

Date: 03 July 2024
Our ref: [Click here to enter text.](#)
LPA ref: P/OUT/2023/01166
PINs ref: APP/D1265/W/23/3336518



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Mss Dutton on behalf of the Inspector

Planning consultation: Mixed use development of up to 1,700 dwellings including affordable housing and care provision; 10,000sqm of employment space in the form of a business park; village centre with associated retail, commercial, community and health faculties; open space including the provision of suitable alternative natural green space (SANG); biodiversity enhancements; solar array, and new roads, access arrangements and associated infrastructure (Outline Application with all matters reserved apart from access off Hillbury Road)

Location: Land To The South Of Ringwood Road Alderholt

Appeal Reference: APP/D1265/W/23/3336518

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.

I am writing to the Inspector concerning a matter affecting the River Avon and which requires consideration at the above Inquiry.

This was only recently brought to my attention hence the very late submission of additional information for which I must make sincere apologies on behalf of Natural England. I have only provided extracts of documents to minimise additional evidence and focus on the matter.

The matter concerns water supply to the proposed development, if approved.

The application site falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and the drinking water supply for the development would be supplied by a local Water Company. Currently water is abstracted from the River Avon and its aquifers which has resulted in low flows which are below the necessary levels to achieve the sites Favourable Conservation status because the Conservation Objectives for the site are not met. This is particularly the case during low rainfall periods such as the summer period when demand is high.

The water company, South West Water, is currently undergoing a statutory consultation process to agree a Water Resources Management Plan for the next 25 years. However the company has now carried out three revisions to its draft proposed plan, most recently in 2023. These consultations have been rejected by both the Environment Agency (Annexe 1) and Natural England because they have failed to provide information which confirms that sufficient water supply can be secured to both meet the need of new development as well as meet water demand reduction targets set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (Annexe 2) which is underpinned by the Environment Act

2021.

This position, statutory agency advice and tightening water consumption requirements to protect/reduce both supply and the natural environment, is set within a context of much of southern England being classified as under serious water stress by the Environment Agency (2021) Annexe 3.

It should be noted that the application, which is large, does not form part of any formally submitted proposal through the Local Plan process and will not therefore have informed the water companies water resource planning.

This difficult position is reflected in the letter from Mr Munslow dated 7 March 2024 (Annexe 4) setting out the water companies concerns about water supply. Although the risk or harm to the designated sites at the River Avon is not mentioned.

Natural England did raise the matter of water quantity in our scoping letter dated 20 Dec 2022, as highlighted on page 4 in Annexe 5. However it was omitted to comment further at the application stage and reference to hydrological impacts may have been taken to only refer to nutrient issues given their profile. At Annexe 6 is an extract from the Site Improvement Plan(SIP) for the River Avon SAC and SPA confirming water abstraction is an adverse effect requiring action.

Natural England has provided guidance to two competent authorities relating to the impacts of new development proposed in draft Local Plans on water flows in the River Avon. Wiltshire Council and Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole council. These are appended at Annexe 7.

Due to the uncertainty concerning the supply of water both Councils have agreed in principle that a key part of their role in avoiding harm to the habitats and international sites in the R Avon will be to require new development to go further than the 110 litres per person per day level outlined in the representation by Mr Munslow and adopt an **85 litres** per person per day consumption rate.

Natural England has concluded that there is currently a lack of certainty concerning the River Avon because the water company does not have a current Water Resources Management Plan(WRMP) confirmed by the Secretary of State which both meets the various general environmental improvement measures required whilst also demonstrating that harm to the habitats sites in the R Avon has been avoided. However if approved the application would be phased over many years and a draft WRMP is likely to be finalised in the interim period.

Therefore Natural England can advise the Inspector that a Grampian style condition which incorporates the water efficiency measures outlined by Mr Munslow but with a consumption level of **85 litres** per person would be appropriate.

In addition Natural England advise that there should be an overarching condition which makes commencement subject to there being an approved WRMP which will have an accompanying HRA to ensure that the proposals in the WRMP are fully consistent with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations 2017 as amended.

If these measures are secured then Natural England will be able to confirm to the Inspector and Dorset Council that there are suitable measures in place to both prevent an adverse effect on the SAC but which would also allow the application phases to come forward subject to the conditions outlined by the water company in their representation.

Yours sincerely

Nick Squirrell
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Dorset Team

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Annexe 1

Environment Agency representation to the South West Water draft WRMP



Representation on South West Water's reconsulted draft water resources management plan

Date: 06 December 2023

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

Published by:

Environment Agency
Horizon House, Deanery Road,
Bristol BS1 5AH

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

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Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

1. Introduction

This is the Environment Agency's review of South West Water's reconsulted draft water resources management plan (WRMP). We have a statutory duty to manage water resources and protect the environment in England. We aim to make sure that there is sufficient water for society, the environment and the economy. We are a statutory consultee in the water company WRMP process and provide advice to government on the content of these plans. We have assessed the plan against the relevant legislation, the government's expectations for WRMPs and technical information.

2. Executive summary

We consider that South West Water's reconsulted draft WRMP partially demonstrates that it will provide a secure supply of water that sufficiently protects the environment over the next 25 years. We recommend that South West Water revises some parts of its draft plan.

We recognise that South West Water's reconsulted draft WRMP is an improvement on its previous draft plan. We do however remain concerned with this reconsulted draft WRMP that there are:

- risks to security of supply in the early years of the plan if new supply schemes due for imminent delivery in the Colliford and Roadford zones are further delayed,
- risks to the environment and supplies in the Bournemouth zone
- alignment issues with the regional plan, with confusion on Cheddar 2 and transfers with Wessex Water
- risks to security of supply through inadequate demand monitoring and scenario planning
- missing environmental assessments that are crucial to understand how decisions have been made that could impact the environment.

These risks are outlined in further detail below with other concerns. The company now needs to allocate the appropriate amount of time to rectifying these issues before its statement of response and finalising the plan. A normal statement of response in the statutory process may take 12 weeks, and whilst a shorter timeframe may be viable, a robust revised plan must be produced. Otherwise, it could risk further public scrutiny, delaying the process to producing a final plan.

In the Colliford, Roadford and Isles of Scilly zones, the company is working to implement new supply schemes, which this plan assumes will be providing water available for use by April 2025. There is however a known risk of delay to these schemes, which could mean baseline assumptions for the plan are incorrect for the early years of the plan. This could lead to a risk to security of supply and the environment if in 2025 there is less water available for use than this plan assumes. It

is important therefore that the company acknowledge and manage this risk in the early years of the plan.

In the Bournemouth zone, we require further assurance that the plan will support water supplies for planned growth whilst ensuring that abstractions with potential to adversely affect the River Avon SAC do not increase and are reduced to environmentally acceptable levels as soon as practicable. The draft plan does not include any new supply options between 2025 and 2030. This is a particular risk in the Bournemouth zone where reducing abstraction at existing locations is so important for protecting the River Avon SAC. The company must explore all options that could increase supplies in the short term.

South West Water is not aligned with the other West Country Water Resources companies in its representation of strategic resource options for the region and transfer volumes and timings. This is unclear for regulators and stakeholders, and risks options being selected that do not represent best value for the region. With this lack of alignment, there is also a risk to security of supplies if utilisation of shared resources (for example Poole water recycling) is not aligned between plans in all potential future pathways. The company needs to work closely with the West Country Water Resources group to ensure that developing new strategic supplies and redistributing water between companies is consistently represented in all company plans and tables, and all options represent best value for customers and the environment.

Following the 2022 drought, the company identified that its drought plan will need updating. It is important that the company's drought plan and WRMP are aligned and that the options it will use during a drought are represented in the plans. As such, the company need to update its WRMP with options that were used in 2022, yet do not appear in this plan, and outline how it will ensure alignment between its yet-to-be revised drought plan and the WRMP.

