the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site which can demonstrate that they are able to provide a bespoke water offsetting solution (Appendix B and C). Sites such as this, can be delivered within the early part of the Plan Period assisting to meet HDC housing requirement in full. Thus, should have been assessed by HDC when preparing their HDLP.

Appendix A

Glossary

GLOSSARY

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| HDC | Horsham District Council |
| HDLP | Horsham District Council Local Plan |
| HDPF | Adopted Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 |
| HDPF | Adopted Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| R18 | Regulation 18 |
| R19 | Regulation 19 |
| SAC | Special Area of Conservation |
| SHELAA | Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment |
| SNOWS | Sussex North Offsetting Water Scheme |
| SNWRZ | Southern North Water Resource Zone |
| SPA | Special Protection Area |
| WRMP | Water Resource Management Plan |

Appendix B HDC Appropriate Assessment

Horsham District Council
Habitats Regulations Assessment Appropriate Assessment Record

Plan/project: DC/24/0021 | Demolition of existing buildings and the phased redevelopment of the site as a residential led development comprising 247 dwellings and flexible non-residential floorspace (Use Class E), with works to public right of way and associated landscaping, open space and infrastructure. (additional Marketing Report) | Thakeham Mushrooms Site Storrington Road Thakeham Pulborough West Sussex RH20 3DY

The purpose of this screening record is to assess the need for appropriate assessment in relation to the plan/project detailed above.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires that a Habitats Regulations Assessment screening is carried out in relation to any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on Habitats (European) sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. European sites are Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. Ramsar sites should also be given the same level of protection, as stated within the National Planning Policy Framework.

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a development is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site. HRA screening concluded that it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects without mitigation in place. **This report is therefore an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).**

Where an Appropriate Assessment is carried out a project may only be authorised after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned.

Table 1: Screening matrix

| Stage 1 HRA screening | |
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| Brief description of the Plan/Project | <p>Application: DC/24/0021 Planning Application: Demolition of existing buildings and the phased redevelopment of the site as a residential led development comprising 247 dwellings and flexible non-residential floorspace (Use Class E), with works to public right of way and associated landscaping, open space and infrastructure. (additional Marketing Report) Location: Thakeham Mushrooms Site Storrington Road Thakeham Pulborough West Sussex RH20 3DY</p> |
| Brief description of the Habitats sites within scope of this assessment | <p>The Mens SAC (Sussex bat SAC) and Ebernoe Common SAC lie within West Sussex and the Impact Risk Zones identified by Natural England includes Horsham District.</p> <p>The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 8.9km to the northwest of the site and lists Barbastelle bats as a qualifying feature. A long and varied history of management has seen The Mens move from an open, wood pasture system with huge, spreading parkland trees and pollards to a high forest with closely spaced trees with narrow crowns. A lack of management in recent years has added to this silvicultural diversity.</p> <p>Ebernoe Common SAC is located approximately 14.4km northwest of the site and lists Barbastelle and Bechstein's bats as qualifying features. Ebernoe Common is dominated by old wood pasture where Commoners would have turned out their cattle or pigs to graze and browse on young trees and scrub, beech mast and acorns, or on the grassy meadows in glades and clearings. Grazing stopped by the middle of the 20th century and the wood pasture became more and more overgrown. Great effort has been put into opening up glades and rides and restoring grazing to this SAC.</p> |

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| | <p>Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar is approximately 4.0km to the west, and lists rare and diverse plant, invertebrate and bird assemblages as qualifying features. It consists of low-lying grazing marsh, largely on alluvial soils, but with an area of peat derived from a relict raised bog. Variation in soils and water supply lead to a wide range of ecological conditions and hence a rich flora and fauna.</p> |
| <p>Qualifying Features for SPA/SAC</p> | <p>The Mens SAC</p> <p><u>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of the site:</u></p> <p>9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with <i>Ilex</i> and sometimes also <i>Taxus</i> in the shrub layer (Quercion robori-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion)</p> <p>The Mens is an extensive area of mature Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> woodland rich in lichens, bryophytes, fungi and saproxylic invertebrates, and is one of the largest tracts of Atlantic acidophilous beech forests in the south-eastern part of the habitat's UK range. It is developing a near-natural high forest structure, in response to only limited silvicultural intervention over the 20th century, combined with the effects of natural events such as the 1987 great storm.</p> <p><u>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:</u></p> <p>1308 Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i></p> <p>Ebernoe Common SAC</p> <p><u>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</u></p> <p>9120 Atlantic acidophilous Beech forests with <i>Ilex</i> and sometimes also <i>Taxus</i> in the shrub layer (Quercion robori-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion).</p> <p>Ebernoe Common has an extensive block of Beech high forest and former wood-pasture over dense Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>, and has a very rich epiphytic lichen flora, including <i>Agonimia octospora</i> and <i>Catillaria atropurpurea</i>. It represents Atlantic acidophilous Beech forests in the south-eastern part of the habitat's UK range. The Beech woodland is associated with other woodland types, open glades and pools, which contribute to a high overall diversity. The woods are important for a number of bat species, in particular 1323 Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> and 1308 Barbastelle.</p> <p><u>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:</u></p> <p>1308 Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i></p> <p>A maternity colony of Barbastelles utilises a range of tree roosts in this area of 91A0 old sessile Oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles, which has a dense understorey of holly as well as open glades and open water. Maternity roost sites are usually in dead tree stumps, but the species appears to be present throughout the year, with individuals utilising a range of roost sites in tree holes and under bark.</p> <p>1323 Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i></p> <p>A maternity colony of Bechstein's bat is associated with this area of 91A0 Old sessile Oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles. Roosts are mainly in old woodpecker holes in the stems of live mature oak <i>Quercus petraea</i> trees.</p> <p>Arun Valley SPA</p> <p>A037 Bewick's swan, <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> (non-breeding).</p> <p>During the time of site notification, the SPA supported 115 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1992/93 - 1996/97).</p> |

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| | <p>During the non-breeding season, the SPA regularly supports an assemblage of waterfowl with the area regularly supporting 27,241 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean for 1992/93 to 1996/97) including: Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>, Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>, Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>, Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>.</p> <p>Arun Valley SAC 4056 Little Whirlpool Ramshorn snail <i>Anisus vorticulus</i></p> <p><i>Anisus vorticulus</i> occurs across a range of sites in southern and eastern England. The Arun valley is one of the three main population centres for this species in the UK. This proposed site includes two of its core sites in the wash lands of the Arun floodplain (Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wild Brooks SSSIs).</p> |
| <p>Qualifying Features for Ramsar</p> | <p>Arun Valley Ramsar Ramsar criterion 2 The site holds seven wetland invertebrate species listed in the British Red Data Book as threatened. One of these, <i>Pseudamnicola confusa</i>, is considered to be endangered. The site also supports four nationally rare and four nationally scarce plant species</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 3 In addition to the Red Data Book invertebrate and plant species, the ditches intersecting the site have a particularly diverse and rich flora. All five British duckweed (<i>Lemna</i> species), all five water-cress (<i>Rorippa</i> species), and all three British water milfoils (<i>Myriophyllum</i> species), all but one of the seven British water dropworts (<i>Oenanthe</i> species), and two-thirds of the British pondweeds (<i>Potamogeton</i> species) can be found on site.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 5 Assemblages of international importance: Species with peak counts in winter: 13774 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003).</p> |
| <p>Conservation Status of the relevant Qualifying Features</p> | <p>The Mens SAC</p> <p>The Barbastelle is one of the UK's rarest mammals. Few maternity roost sites are known in the UK. While the SAC series makes a contribution to securing favourable conservation status for this Annex II species, wider measures are also necessary to support its conservation in the UK.</p> <p>These are outlined in the Species Biodiversity Action Plan (DEFRA website). <i>It is likely that its low population density and slow population growth make it particularly vulnerable to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further loss and fragmentation of ancient deciduous woodland habitat; • loss, destruction and disturbance of roosts in buildings, trees and underground sites; • a reduction in numbers of insect prey due to habitat simplification acting through factors such as fertiliser use and intensive grazing. <p>Ebernoe Common SAC</p> <p>Barbastelle as outlined for The Mens SAC.</p> <p>Bechstein's Bat Species Biodiversity Action Plan (DEFRA website): <i>The rarity of this species means that it is poorly understood, but according to the national species action plan, its low population density, exacting habitat requirements and low rates of reproduction make it particularly vulnerable to factors such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further loss and fragmentation of open ancient deciduous woodland habitat. • Loss, destruction and disturbance of roosts or potential roosts (particularly in old trees) <p>Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>In line with the national trend, the number of Bewick's swans wintering in the</p> |