We are concerned that the company still has not justified that its highest demand scenario used to test its plan is high enough. It is only marginally higher than peak demands experienced in 2022, and with a year on year rising trend in demand in the company's supply area, the company should review this scenario to ensure its capturing plausible but extremely high demand.

The draft plan is missing some accompanying environmental assessments, which needed updating since the previous draft plan. The accompanying environmental assessments including the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment are important documents that should help inform decision-making and help explain and justify a best value plan. It is important that once these are available, they are shared with regulators and stakeholders for review with the opportunity for feedback.

The draft plan does not meet the national targets of demand reduction for household per capita consumption and non-household consumption by 2037/38 as set out in the governments Environment Improvement Plan. The company should explore all ways to ensure it meets its contribution to these targets and should provide robust justification if it cannot.

It is important that the company addresses the above and additional issues, outlined in further detail below and in the evidence report appended to this representation. The company has shown significant improvement since its last draft plan and must now produce a robust and reliable final plan that protects the unique environments of the south west, and ensures customers and visitors to the area have secure water supplies over the next 25 years.

3. Legal compliance

We do not consider that South West Water has complied with the water Resources management Plan (England) Direction 2022. It has not met the following directions

Direction not complied with	Description
3 (c)	<p>3. (1) In accordance with section 37A(3)(d), a water undertaker must include in its water resources management plan a description of the following matters—</p> <p>the assumptions it has made to determine the estimates of risks under sub-paragraph (b), including but not limited to drought severity</p>
3 (d)	<p>In respect of greenhouse gas emissions –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the emissions of greenhouse gases which are likely to arise as a result of each measure which it has identified in accordance with section 37A(3)(b), unless that information has been reported and published elsewhere and the water resources management plan states where that information is available; (ii) ... (iii) ... (iv) how these steps will support the delivery of any net zero greenhouse gas emissions commitment made by it; and (v) how these steps will support delivery of the UK government's net zero greenhouse gas emissions targets and commitments.
3 (h)	<p>its estimate of the total number of domestic premises which will become subject to domestic metering during the planning period and including a breakdown of –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) ... (ii) the number of domestic premises with meters that will not be charged by reference to volume; (iii) ...

4. Recommendations

We recommend that South West Water undertakes the following actions to meet its legal obligations, secures supplies for its customers, protects the environment and meets government expectations.

The evidence report appended to this report sets out the evidence behind the recommendations.

- **Recommendation 1:** Deliver new supply options by the start of WRMP24. There is a real risk to security of supply should South West Water fail to deliver its new supply options. We recommend the company review the AMP7 programme and ensure all risks are appropriately managed by the plan. The company are seeking to implement a number of supply options before April 2025 across the Colliford, Roadford and Isles of Scilly zones. This plan includes these options as part of the baseline supply demand balance as they are assumed to be in operation, yet there are known risks of delay to these new options being implemented by April 2025. This is a risk to security of supply from the start of the plan. The company should update its baseline with the latest information it has for implementation of new supply options and ensure that its plan accommodates delivery risks in the early years without compromising security of supplies or environmental protection.
- **Recommendation 2:** Ensure alignment between the plan with the regional plan and neighbouring water company plans. There are inconsistencies between this draft plan, neighbouring water company plans, and the west country regional plan in how option volumes, timings, and transfers and interconnections are considered and represented. This is particularly relevant to the strategic resource options – Cheddar 2 reservoir, Poole water recycling, and Mendips quarries. Where other companies may require resource from options in alternative pathways in the future (Poole and Mendips), this must be considered consistently between companies to avoid risk to security of supplies. South West Water should work with Bristol Water, Wessex Water and West Country Water Resources to ensure that best value options for the region are considered and selected consistently.
- **Recommendation 3:** Ensure the plan does not constrain planned growth and achieves sustainable abstraction. The plan does not clearly demonstrate how relevant local growth including new developments in the Bournemouth zone will be supplied without increasing actual abstraction rates in the short term. Actual abstraction rates must not increase and must be reduced as soon as practicable to protect the River Avon SAC. There are no new supply options in the plan from

2025 to 2030, and this is of particular concern for the Bournemouth zone given the risk of 'water neutrality'¹. The company should clarify how growth will be catered for in the Bournemouth zone whilst meeting its environmental obligations and ensure that alternative pathways are available early in the plan should the preferred pathway not be achievable. With regard to preventing deterioration and achieving the company's environmental destination across the company's supply area, the plan does not clearly accommodate our current understanding of the extent of sustainability changes that may be required. The company should ensure that all options have been considered to meet environmental destination as soon as possible, and that the sustainability changes required beyond just preventing deterioration are accommodated by the plan.

- **Recommendation 4:** Understand, monitor and respond to the rising trend in demand in the company's supply area. The rise in South West Water demand was one of the causes of having low supplies during the 2022 drought. Historically, there has been a rising trend and high demands in South West Water's area. The plan does not include frequent enough monitoring of demand and adaptive pathway decision points and does not justify that its high demand scenario is high enough. Furthermore, the starting position for this plan in 2025 on distribution input, leakage and per capita consumption risks being too low given recent performance. This creates risks to security of supply. The company should review its adaptive pathways monitoring plan and increase frequency to 6 monthly as a minimum. The company should also review its demand base year, high demand scenarios and starting position on distribution input, leakage and per capita consumption to ensure that the plan adequately captures the risks of high demand.
- **Recommendation 5:** Ensure that water supplies are planned and managed to be resilient to drought. The plan lacks detail on drought assessment methodologies and does not include all the actions that were taken in the 2022 drought as options to maintain secure supplies. We are aware that the company's drought plan will be reconsulted, but it is not clear how the company will maintain alignment between the WRMP and drought plan. The company should provide further detail of assessment methodologies related to drought and should include options the company will use during drought in this plan. The company should also clearly outline how it will align the WRMP and yet-to-be reconsulted drought plan.
- **Recommendation 6:** Provide completed environmental assessments. The company has not completed its Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which are required to accompany the plan. There is a risk that changes to the plan could be needed as a result of findings from these assessments. The company must provide completed SEA

¹ In order to prevent harm to a special area of conservation, Natural England could advise planning authorities that new developments must not increase the demand for water above existing levels, this is referred to as 'water neutrality' and can constrain growth

and HRA before the plan can be finalised. The company needs to allow for further scrutiny once regulators and stakeholders receive these assessments and should ensure that any changes required to the plan and assessments can be accommodated before finalising the plan.

- **Recommendation 7:** Meet the Environment Improvement Plan demand targets. We expect all companies to reduce household consumption and non-household consumption and contribute to 122 l/h/d average household consumption and a 9% reduction in non-household consumption by 2037/38 as part of the Environment Act target or justify why this is not possible. The plan does not meet these targets and this is not sufficiently justified. The company should update its plan to increase its ambition on demand reductions and look to meet these Environment Improvement Plan targets or provide evidence that it has done everything it can to do so.
- **Recommendation 8:** Ensure the plan is legally compliant by adhering to the WRMP directions. The plan fails direction 3(c), 3(d), and 3(h).

5. Improvements

We consider that the following improvements would be beneficial to South West Water's reconsulted draft WRMP. The evidence report sets out the evidence behind these improvements.

- **Improvement 1:** Ensure that the narrative on meeting 1 in 500 drought resilience is clear and appropriately tested.
- **Improvement 2:** Provide greater clarity on the options presented.
- **Improvement 3:** Include further information on adaptive pathways decision points and monitoring plan.
- **Improvement 4:** Clarify actions on abstraction sustainability.
- **Improvement 5:** Clarify the baseline supply forecast assumptions.
- **Improvement 6:** Ensure the plan appropriately assesses target headroom.
- **Improvement 7:** Improve the assessment of outage and treatment works losses and operational use.
- **Improvement 8:** Ensure that abstraction licence information is updated and representative.
- **Improvement 9:** Ensure the assessment of Climate Change and carbon emissions in the plan is robust and justified.
- **Improvement 10:** Consider additional programmes and provide further programme information.
- **Improvement 11:** Improve Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Risk Assessment (HRA), Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) assessments and Biodiversity net gain and Natural Capital assessments.
- **Improvement 12:** Amend inaccurate and contradictory text within the plan.