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| | <p>Arun Valley has declined since the time of designation and is now typically fewer than 50 birds. This may reflect an overall decline in the population of the species and/or be due to the effects of a milder climate in which more are able to winter in continental Europe (The Birds of Sussex, 2014). The waterfowl assemblage numbers fluctuate depending upon conditions in the valley but over the past five years have averaged 40,311, an increase from the five year mean of 27,241 at the time of designation.</p> <p>The Arun Valley is one of the remaining strongholds for the Little Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail.</p> |
| <p>Conservation Objectives (Only Relevant for SPA/SAC)</p> | <p>The Mens SAC Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and, • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. <p>Ebernoe Common SAC Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely • The populations of qualifying species, and, • The distribution of qualifying species within the site. <p>Arun Valley SAC & SPA Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features • The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features • The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely • The population of each of the qualifying features, and, • The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. |
| <p>Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity</p> | <p>Issues listed in the relevant Site Improvement Plan (SIP) are:</p> <p>The Mens SAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry and woodland management; • Habitat connectivity for barbastelle bats; • Invasive species; • Changes in land management, with reference to foraging and commuting routes; • Air pollution, risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition; • Public access / disturbance, with regards to light levels. <p>The mechanism for addressing these issues within the SIP is investigation, research and monitoring; with the exception of appropriate management, and removal of, rhododendron, within The Mens SAC.</p> |

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| | <p>Ebernoe Common SAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry and woodland management; • Off-site habitat availability / management; • Habitat fragmentation; • Change in land management, with reference to foraging and commuting routes for Barbastelles; • Hydrological changes; • Air pollution, risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition; • Public access / disturbance, with regards to light levels. <p>Again, the mechanism for addressing all of these issues within the SIP is investigation, research, monitoring at this stage.</p> <p>Arun Valley SAC and SPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate water levels • Water pollution • Inappropriate ditch management • Disturbance <p>Again, the mechanism for addressing all of these issues within the SIP is investigation, research, monitoring at this stage.</p> <p>However, for applications where increased demand for water resources is the only pathway for impacts, Natural England’s substantive advice (Position Statement Interim Approach, September 2021) is that such applications - without mitigation - will result in a likely significant effect on the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar site in combination with other developments in the Sussex North WSZ. As it cannot be concluded that the existing abstraction within Sussex North Water Supply Zone is not having an impact on the Arun Valley sites, developments within this zone must not add to this impact. Therefore, such applications, even where mitigation is proposed, must progress to Appropriate Assessment (AA).</p> <p>Natural England’s substantive advice (September 2021) is that the Sussex North Water Supply Zone includes supplies from a groundwater abstraction which cannot, with certainty, conclude no adverse effect on the integrity of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arun Valley Special Area Conservation (SAC) • Arun Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) • Arun Valley Ramsar Site |
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| Assessment Criteria | |
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| <p>The individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Habitats site</p> | <p>Barbastelle bat has been recorded within the site; one pass of this species was recorded for each of the transect surveys in July and October 2023 (Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)). Barbastelle has also been recorded 1.8km to the south of the site (Sussex Biodiversity Information Centre – accessed under licence).</p> <p>The Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol provides advice for developers and local Councils when assessing applications which fall within an identified 12 km Impact Zone for The Men’s SAC, Ebernoe Common SAC. In line with this Protocol, this application is located within the wider Conservation Area of The Men’s SAC, and significant impacts or severance to flightlines need to be considered. This development does not occur along one of the identified flightlines.</p> <p>Based on the threats listed in the SIPs, the following potential impact pathways are considered with reference to the development proposals regarding the need for further assessment:</p> <p>Direct land take - The proposed development will not result in any direct land take from any designated sites. Direct land take does not therefore have the potential to result in likely significant effects (LSE), and can be <u>screened out</u> and will not be considered further.</p> |
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Forestry and woodland management - This threat / issue is of relevance to the habitats within the designated sites themselves. There is no pathway for woodland management at these locations to be affected by the proposals. There is no potential for forestry and woodland management to be impacted by the proposals, so they have been screened out and will not be considered further.