Annexe 2

Extract of water resource commitments in Environmental Improvement Plan 2023



HM Government

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023

First revision of the
25 Year Environment Plan





Goal 3

Clean and plentiful water

Key policies to achieve our water targets

Incentivise sustainable land use and increase compliance with regulations to reduce agricultural pollution

Construct new minewater treatment schemes

Modernise wastewater treatment by reducing the use of storm overflows and upgrading wastewater treatment works

Facilitate infrastructure projects, reduce leakage, and increase efficiency in new developments and retrofits to promote a sustainable and resilient water supply

Use nature-based solutions to reduce pollutants entering the water environment through sustainable drainage, wetlands, and more



- Improved planning requirements to support water availability, enabling an additional £469 million of water company investment to develop new strategic water resources; required that water companies produce high quality Water Resources Management Plans and drought plans.
- Published our Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat, which sets clear long-term priorities for the water industry and the economic regulator.

We have the following targets and commitments:

- Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture into the water environment by at least 40% by 2038, compared to a 2018 baseline, with an interim target of 10% by 31 January 2028, and 15% in catchments containing protected sites in unfavourable condition due to nutrient pollution by 31 January 2028.
- Reduce phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater by 80% by 2038 against a 2020 baseline, with an interim target of 50% by 31 January 2028.
- Halve the length of rivers polluted by harmful metals from abandoned mines by 2038, against a baseline of around 1,500km (approximately 930 miles), with an interim target to construct eight mine water treatment schemes and 20 diffuse interventions to by 31 January 2028.
- Reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population by 20% from the 2019 to 2020 baseline reporting figures, by 31 March 2038, with interim targets of 9% by 31 March 2027 and 14% by 31 March 2032, and to reduce leakage by 20% by 31 March 2027 and 30% by 31 March 2032.
- Restore 75% of our water bodies to good ecological status.
- Water companies to cut leaks by 50% by 2050. We will reduce leakage by 20% by 31 March 2027 and 30% by March 2032.
- Require water companies to have eliminated all adverse ecological impact from sewage discharges at all sensitive sites by 2035, and at all other overflows by 2050.
- Target a level of resilience to drought so that emergency measures are needed only once in 500-years.



Achieving the long-term target will likely require 40 mine water treatment schemes and around 40 diffuse interventions by 2038.

Long term target:

Reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population by 20% from the 2019 to 2020 baseline reporting year figures, by 31 March 2038.

Interim target 1:

Reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population by 9% by 31 March 2027 and 14% by 31 March 2032.

Interim target 2:

Reduce leakage by 20% by 31 March 2027 and 30% by 31 March 2032.

An additional 4,000 megalitres (MI) of water a day will be needed in England by 2050 to meet future pressures on public water supply, due to population growth and climate change causing drier conditions. Half will need to be delivered through reducing demand for water and the remainder through increased supply. The long-term target to reduce water demand seeks to close this gap by setting us on a course for more sustainable water consumption.

To achieve the statutory water demand target, we plan to reduce household water use to 122 litres per person per day (l/p/d), reduce leakage by 37% and reduce non-household (for example, business) water use by 9% by 31 March 2038. This is part of the trajectory to achieving 110 l/p/d household water use, a 50% reduction in leakage and a 15% reduction in non-household water use by 2050. The interim targets are based on the progressive reductions needed to meet the long-term target and the supply-demand challenge.

Government estate

The **Greening Government Commitments (GGCs)** seek to reduce the impact of government on the environment. This

Annexe 3

EA report on a consultation on water stress 2021.

Map of areas of the country under *serious water stress*



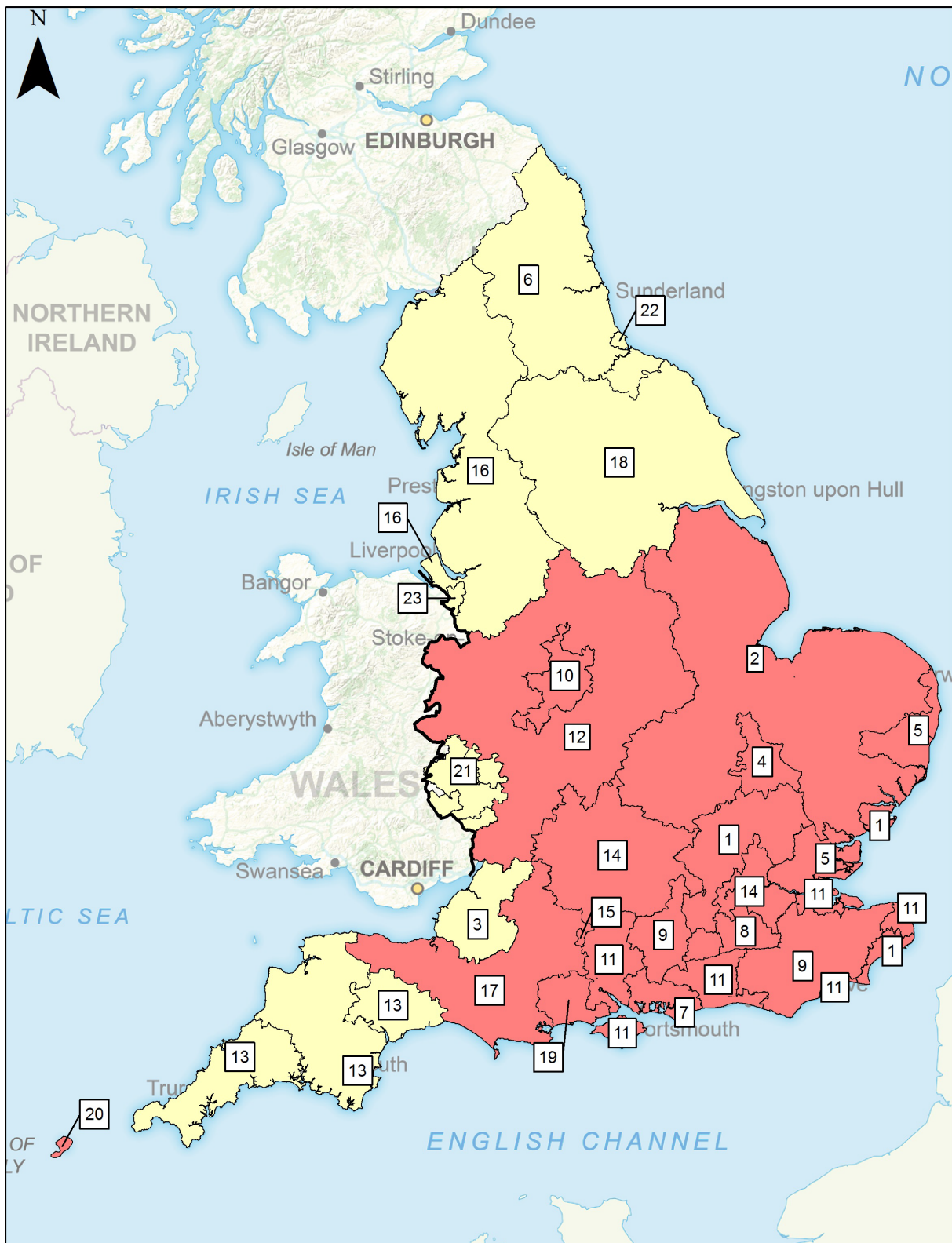
Environment
Agency

Updating the determination of water stressed areas in England

Consultation response document

Date: 1 July 2021

Figure 1: map showing the classification of water stress areas.