Habitat connectivity and availability for foraging and commuting

Barbastelle bats – Barbastelle bats are qualifying features for both SACs, and threats and issues relating to this species in the wider area have been identified in the relevant SIPs as:

- Off-site habitat availability / management;
- Habitat fragmentation / Habitat connectivity for barbastelle bats;
- Changes in land management, with reference to foraging and commuting routes.

Barbastelle bats have been recorded on site and within 2km of the site (Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)) and Sussex Biodiversity Information Centre – accessed under licence)) and there is potential for changes in vegetation structure with the removal of small sections of hedgerows H1 and H2 on the eastern boundary. So habitat loss may alter the availability of foraging and commuting routes for Barbastelle around the site, and impact commuting routes across the wider area. The removal or fragmentation of commuting routes for this species e.g. treelines, may result in increased energy expenditure and consequently reduced survival. This would be in conflict with the conservation objectives for both SACs which include ‘maintaining or restoring the population of qualifying species’.

Further assessment is therefore screened in regarding habitat connectivity for commuting and foraging Barbastelle bats, as there is potential for LSE on this qualifying feature of The Men’s SAC as a result of the proposed development.

Bechstein’s bats are a qualifying feature for Ebernoe Common SAC. The site lies outside the Ebernoe Common Impact Risk Zone and the species is considered most likely to remain within 1.5km of their roosts. As such, Bechstein’s bats from Ebernoe Common SAC are considered likely to be absent, and as such, the potential for LSE is screened out, and they will not be considered further.

Invasive species

This threat concerns invasive rhododendron within The Mens SAC, and, as such there is no pathway for impacts due to the proposals. There is no potential for invasive species in The Men’s to be impacted by the proposals, so they have been screened out and will not be considered further.

Hydrological changes

This threat / issue is of no relevance to The Men’s SAC and Ebernoe Common SAC.

The nearest area which would be affected by hydrological changes is the Arun Valley SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar site.

Therefore, there is a predicted Likely Significant Effects due to hydrological changes in combination with other plans and projects, so these have been screened in. **This is considered under a separate HRA Appropriate Assessment for water neutrality.**

Air pollution

The proposal will result in an increase in local residents and use of the SACs and Arun Valley SPA, and Ramsar are currently above their critical load for nitrogen deposition as noted in the HRA Screening Statement for Petworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (South Downs National Park Authority, 2017). Natural England Advice to Local Authorities when Considering Air Quality Impacts at HRA poses that air pollution impacts are predominantly

considered within 200m of a road. As the development is >200m from any Habitats site, the potential for LSE on the Habitats sites due to air pollution can be screened out and will not be considered further.

Public access / disturbance, with regards to light levels.

The HRA Screening Statement for Petworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (South Downs National Park Authority, 2017) notes that most visits to The Men's and Ebernoe Common SACs take place during daylight, with low levels of recreation at night. As such, they conclude that significant adverse effects due to lighting are unlikely. Recreation itself (i.e. during daylight hours) is not listed as threat within the SIPs.

Whilst there is potential for disturbance to local flightlines from increased light levels, light spill is not anticipated to extend into the wider landscape.

Therefore there is no potential for disturbance effects to the habitat or Barbastelle within the designated site. This impact pathway therefore needs to be screened out.

In combination effects

There is no potential for LSE from direct land take, forestry and woodland management, invasive species, hydrological connections, or air pollution there is no potential for the development proposals to contribute to any likely significant effects along these pathways, in combination with other plans and projects.

However, impacts from disturbance with regards to increased levels of lighting and loss of connectivity on foraging and commuting Barbastelle bats, as qualifying feature of both The Men's SAC and Ebernoe Common SAC have already been screened in for further assessment from the development alone. In combination effects will be considered at stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

Test 1 the significant test:

As the development may result in new lighting of commuting and foraging habitat within the Impact Risk Zone of the SACs, mitigation will be required in terms of new planting and a sensitive lighting scheme. The LPA therefore anticipates that, without mitigation, it is not possible to conclude no 'likely significant effect' (LSE) to The Men's SAC in terms of **disturbance impacts from lighting and loss of habitat connectivity** when considered from the development alone.

The effects due to changes to lighting, in-combination with other plans and projects, are also possible pathways for LSE so these will be assessed further in Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.