Water Stress Map		Notes			
	England Wales Boundary	1. Affinity Water	7. Portsmouth Water	14. Thames Water	20. Isles of Scilly WRZ (South West Water)
	Not Serious	2. Anglian Water	8. Sutton and East Surrey	15. Veolia Water	21. DCWW
	Serious	3. Bristol Water	9. South East Water	16. United Utilities	22. Hartlepool WRZ (Anglian Water)
		4. Cambridge Water	10. South Staffordshire	17. Wessex Water	23. Chester WRZ (Severn Trent Water)
		5. Essex and Suffolk	11. Southern Water	18. Yorkshire Water	
		6. Nothumbrian Water	12. Severn Trent Water	19. Bournemouth WRZ (South West Water)	
			13. South West Water		



Annexe 4
Mr Munslow representation

Date: 7 March 2024

Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

LPA Ref: P/OUT/2023/01166

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/23/3336518

FAO: Holly Dutton

Dear Ms. Dutton,

Please accept these representations on behalf of South West Water Limited [SWWL], trading as Bournemouth Water, in their function as Statutory Water Undertaker [the Undertaker] in relation to case reference: APP/D1265/W/23/3336518. The Undertaker requests the ability to reserve the right to provide additional representations in the event further instructions are received to provide material water undertaker concerns pertinent for the Planning Inspector's consideration.

The submitted proposals for the development of 1,700 dwellings, 10,000sqm of employment space and other proposed elements [Proposed Development] will have a significant impact on the existing drinking water infrastructure and available water resources. The average water usage across the SWWL operational area (excluding the Bristol Water area) is over 140 litres/person/day (Our Strategic Priorities: Water Quality and Resilience, South West Water, p.42). Using the national residential occupancy average of 2.4 persons per dwelling (ONS, Census 2021), the Proposed Development's residential element would equate to an additional drinking water demand of over 571,200 litres/day and 208,488,000 litres/year within the Alderholt supply area.

It is confirmed that SWWL can provide drinking water services in terms of Water Treatment Works capacity; however, upgrades to existing water transfer infrastructure would be required in order to enable to the development. These upgrade works, from preliminary evaluations, would entail network reinforcement to the mains within either Blackwater Close or Ringwood Road, pending further evaluations and submission of Reserved Matter details. However, the development poses a substantial and significant increase in potable water demand compared to the existing settlement.

Water resources are coming under increased strain due to climate change and other pressures. To minimise impact on water resources posed by the Proposed Development, SWWL would strongly suggest and support the inclusion of conditions – in the event the Inspector is minded to allow the appeal – securing the optional Building Regulations G2 Requirement. The optional requirement, if required by condition, secures water efficiency measures to achieve an average water consumption of 110 litres/person/day for residential

development. The inclusion of such a condition is supported by the objectives of the current Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan (April 2014), which includes paragraph 13.27 stating:

'All new development, whether it is for housing or employment, will need to meet higher levels of sustainable construction and renewable energy sources. Development will also have to take account of the need to reduce water consumption, as well as maintaining and improving water quality'.

Such statements are solidified within adopted policy ME3, requiring – among other elements – water efficiency measures within both residential and non-residential development.

To this end, SWWL request the inclusion of the following draft conditions:

1. Each Reserved Matters application for a phase of development pursuant to this outline permission which include a residential component shall be accompanied by a Water Conservation Strategy to be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include a water efficiency specification for each dwelling type, based on the Fitting Approach set out in Part G of the Building Regulations 2010 (2015 edition or any future successor) demonstrating that all dwellings (when considered as a whole) are able to achieve a typical water consumption standard of no more than 110 litres per person per day, in line with Building Regulations Optional Requirement G2. The approved strategy for each residential dwelling shall be subsequently implemented in full accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of that residential dwelling and thereafter shall be retained.

Reason: To ensure that the development makes efficient use of water and promotes the principles of sustainable construction in line with Paragraphs 8(c) and 135 (a) of the NPPF and adopted policy ME3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan (April 2014).

2. Each Reserved Matters application for a phase of development pursuant to this outline permission which include a commercial component shall be accompanied by a Water Conservation Strategy to be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include a water efficiency specification, utilising the results of BREEAM Wat 01 calculator where the methodology is appropriate, and known pre-development information supported by BREEAM standard for non-residential development.

Reason: To ensure that the development makes efficient use of water and promotes the principles of sustainable construction in line with Paragraphs 8(c) and 135 (a) of the NPPF and adopted policy ME3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan (April 2014).

To conclude, the Undertaker as statutory custodian of Drinking Water services to the public requests the inclusion of conditions to secure sustainable construction principles pertaining to water efficiency, in the event the Inspector is minded to allow the appeal.

For further information, please contact us via details below.

Yours sincerely,



Laurence Munslow
Town and Country Planning Advisor
D: 01392 446688
E: LMunslow@Pennon-Group.co.uk

Annexe 5

Natural England scoping letter 20/12/2022 (p4 highlighted)

Date: 20 December 2022

[Click here to enter text.](#)



Yvonne Wiacek
Dorset Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Consultations
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CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 900

Dear Yvonne

Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping consultation (Regulation 15 (4) of the Town and Country Planning EIA Regulations 2017)

Location: Land at Alderholt, Ringwood Road - EIA Scoping Opinion

Thank you for seeking our advice on the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES) in the consultation dated 19 December 2022.

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.

A robust assessment of environmental impacts and opportunities based on relevant and up to date environmental information should be undertaken prior to a decision on whether to grant planning permission. Annex A to this letter provides Natural England's advice on the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed development.

Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on [environmental assessment, natural environment and climate change](#).

Should the proposal be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment then, in accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Natural England should be consulted again.

Please note that Natural England must be consulted on Environmental Statements.

Please send any new consultations or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Regards

John Stobart
Planning and Conservation Senior Advisor
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07825 844475

Annex A – Natural England Advice on EIA Scoping

General Principles

[Schedule 4](#) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, sets out the information that should be included in an Environmental Statement (ES) to assess impacts on the natural environment. This includes:

- A description of the development – including physical characteristics and the full land use requirements of the site during construction and operational phases
- Expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation etc.) resulting from the operation of the proposed development
- An assessment of alternatives and clear reasoning as to why the preferred option has been chosen
- A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development including biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land, including land take, soil, water, air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation, cultural heritage and landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors
- A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment – this should cover direct effects but also any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium, and long term, permanent and temporary, positive, and negative effects. Effects should relate to the existence of the development, the use of natural resources (in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity) and the emissions from pollutants. This should also include a description of the forecasting methods to predict the likely effects on the environment
- A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment
- A non-technical summary of the information
- An indication of any difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered by the applicant in compiling the required information

Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on [environmental assessment](#) and [natural environment](#).

Cumulative and in-combination effects

The ES should fully consider the implications of the whole development proposal. This should include an assessment of all supporting infrastructure.

An impact assessment should identify, describe, and evaluate the effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with other projects and activities that are being, have been or will be carried out. The following types of projects should be included in such an assessment (subject to available information):

- a. existing completed projects;
- b. approved but uncompleted projects;
- c. ongoing activities;
- d. plans or projects for which an application has been made and which are under consideration by the consenting authorities; and
- e. plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable, i.e. projects for which an application has not yet been submitted, but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.

Environmental data

Natural England is required to make available information it holds where requested to do so. National datasets held by Natural England are available at <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/data/default.aspx>.

Detailed information on the natural environment is available at www.magic.gov.uk.

Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones are a GIS dataset which can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the [Natural England Open Data Geoportal](#).

Natural England does not hold local information on local sites, local landscape character, priority habitats and species or protected species. Local environmental data should be obtained from the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC).

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

General principles

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (paragraphs 174-175 and 179-182) sets out how to take account of biodiversity and geodiversity interests in planning decisions. Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on the [natural environment](#).

The potential impact of the proposal upon sites and features of nature conservation interest and opportunities for nature recovery and biodiversity net gain should be included in the assessment.

Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) is the process of identifying, quantifying, and evaluating the potential impacts of defined actions on ecosystems or their components. EclA may be carried out as part of the EIA process or to support other forms of environmental assessment or appraisal. [Guidelines](#) have been developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Local planning authorities have a [duty](#) to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include habitat restoration or enhancement. Further information is available [here](#).

Designated nature conservation sites

International and European sites

The development site is within or may impact on the following European / Internationally designated nature conservation site(s):

- Dorset Heathlands European Sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar)
- River Avon SAC
- New Forest European Sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar)
- Solent Marine European Sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar)

European site conservation objectives are available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216>

The ES should thoroughly assess the potential for the proposal to affect nationally and internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance, including marine sites where relevant. European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)

fall within the scope of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). In addition paragraph 181 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that potential SPAs, possible SAC, listed or proposed Ramsar sites, and any site identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitat (European) sites, potential SPAs, possible SACs and listed or proposed Ramsar sites have the same protection as classified sites (NB. sites falling within the scope of regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are defined as 'habitats sites' in the NPPF). Under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations, an appropriate assessment must be undertaken in respect of any plan or project which is (a) likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and (b) not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site. The consideration of likely significant effects should include any functionally linked land outside the designated site. These areas may provide important habitat for mobile species populations that are qualifying features of the site, for example birds and bats. This can also include areas which have a critical function to a habitat feature within a designated site, for example by being linked hydrologically or geomorphologically.

Should a likely significant effect on a European/Internationally designated site be identified (either alone or in-combination) or be uncertain, the competent authority (in this case the Local Planning Authority) will need to prepare an appropriate assessment in addition to the consideration of impacts through the EIA process. Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on appropriate assessment

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

This should also take into account any agreed strategic mitigation solution that may be being developed or implemented in the area to address recreational disturbance, nutrients, or other impacts.

Possible impact pathways that should be assessed include:

- Recreational impacts on Dorset and New Forest Heathlands.
- Hydrological impacts on the River Avon including nutrient loads and water consumption within the catchment.
- Water quality impacts on the Solent Marine Sites through increased nutrient loads.
- Air quality (all sites)

Nationally designated sites

The development site is within or may impact on the following **Site of Special Scientific Interest**:

The application site lies in close proximity to the following sites:

- Cranborne Common SSSI
- Verwood Heaths SSSI
- Bugdens Copse and Meadows SSSI
- Holt and West Moors Heaths SSSI
- Eddlake Bog SSSI
- Bouldsbury Wood SSSI
- Moors River System SSSI
- River Avon System SSSI
- Avon Valley (Bickton to Christchurch) SSSI

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Further information on the SSSI and its special interest features can be found at www.magic.gov.

Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the [Natural England Open Data Geoportal](#).

The Environmental Statement should include a full assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the development on the features of special interest within the SSSI and identify appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, minimise or reduce any adverse significant effects. The consideration of likely significant effects should include any functionally linked land outside the designated site. These areas may provide important habitat for mobile species populations that are interest features of the SSSI, for example birds and bats. This can also include areas which have a critical function to a habitat feature within a site, for example by being linked hydrologically or geomorphologically.

Regionally and Locally Important Sites

The ES should consider any impacts upon local wildlife and geological sites, including local nature reserves. Local Sites are identified by the local wildlife trust, geoconservation group or other local group and protected under the NPPF (paragraph 174 and 175). The ES should set out proposals for mitigation of any impacts and if appropriate, compensation measures and opportunities for enhancement and improving connectivity with wider ecological networks. Contact the relevant local body for further information.

Protected Species

The conservation of species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 is explained in Part IV and Annex A of Government Circular 06/2005 [Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System](#).

The ES should assess the impact of all phases of the proposal on protected species (including, for example, great crested newts, reptiles, birds, water voles, badgers and bats). Natural England does not hold comprehensive information regarding the locations of species protected by law. Records of protected species should be obtained from appropriate local biological record centres, nature conservation organisations and local groups. Consideration should be given to the wider context of the site, for example in terms of habitat linkages and protected species populations in the wider area.

The area likely to be affected by the development should be thoroughly surveyed by competent ecologists at appropriate times of year for relevant species and the survey results, impact assessments and appropriate accompanying mitigation strategies included as part of the ES. Surveys should always be carried out in optimal survey time periods and to current guidance by suitably qualified and, where necessary, licensed, consultants.

Natural England has adopted [standing advice](#) for protected species, which includes guidance on survey and mitigation measures. A separate protected species licence from Natural England or Defra may also be required.

District Level Licensing for Great Crested Newts

District level licensing (DLL) is a type of strategic mitigation licence for great crested newts (GCN) granted in certain areas at a local authority or wider scale. A [DLL scheme for GCN](#) may be in place at the location of the development site. If a DLL scheme is in place, developers can make a financial contribution to strategic, off-site habitat compensation instead of applying for a separate licence or carrying out individual detailed surveys. By demonstrating that DLL will be used, impacts on GCN can be scoped out of detailed assessment in the Environmental Statement.

Priority Habitats and Species

Priority Habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and 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. Lists of priority habitats and species can be found [here](#). 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. Sites can be checked against the (draft) national Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH) inventory published by Natural England and freely available to [download](#). Further information is also available [here](#).

An appropriate level habitat survey should be carried out on the site, to identify any important habitats present. In addition, ornithological, botanical, and invertebrate surveys should be carried out at appropriate times in the year, to establish whether any scarce or priority species are present.

The Environmental Statement should include details of:

- Any historical data for the site affected by the proposal (e.g. from previous surveys)
- Additional surveys carried out as part of this proposal
- The habitats and species present
- The status of these habitats and species (e.g. whether priority species or habitat)
- The direct and indirect effects of the development upon those habitats and species
- Full details of any mitigation or compensation measures
- Opportunities for biodiversity net gain or other environmental enhancement

Ancient Woodland, ancient and veteran trees

The development site lies in close proximity to ancient woodland.

Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat of great importance for its wildlife, its history, and the contribution it makes to our diverse landscapes. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF sets out the highest level of protection for irreplaceable habitats and development should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. The [wood pasture and parkland inventory](#) sets out information on wood pasture and parkland. The [ancient tree inventory](#) provides information on the location of ancient and veteran trees.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have prepared [standing advice](#) on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

The ES should assess the impacts of the proposal on any ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, and the scope to avoid and mitigate for adverse impacts. It should also consider opportunities for enhancement.

Biodiversity net gain

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Biodiversity Net Gain is additional to statutory requirements relating to designated nature

conservation sites and protected species.

The ES should use an appropriate biodiversity metric such as Biodiversity Metric 3.0 together with ecological advice to calculate the change in biodiversity resulting from proposed development and demonstrate how proposals can achieve a net gain.

The metric should be used to:

- assess or audit the biodiversity unit value of land within the application area
- calculate the losses and gains in biodiversity unit value resulting from proposed development
- demonstrate that the required percentage biodiversity net gain will be achieved

Biodiversity Net Gain outcomes can be achieved on site, off-site or through a combination of both. On-site provision should be considered first. Delivery should create or enhance habitats of equal or higher value. When delivering net gain, opportunities should be sought to link delivery to relevant plans or strategies e.g. Green Infrastructure Strategies or Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Opportunities for wider environmental gains should also be considered.

The Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol

The scheme should ensure it meets all the requirements of the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol including the provision of a Dorset Council Natural Environment Team agreed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP). Further information on the protocol may be found at:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/countryside-management/biodiversity/the-dorset-biodiversity-appraisal-protocol>

Landscape

Nationally Designated Landscapes

The development site may lie within the setting of the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The NPPF (paragraph 176) provides the highest level of planning protection for these nationally designated landscapes.

Public bodies have a duty to have regard to the statutory purposes of designation in carrying out their functions (under (section 11 A (2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for National Parks and S85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 for AONBs). [Planning Practice Guidance](#) confirms that this duty also applies to proposals outside the designated area but impacting on its natural beauty.