Therefore, in accordance with the Sussex Bat SAC planning and landscape scale enhancement protocol, this assessment needs to proceed to HRA Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment. This will consider, with mitigation, the impacts of disturbance from lighting on Barbastelle bats from the above designated site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

After mitigation has been embedded into the project design, Test 2 – the integrity test then needs to be applied.

Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

The above Stage 1 HRA screening has determined that LSE are possible at The Men's SAC as a result of impacts on habitat connectivity and availability for foraging and commuting Barbastelle bats.

These pathways have been screened in, and the potential for adverse effects on site integrity, either alone, or in-combination will be assessed.

Therefore, this section of the report to inform HRA Stage 2 only discusses the potential for impacts from new lighting as a result of the proposed development.

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| <p>Potential for Adverse Effects On the Integrity (AEOI) of a Habitats site from the development alone.</p> | <p>Barbastelle may commute and forage along the treelines onsite and therefore the site could be important for Barbastelle bats within the bat sustenance zone of a bat SAC designated for this Appendix II species.</p> <p>Based on published data¹ Natural England recommends that the Zone of Influence of 12km (as detailed on Defra's MAGIC map 2022) is used for the wider conservation area for the Sussex Bat SACs and all impacts are assessed.</p> <p>This development is within the 12km "wider conservation area" for The Men's SAC and lying within a 'bat sustenance zone' for Barbastelle bats, a designated feature of the SACs as identified in the Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol.</p> <p>From the submitted documents, it appears that the majority of the hedgerows and woodland on site will be retained and new areas of native species planting of hedgerow, scrub and trees is proposed. Therefore there will be no overall loss of hedgerow or woodland on the site.</p> |
| <p>Potential for Adverse Effects On the Integrity (AEOI) of a Habitats site from the development in combination with other plans and projects.</p> | <p>Based on the scale of the proposed development, and the conclusions of the HDC Local Plan HRA, any further search using data from surrounding LPA planning portals for other projects was not considered necessary.</p> <p>Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF, 2015), Section 9.34 within Policy 31 states: In the case of The Men's, development must not impact on bat flight paths in the district. As recommended in the Council's Habitat Regulations Assessment of this plan, a 'bat sustenance zone' has been identified and is shown on the Policies Map (see Appendix B). Within this area, it may be necessary for compensatory measures such as hedgerow enhancement to be undertaken prior to any development.</p> <p>The HRA for the Chichester Local Plan Review (ACOM, 2018), considers disturbance of bat flight lines from both The Men's and Ebernoe Common SACs. With regards to The Men's, they conclude that <i>"Along with implementation of the Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol' (2017), the Chichester Local Plan policies provide a protective framework for the SAC and the Local Plan Review will not result in an adverse effect in integrity on this SAC"</i>.</p> <p>The HRA Appropriate Assessment for development in the locality which could act in combination relates to Land at Wiltshire Farm, Pickhurst Lane, Codmore Hill, Pulborough (DC/19/0591) for redevelopment of Wiltshire Farm, Pulborough (Place Services, August 2019). The site comprises a number of outbuildings and grassland fields. The proposals entail the demolition of barn on site and construction of a replacement residential accommodation, concluded with mitigation secured, no adverse effect on site integrity of The Men's SAC or Ebernoe Common either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and Natural England agreed with this decision.</p> <p>Other developments within the wider conservation zone for The Men's SAC include the HRA Appropriate Assessment (Place Services, May 2020) for Land at Lyons Farm Lyons Road Slinfold (DC/19/1723) for an outline application for the erection of a continuing care retirement community, concluded with mitigation secured, no adverse effect on site integrity of The Men's SAC either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and Natural England agreed with this decision. This was refused consent and a decision of appeal APP/Z3825/W/20/3265874 is still awaited as the Hearing is in progress.</p> <p>The HRA Appropriate Assessment (Place Services, June 2020) for Land at Wellcross Farm Broadbridge Heath (DC/19/1897) which was allowed at appeal (APP/Z3825/W/20/3262938) also for an outline application for the erection of a continuing care retirement community, concluded with mitigation secured, no adverse effect on site integrity of The Men's SAC or</p> |

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| | <p>Ebernoe Common either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and Natural England agreed with this decision.</p> <p>The HRA Appropriate Assessment (Place Services, Feb 2021) for Land at Duckmoor East of Billingshurst (DC/20/2607) for an Outline Application for the development of 83 residential units, landscaping, access, parking and associated infrastructure on land at Duckmoor, East Billingshurst concluded that with mitigation secured the project will avoid an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Habitats sites listed in this assessment, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects. The application was refused consent but allowed at appeal (APP/Z3825/W/21/3283823). Natural England has confirmed that it has no objection to the development, providing all relevant mitigation is secured in any planning permission which the Inspector has included in the decision notice.</p> <p>Additional HRA Appropriate Assessment for development in the locality which have been deemed to have, with mitigation secured, no adverse effect on site integrity of The Men's SAC or Ebernoe Common either alone or in combination with other plans and projects include:</p> <p>DC/22/0141 (Cattlestone Farm, Pulborough), SDNP/20/05831/FUL (Pulborough Garden Centre), DC/21/2530 (Land South of East Street Billingshurst), DC/20/2567 (Billhook Farm West, Billingshurst), DC/19/02952 (Land at Platts Roundabout, Billingshurst) and DC/22/0141 (Cattlestone Farm, West Chiltington).</p> <p>Other developments nearby over the past 6 years have comprised of smaller developments such as extensions and building conversions. No in - combination effects are therefore considered likely to result from the on-site proposals and these small-scale developments. Any development proposals in the wider area around Broadbridge Heath will need to be assessed within the Horsham Local Plan HRA Appropriate Assessment or bespoke assessments at application stage.</p> <p>Given the above, and once the mitigation and compensation measures have been incorporated and secured, there is no potential for significant impacts from the proposals, it is considered that there is no potential for the development proposals to contribute to any adverse effects on integrity, in combination with other plans and projects.</p> |
| <p>Proposed mitigation for the project to secure the mitigation as a condition of any consent</p> | <p>Summary of mitigation package</p> <p>The implementation of an ecologically sensitive lighting scheme which specifies that lighting should comply with Bat Conservation Trust and the Institution of Lighting Professionals, including the measures recommended by GN:08/23 (ILP) (Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)).</p> <p>Retention of the majority of hedgerows (except for small sections of H1 and H2 on eastern boundary) Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)).</p> <p>Compensatory planting of native trees and 328 urban trees and scrub (Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)) and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Aspect Ecology, February 2024)).</p> <p>Creation of SuDS with native species planting (Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)) and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Aspect Ecology, February 2024)).</p> <p>Creation of wildflower grassland (Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, December 2023)) and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Aspect Ecology, February 2024)).</p> <p>The avoidance and mitigation measures are considered appropriate to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the interest features (Barbastelles) of The Men's SAC likely to occur within the site. The measures will be secured by a condition of any consent.</p> |

Test 2 – the integrity test

Conclusion:

Having considered the proposed avoidance and mitigation measures above, Horsham District Council concludes that, the project will avoid an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of the Habitats sites listed in this assessment, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects.

Having made this appropriate assessment of the implications of the project for the sites in view of those sites' conservation objectives and having consulted Natural England and fully considered any representation received where necessary, the authority may now agree to the project under regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

As the mitigation has been considered after HRA screening, this HRA Appropriate Assessment is in line with the People over Wind CJEU Court ruling.

Approving Ecologist: Genevieve Broad, Ecological Consultant - Place Services

Date: 18th April 2024

DISCLAIMER: This information has been produced by Place Services's Ecology Team on behalf of Horsham District Council, at their request.

Appendix C Natural England Consultee Response

Date: 07 June 2024
Our ref: 476062
Your ref: DC/24/0021



planning@horsham.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Jason Hawkes,

Planning consultation: DC/24/0021 HRA/AA & WATER NEUTRALITY REPORT AND BATS

Demolition of existing buildings and the phased redevelopment of the site as a residential led development comprising 247 dwellings and flexible non-residential floorspace (Use Class E), with works to public right of way and associated landscaping, open space and infrastructure

Location: Thakeham Mushrooms Site Storrington Road Thakeham Pulborough West Sussex RH20 3DY

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 13 May 2024 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

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.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

NO OBJECTION - SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE MITIGATION BEING SECURED

We consider that without appropriate mitigation the application would:

- have an adverse effect on the integrity of Arun Valley Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site
- have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Mens SAC.

In order to mitigate these adverse effects and make the development acceptable, the following mitigation measures should be secured:

- Delivery, management and maintenance of measures identified in the Water Neutrality Report dated 23 February 2024 to achieve water neutrality.
- Delivery, management and maintenance of measures as detailed in the Ecological Appraisal dated December 2023 and the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment dated February 2024.