Consideration should be given to the direct and indirect effects on this designated landscape and in particular the effect upon its purpose for designation. The management plan for the designated landscape may also have relevant information that should be considered in the EIA.

Landscape and visual impacts

The environmental assessment should refer to the relevant [National Character Areas](#). Character area profiles set out descriptions of each landscape area and statements of environmental opportunity.

The ES should include a full assessment of the potential impacts of the development on local landscape character using [landscape assessment methodologies](#). We encourage the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), based on the good practice guidelines produced jointly by

the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment in 2013. LCA provides a sound basis for guiding, informing, and understanding the ability of any location to accommodate change and to make positive proposals for conserving, enhancing or regenerating character.

A landscape and visual impact assessment should also be carried out for the proposed development and surrounding area. Natural England recommends use of the methodology set out in *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013* ((3rd edition) produced by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management. For National Parks and AONBs, we advise that the assessment also includes effects on the 'special qualities' of the designated landscape, as set out in the statutory management plan for the area. These identify the particular landscape and related characteristics which underpin the natural beauty of the area and its designation status.

The assessment should also include the cumulative effect of the development with other relevant existing or proposed developments in the area. This should include an assessment of the impacts of other proposals currently at scoping stage.

To ensure high quality development that responds to and enhances local landscape character and distinctiveness, the siting and design of the proposed development should reflect local characteristics and, wherever possible, use local materials. Account should be taken of local design policies, design codes and guides as well as guidance in the [National Design Guide](#) and [National Model Design Code](#). The ES should set out the measures to be taken to ensure the development will deliver high standards of design and green infrastructure. It should also set out detail of layout alternatives, where appropriate, with a justification of the selected option in terms of landscape impact and benefit.

Heritage Landscapes

The ES should include an assessment of the impacts on any land in the area affected by the development which qualifies for conditional exemption from capital taxes on the grounds of outstanding scenic, scientific, or historic interest. An up-to-date list is available at www.hmrc.gov.uk/heritage/lbsearch.htm.

Connecting People with nature

The ES should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, public rights of way and, where appropriate, the England Coast Path and coastal access routes and coastal margin in the vicinity of the development, in line with NPPF paragraph 100. It should assess the scope to mitigate for any adverse impacts. Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) can be used to identify public rights of way within or adjacent to the proposed site that should be maintained or enhanced.

Measures to help people to better access the countryside for quiet enjoyment and opportunities to connect with nature should be considered. Such measures could include reinstating existing footpaths or the creation of new footpaths, cycleways, and bridleways. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Access to nature within the development site should also be considered, including the role that natural links have in connecting habitats and providing potential pathways for movements of species.

Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be incorporated where appropriate.

Soils and Agricultural Land Quality

Soils are a valuable, finite natural resource and should also be considered for the ecosystem services they provide, including for food production, water storage and flood mitigation, as a carbon

store, reservoir of biodiversity and buffer against pollution. It is therefore important that the soil resources are protected and sustainably managed. Impacts from the development on soils and best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land should be considered in line with paragraphs 174 and 175 of the NPPF. Further guidance is set out in the Natural England [Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land](#).

As set out in paragraph 211 of the NPPF, new sites or extensions to sites for peat extraction should not be granted planning permission.

The following issues should be considered and, where appropriate, included as part of the Environmental Statement (ES):

- The degree to which soils would be disturbed or damaged as part of the development
- The extent to which agricultural land would be disturbed or lost as part of this development, including whether any best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land would be impacted.

This may require a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey if one is not already available. For information on the availability of existing ALC information see www.magic.gov.uk.

- Where an ALC and soil survey of the land is required, this should normally be at a detailed level, e.g. one auger boring per hectare, (or more detailed for a small site) supported by pits dug in each main soil type to confirm the physical characteristics of the full depth of the soil resource, i.e. 1.2 metres. The survey data can inform suitable soil handling methods and appropriate reuse of the soil resource where required (e.g. agricultural reinstatement, habitat creation, landscaping, allotments and public open space).
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on BMV agricultural land can be minimised through site design/masterplan.
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be avoided or minimised and demonstrate how soils will be sustainably used and managed, including consideration in site design and master planning, and areas for green infrastructure or biodiversity net gain. The aim will be to minimise soil handling and maximise the sustainable use and management of the available soil to achieve successful after-uses and minimise off-site impacts.

Further information is available in the [Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites](#) and

The British Society of Soil Science Guidance Note [Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction](#).

Air Quality

Air quality in the UK has improved over recent decades but air pollution remains a significant issue. For example, approximately 85% of protected nature conservation sites are currently in exceedance of nitrogen levels where harm is expected (critical load) and approximately 87% of sites exceed the level of ammonia where harm is expected for lower plants (critical level of 1µg)^[1]. A priority action in the England Biodiversity Strategy is to reduce air pollution impacts on biodiversity. The Government's Clean Air Strategy also has a number of targets to reduce emissions including to reduce damaging deposition of reactive forms of nitrogen by 17% over England's protected priority sensitive habitats by 2030, to reduce emissions of ammonia against the 2005 baseline by 16% by 2030 and to reduce emissions of NO_x and SO₂ against a 2005 baseline of 73% and 88%

^[1] [Report: Trends Report 2020: Trends in critical load and critical level exceedances in the UK - Defra, UK](#)

respectively by 2030. Shared Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) have also been identified as a tool to reduce environmental damage from air pollution.

The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to pollution, either directly, or from traffic generation, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on the quality of air, water and land. The ES should take account of the risks of air pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. This should include taking account of any strategic solutions or SNAPs, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate the impacts on air quality. Further information on air pollution impacts and the sensitivity of different habitats/designated sites can be found on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).

Information on air pollution modelling, screening and assessment can be found on the following websites:

- SCAIL Combustion and SCAIL Agriculture - <http://www.scail.ceh.ac.uk/>
- Ammonia assessment for agricultural development <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/intensive-farming-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit>
- Environment Agency Screening Tool for industrial emissions <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-emissions-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit>
- Defra Local Air Quality Management Area Tool (Industrial Emission Screening Tool) – England <http://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/laqm>

Water Quality

The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to water pollution, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on water quality, and land. The assessment should take account of the risks of water pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. A number of water dependent protected nature conservation sites have been identified as failing condition due to elevated nutrient levels and nutrient neutrality is consequently required to enable development to proceed without causing further damage to these sites. The ES needs to take account of any strategic solutions for nutrient neutrality or Diffuse Water Pollution Plans, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate and address the impacts of elevated nutrient levels. Further information can be obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Climate Change

The ES should identify how the development affects the ability of the natural environment (including habitats, species, and natural processes) to adapt to climate change, including its ability to provide adaptation for people. This should include impacts on the vulnerability or resilience of a natural feature (i.e. what's already there and affected) as well as impacts on how the environment can accommodate change for both nature and people, for example whether the development affects species ability to move and adapt. Nature-based solutions, such as providing green infrastructure on-site and in the surrounding area (e.g. to adapt to flooding, drought and heatwave events), habitat creation and peatland restoration, should be considered. The ES should set out the measures that will be adopted to address impacts.

Further information is available from the [Committee on Climate Change's \(CCC\) Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk](#), the [National Adaptation Programme \(NAP\)](#), the [Climate Change Impacts Report Cards](#) (biodiversity, infrastructure, water etc.) and the [UKCP18 climate projections](#).

The Natural England and RSPB [Climate Change Adaptation Manual](#) (2020) provides extensive information on climate change impacts and adaptation for the natural environment and adaptation focussed nature-based solutions for people. It includes the Landscape Scale Climate Change Assessment Method that can help assess impacts and vulnerabilities on natural environment features and identify adaptation actions. Natural England's [Nature Networks Evidence Handbook](#)

(2020) also provides extensive information on planning and delivering nature networks for people and biodiversity.