We advise that an appropriate planning condition or obligation is attached to any planning permission to secure these measures.

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other natural environment issues is set out below.

Further advice on mitigation

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

1. Water neutrality

The proposed development falls within the [Sussex North water supply zone](#); As set out in Natural England's [Advice Note regarding Water Neutrality within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone](#), the existing water supply in the Sussex North water supply zone cannot be ruled out as contributing to the declines in wildlife within internationally protected sites in the Arun Valley SPA, SAC and Ramsar site. Achieving water neutrality is recognised as a suitable method to rule out potential adverse effects on the integrity of these sites arising from development.

Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment for water impacts of the proposal dated 13 May 2024 in accordance with regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Natural England is a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process. Your appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the proposal will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any of the sites in question.

The mitigation measures proposed for this site in relation to minimising additional water demand include on-site water efficiency measures. Furthermore we understand that two options are available to the applicant to offset the remaining water demand of the proposal which are to utilise the previous water usage of the mushroom factory to offset the proposal or use the existing borehole on site which includes a residential licence. We understand that the licence for annual water abstraction which is in place for the existing borehole has sufficient capacity to accommodate the up to 600 homes proposed in this development.

Having considered the Water Neutrality Statement and your assessment, Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions, providing that all mitigation measures are appropriately secured in any planning permission given.

2. The Mens SAC

In addition, Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment of the proposal dated 18 April 2024 in relation to the impacts to the Barbastelle bat populations associated with the Mens SAC, in accordance with regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Your appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the proposal will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Mens SAC.


The mitigation measures proposed are detailed in the Ecological Appraisal (December 2023) and the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment (February 2024). These include the implementation of an ecologically sensitive lighting scheme, the retention of the majority of hedgerows, compensatory planting of native and other trees and scrub, the creation of SuDS with native species planting and the creation of wildflower grassland.

We are pleased to see these proposed measures which seek to provide BNG in line with legislation, and the retention and enhancement of the Green and Blue Infrastructure of the site in line with good practice. We also welcome the proposed provision of an ecologically sensitive lighting scheme which seeks to minimise impacts to bat populations.

Having considered the proposed avoidance and mitigation measures detailed in the assessment Natural England concurs with the conclusions, providing that all mitigation measures are

appropriately secured in any planning permission given. You, as the competent authority, should ensure conditions are sufficiently robust to ensure that the mitigation measures can be fully implemented and are enforceable in perpetuity and therefore provide a sufficient degree of certainty to pass the Habitats Regulations.

Further general advice on consideration of protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me 



Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

Yours sincerely

Nancy Warne
Senior Adviser Sustainable Development
Sussex and Kent Area Team

Annex A – Natural England general advice

Protected Landscapes

Paragraph 182 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (known as National Landscapes), National Parks, and the Broads and states that the scale and extent of development within all these areas should be limited. Paragraph 183 requires exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated to justify major development within a designated landscape and sets out criteria which should be applied in considering relevant development proposals. [Section 245](#) of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 places a duty on relevant authorities (including local planning authorities) to seek to further the statutory purposes of a National Park, the Broads or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England in exercising their functions. This duty also applies to proposals outside the designated area but impacting on its natural beauty.

The local planning authority should carefully consider any impacts on the statutory purposes of protected landscapes and their settings in line with the NPPF, relevant development plan policies and the Section 245 duty. The relevant National Landscape Partnership or Conservation Board may be able to offer advice on the impacts of the proposal on the natural beauty of the area and the aims and objectives of the statutory management plan, as well as environmental enhancement opportunities. Where available, a local Landscape Character Assessment can also be a helpful guide to the landscape's sensitivity to development and its capacity to accommodate proposed development.

Wider landscapes

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland, or dry-stone walls) could be incorporated into the development to respond to and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments. Where the impacts of development are likely to be significant, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be provided with the proposal to inform decision making. We refer you to the [Landscape Institute](#) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for further guidance.

Biodiversity duty

The local planning authority has a [duty](#) to conserve and enhance biodiversity as part of its decision making. Further information is available [here](#).