The ES should also identify how the development impacts the natural environment's ability to store and sequester greenhouse gases, in relation to climate change mitigation and the natural environment's contribution to achieving net zero by 2050. Natural England's [Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat report](#) (2021) and the British Ecological Society's [nature-based solutions report](#) (2021) provide further information.

Contribution to local environmental initiatives and priorities

The ES should consider the contribution the development could make to relevant local environmental initiatives and priorities to enhance the environmental quality of the development and deliver wider environmental gains. This should include considering proposals set out in relevant local strategies or supplementary planning documents including landscape strategies, green infrastructure strategies, tree and woodland strategies, biodiversity strategies or biodiversity opportunity areas.

Annexe 6

Site Improvement Plan(SIP) for the River Avon SAC and SPA extract

Site Improvement Plan

Avon River and Valley

Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) have been developed for each Natura 2000 site in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS). Natura 2000 sites is the combined term for sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Areas (SPA). This work has been financially supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community.

The plan provides a high level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. It does not cover issues where remedial actions are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for maintenance.

The SIP consists of three parts: a Summary table, which sets out the priority Issues and Measures; a detailed Actions table, which sets out who needs to do what, when and how much it is estimated to cost; and a set of tables containing contextual information and links.

Once this current programme ends, it is anticipated that Natural England and others, working with landowners and managers, will all play a role in delivering the priority measures to improve the condition of the features on these sites.

The SIPs are based on Natural England's current evidence and knowledge. The SIPs are not legal documents, they are live documents that will be updated to reflect changes in our evidence/knowledge and as actions get underway. The information in the SIPs will be used to update England's contribution to the UK's Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).

The SIPs are not formal consultation documents, but if you have any comments about the SIP or would like more information please email us at IPENSLIFEProject@naturalengland.org.uk, or contact Natural England's Responsible Officer for the site via our enquiry service 0300 060 3900, or enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

This Site Improvement Plan covers the following Natura 2000 site(s)

UK9011091 Avon Valley SPA

UK0013016 River Avon SAC

3	Water Pollution	Pressure/ Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan, A051(NB) Gadwall, H3260 Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot, S1016 Desmoulin`s whorl snail, S1095 Sea lamprey, S1096 Brook lamprey, S1106 Atlantic salmon, S1163 Bullhead	Reduce phosphorus and organic pollutants from diffuse pollution and point sources	Dorset County Council, Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, The New Forest National Park Authority, Wessex Water Services Ltd, Wiltshire Council, Wessex Chalk Streams and Rivers Trust, Parish Council(s), National Farmers' Union (NFU), Simcorp, New Forest Land Advice Service, Householder(s), Campaign for the Farmed Environment
4	Water abstraction	Pressure/ Threat	H3260 Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot, S1095 Sea lamprey, S1096 Brook lamprey, S1106 Atlantic salmon, S1163 Bullhead	Restore river flows (favourable condition targets)	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wessex Water Services Ltd, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Veolia, Sembcorp
5	Changes in species distributions	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan, S1016 Desmoulin`s whorl snail, S1106 Atlantic salmon	Monitor, investigate and aim to restore swan, snail and salmon populations.	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wessex Chalk Streams and Rivers Trust
6	Invasive species	Pressure/ Threat	H3260 Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot, S1095 Sea lamprey, S1096 Brook lamprey, S1106 Atlantic salmon, S1163 Bullhead	Control invasive plant species; monitor and investigate Signal crayfish impacts	Dorset County Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, Wessex Water Services Ltd, Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Wessex Chalk Streams and Rivers Trust, National Farmers' Union (NFU), Avon Non Native Invasive Plant Forum
7	Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan	Manage dog walkers to prevent wildfowl being disturbed	Natural England

Annexe 7

Representations made by Natural England to Wiltshire Local Plan and BCP Local Plan

Date: 04 December 2023

Our ref: 451289

Your ref: Wiltshire Local Plan - Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 19)



Spatial Planning
Planning Directorate
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

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

T 0300 060 3900

Wiltshire Council Local Plan Review – Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 19)

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 27th September 2023.

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.

Overview

The Wiltshire Plan recognises the significant challenges that are increasingly plain to see, whether that be tackling the causes and consequences of climate change, recovering nature or building resilient, healthy and thriving communities. The Local Plan has a critical role to play in providing a framework that enables those challenges to be met. While the scale of change needed can be daunting there are also some major opportunities and new tools to support meaningful responses. Chief among these is the scope to take action and deliver sustainable development in a joined-up way, understanding how best community needs, infrastructure provision (including green and blue infrastructure), climate resilience and nature resilience. In terms of the natural environment, the Environment Act and Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) provide new impetus for delivering nature recovery, improving water quality, and tackling and adapting to climate change.

Wiltshire is made up of distinctive and diverse landscapes, with special habitats and ancient heritage of national and even global importance. We need to plan strategically to protect and enhance these places, building bigger, better and more joined up networks for nature to thrive and people to enjoy and benefit from.

Overall, Natural England strongly supports the overall approach of the draft Wiltshire Local Plan (Regulation 19 stage) to tackling the challenges outlined above. It is evident that the spatial approach to identifying locations for development has sought to consider the natural environment from the outset

and follow national policy including the mitigation hierarchy such that the scope for potentially harmful effects has been minimised.

We have the following headline comments on specific aspects of the draft Plan:

Habitats Sites (internationally important wildlife sites including SACs, SPAs and Ramsar Sites)

- We support the strategic solutions that are in place or being finalised or updated and consider that they provide a firm basis for avoiding effects on the integrity of Habitats Sites. NB, we have only received copies of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC), New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) / SAC/ Ramsar and Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy in the past few days and so may have further detailed comments to add on those documents.
- That said, in terms of water resources your Authority will need to satisfy itself, having undertaken the Local Plan HRA, that it can rely upon Wessex Water's Water Resource Management Plan in terms of there being shown to be sufficient water resources to deliver planned growth. At this stage, Natural England has not been able to advise that the WRMP can avoid harm to internationally important sites. We recognise and support the new commitments in the Local Plan to managing water resources sustainably and will continue to work with Wessex Water, Environment Agency and your Authority to reach the level of certainty required.

Protected landscapes

- As you will be aware the Government recently announced that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will now be referred to as National Landscapes. We recommend this terminology is adopted in the final Plan.
- A number of the new allocations have potential to adversely affect the special qualities of National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) within the county. While these would be subject to detailed assessment of landscape and visual effects at the application stage, we make comments on allocations in this response and advise that your Authority gives weight to comments received from the three National Landscape partnerships.
- Some of the areas of growth are linked to road corridors that pass through protected landscapes and this will inevitably lead to further pressure for road upgrades that could result in harmful landscape and visual effects in the future. This should be more clearly addressed in the Plan and Sustainability Appraisal.

Wider biodiversity

We commend the on-site requirements to support wildlife in new development set out in Policy 88.

Green and blue infrastructure

We broadly welcome the policies for green and blue infrastructure and commend that the plan (policy 93) recognises it as essential infrastructure to support sustainable development and communities. Nonetheless we also advise that you consider whether applying or adopting the most relevant standards in NE's Green Infrastructure Framework could make a difference to the delivery of aspirations for place-making and the multi-functional benefits that are sought, particularly for key growth locations.

Climate change adaption

We welcome the emphasis placed on adapting to climate change and using natural solutions, which are increasingly being shown to deliver more cost-effective outcomes when wider benefits are factored in.

Air quality

The conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of air quality (NO_x and Nitrogen deposition) impacts on habitats and international sites are agreed. The AA does not at present consider the effects of ammonia from road transport.

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Natural England welcomes the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report and consider that the methodology and baseline information used to inform the report appears to meet the requirements of the SEA Directive and associated guidance.

In reference to Table 7.2, sites identified as having significant cumulative effects and adverse environmental impacts should be appropriately mitigated. Strategic mitigation should be considered where possible and mitigation measures should take account of cumulative environmental effects of allocations in a settlement area.