Designated nature conservation sites

Paragraphs 186-188 of the NPPF set out the principles for determining applications impacting on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and habitats sites. Both the direct and indirect impacts of the development should be considered. A Habitats Regulations Assessment is needed where there is a likely significant effect on a habitats site and Natural England must be consulted on '[appropriate assessments](#)'. Natural England must also be consulted where development is in or likely to affect a SSSI and provides advice on potential impacts on SSSIs either via [Impact Risk Zones](#) or as standard or bespoke consultation responses.

Protected Species

Natural England has produced [standing advice](#) to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances. A protected species [licence](#) may be required in certain cases.

Local sites and priority habitats and species

The local planning authority should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity site, in line with paragraphs 180, 181 and 185 of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity to help nature's recovery. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local

sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies. Emerging [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#) may also provide further useful information.

Priority habitats and species are of particular importance for nature conservation and are included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. A list of priority habitats and species can be found on [Gov.uk](#).

Natural England does not routinely hold species data. Such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

Biodiversity and wider environmental gains

Development should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the NPPF paragraphs 180(d), 185 and 186. Major development (defined in the [NPPF glossary](#)) is required by law to deliver a biodiversity gain of at least 10% from 12 February 2024 and this requirement is expected to be extended to smaller scale development in spring 2024. For nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs), it is anticipated that the requirement for biodiversity net gain will be implemented from 2025.

Further information on the timetable for mandatory biodiversity net gain can be found [here](#). Further information on biodiversity net gain, including [draft Planning Practice Guidance](#), can be found [here](#).

The statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) should be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and intertidal habitats and can be used to inform any development project. For small development sites, the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of the [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met.

The mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 186 of the NPPF should be followed to firstly consider what existing habitats within the site can be retained or enhanced. Where on-site measures are not possible, provision off-site will need to be considered.

Development also provides opportunities to secure wider biodiversity enhancements and environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 74, 108, 124, 180, 181 and 186). Opportunities for enhancement might include incorporating features to support specific species within the design of new buildings such as swift or bat boxes or designing lighting to encourage wildlife.

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside the [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is available as a beta test version.

Further information on biodiversity net gain, the mitigation hierarchy and wider environmental net gain can be found in government [Planning Practice Guidance for the natural environment](#).

Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees

The local planning authority should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 186 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should be taken into account when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Best and most versatile agricultural land and soils

Local planning authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient detailed agricultural land classification (ALC) information to apply NPPF policies (Paragraphs 180 and 181). This is the case regardless of whether the proposed development is sufficiently large to consult Natural England. Further

information is contained in [GOV.UK guidance](#) Agricultural Land Classification information is available on the [Magic](#) website and the [Data.Gov.uk](#) website

Guidance on soil protection is available in the Defra [Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites](#), and we recommend its use in the design and construction of development, including any planning conditions. For mineral working and landfilling, separate guidance on soil protection for site restoration and aftercare is available on [Gov.uk](#) website. Detailed guidance on soil handling for mineral sites is contained in the Institute of Quarrying [Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings](#).

Should the development proceed, we advise that the developer uses an appropriately experienced soil specialist to advise on, and supervise soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled and how to make the best use of soils on site.

Green Infrastructure

Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) provides evidence-based advice and tools on how to design, deliver and manage green and blue infrastructure (GI). GI should create and maintain green liveable places that enable people to experience and connect with nature, and that offer everyone, wherever they live, access to good quality parks, greenspaces, recreational, walking and cycling routes that are inclusive, safe, welcoming, well-managed and accessible for all. GI provision should enhance ecological networks, support ecosystems services and connect as a living network at local, regional and national scales.

Development should be designed to meet the [15 Green Infrastructure Principles](#). The GI Standards can be used to inform the quality, quantity and type of GI to be provided. Major development should have a GI plan including a long-term delivery and management plan. Relevant aspects of local authority GI strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

GI mapping resources are available [here](#) and [here](#). These can be used to help assess deficiencies in greenspace provision and identify priority locations for new GI provision.

Access and Recreation

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths, together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to urban fringe areas should also be explored to strengthen access networks, reduce fragmentation, and promote wider green infrastructure.

Rights of Way, Access land, Coastal access and National Trails

Paragraphs 104 and 180 of the NPPF highlight the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, rights of way and coastal access routes in the vicinity of the development. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts on the any nearby National Trails. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts.

Further information is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on the [natural environment](#)