Whilst we broadly agree with the monitoring indicators, we have the following comments on Table 8.1:

- We welcome the targets for SA Objective 1 'Biodiversity for development' to achieve a minimum of 20% BNG, or higher as stipulated in national legislation and/or policy or supplementary guidance, over the pre-development biodiversity value as measured by the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric.
- It is not clear from what level the first target bullet point for SA Objective 2 is reducing the loss of BMV agricultural land. The 25 year Environment Plan highlights the need to protect the best agricultural land. Thus, we suggest the first bullet point for SA Objective 2 is changed to, "Protect best and most versatile agricultural land from being lost to development".

We have the following comments on Appendix A:

- SA Objective 1. Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features and avoid irreversible losses - We suggest adding the following to the fourth bullet point, "...and improve habitat connectivity."
- SA Objective 10. Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive communities with better services and facilities - We suggest adding the following to the third bullet point, "...and avoids impacts on the quality and extent of existing recreational assets."

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Natural England will respond separately to the completed for the Plan.

The following sections provide our detailed comments on the draft Local Plan and specific policies. Please note the numbering follows that adopted within the Plan.

Section 1 - Introduction and Spatial Portrait

We welcome the recognition of the importance of the natural environment, including issues such as water stress and the extent of habitat loss.

Section 2 - Key challenges, vision and objectives

The spatial vision emphasises the focus on existing urban areas as sustainable locations for growth. While Trowbridge and Salisbury both have ecological constraints, these are discussed later in the plan and through strategic solutions for Habitats sites.

We welcome the emphasis in paragraph 2.11 on the need for new homes to be designed and delivered in a manner that reinforces and respects the local character and distinctiveness of the local area.

The section describing objectives and outcomes for planning for healthier communities misses the opportunities to improve nature's role in supporting healthy lifestyles and environments, such as how improving access to nature reduces health inequalities. As written, there is a very narrow focus on sports activities.

We support the outcomes set out in respect of environmental quality, which includes acknowledgement of the need to address issues strategically and systematically, including water and air pollution, managing recreational impacts on sensitive sites and protecting, creating and enhancing green/blue and nature networks in development areas and across the landscape.

Part 3 - Spatial strategy for Wiltshire

Policy 1 – Settlement strategy

Natural England acknowledges that most new development will be focused in and around existing main settlements. Some of those settlements have greater ecological constraints than others but this appears to have been taken into account in the quantum of development proposed for different places and detailed in the area strategies.

Policy 2 – Delivery Strategy

As per comments on Policy 1, we accept the focus on existing main settlements and support references to the need to consider the quantum of development planned against other policies including those relating to the natural environment (paragraph 3.18). Paragraph 3.21 is welcome as it specifies the need to consider the new community in the Salisbury area later in the Plan period against process in reversing water quality and quantity issues associated with the River Avon SAC.

Policy 3 – Reserve sites for housing and broad locations for growth

We note that these locations will be assessed and identified through policies within a subsequent development plan document.

Policy 4 – Addressing climate change

Natural England fully supports the provisions set out in Policy 4 and welcomes the clear link between carbon sequestration and the protection, enhancement and restoration of habitats as set out at clause B (i) and supported by clause C (vii).

Policy 5 – Securing Infrastructure Provision from New Development

Paragraph 3.66 The list of infrastructure requiring protection and enhancement should be expanded to include the provision of green infrastructure.

Essential infrastructure

Paragraph 3.69 Natural England supports the list of essential infrastructure but recommends it is expanded to include green infrastructure.

Place-shaping infrastructure

Paragraph 3.70 The list of place shaping infrastructure might include local nature reserves and allotments. While streetscape features should be expanded to include urban street trees and pocket parks.

Area strategies

Delivering allocated sites

Paragraph 4.17 Natural England supports the requirements set out for site allocations, but recommends the list is expanded to include the provision of allotments and urban trees.

Policy 7 – Land South of Chippenham and East of Showell Farm

Natural England supports the policy requirement for the extension of the River Avon Country Park but recommends that the minimum area of the extension required (as set out in the concept plan) is specified within the policy.

Policy 11 – Land to the North of Spitfire Road, Calne

Natural England recommends that the policy includes a minimum provision (hectares) for public open green space (as set out in the concept plan).

Corsham Market Town

Paragraph 4.58 Natural England supports the inclusion of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as a key environmental constraint for the locality.

Policy 12 – Corsham Market Town

Natural England supports policy clause (3) requirement to protect important habitats for bats but recommends the policy is required to “protect *and enhance*” important bat habitat.

Policy 13 – Land South of Dicketts Road, Corsham

Natural England policy requirements for habitat creation on site to provide ecological connectivity. However, we would recommend that the policy is strengthened to specifically require the retention of mature native trees including those within the small copse located in the centre of the allocation site.

Policy 14 – Devizes Market Town

Natural England supports Policy clause (7) requirement to protect and enhance important bat habitats.

Policy 15 – Land at Devizes Wharf, Assize Court and Wadworth Brewery, Devizes

Natural England welcomes and supports the policy requirement to protect the ecological function of the Kennet and Avon Canal including the avoidance of light spill.

Malmesbury Market Town

The policy includes provision for a reserve allocation at “Land Odd Park Lane and Sherston Close” which lies immediately adjacent to the Cotswolds National Landscape Area (AONB). The policy should ensure the reserve site is only brought forward if it can be demonstrated that harm to the setting of the National Landscape is avoided. For example, by the provision of appropriate landscaping to enhance the interface between the town and the open countryside of the AONB.

Melksham Market Town

Policy 18 – Land East of Melksham

Natural England supports the inclusion of 18.7 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Natural England supports the policy requirement to implement ecological buffer zones alongside the habitat to be retained but recommends that a minimum buffer width is specified.

Policy 19 – Land off Bath Road, Melksham

Natural England supports the inclusion of 2.1 ha of Green Blue Infrastructure Corridor and 2 ha of Other Green Infrastructure as set out in the concept plan but recommends this is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Natural England supports the policy requirement to implement ecological buffer zones alongside the habitat to be retained but recommends that a minimum buffer width is specified.

Policy 20 – Land North of the A3102, Melksham

Natural England supports the inclusion of 5.1 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this requirement is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Natural England supports the policy requirement to implement buffers either side of the watercourse but recommends that a minimum buffer width is specified.

Strategy for Salisbury Housing Market Area

Paragraph 4.118 Natural England supports the identification of the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as a substantive environmental constraint for development in Salisbury.

Policy 23 – Land North East of Old Sarum, Salisbury

Natural England supports the inclusion of 7.1 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this requirement is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Natural England supports the policy requirement to implement buffers but recommends the minimum buffer width of 30m as set out in the concept plan is specified in the policy.

Policy 24 – Land at Netherhampton Road Garden Centre, Salisbury

Natural England has no objection to the principle of the allocation and supports the need for a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as set out in Policy 29. It is however unclear from the Policy 24 wording whether the SANG area identified in Policy 29 has been secured for this purpose. If it has been secured then the policy should clarify that a contribution to the SANG will be required, if not then there remains uncertainty as to whether the scheme will be deliverable. The Policy and or supporting text should specify that the necessary SANG provision for the development must be secured prior to commencement of the development and the facility open and available to the public by first occupation.

Policy 25 – Land North of the Beehive Park & Ride, Old Sarum

Natural England supports the inclusion of 2.45 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this requirement is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Natural England is also supportive of the use of the adjacent area of mature woodland as a community woodland as identified in the concept plan, however, it is unclear whether the establishment of the community woodland will be a requirement of the development. If it is intended that the community woodland is to be provided by the development this should be secured by appropriate wording in Policy 25. We would also note that the Concept Plan should refer to a “Community Woodland” rather than a SANG.

Land North of Downton Road, Salisbury

Paragraph 4.141 Natural England supports the requirement for an ecological buffer to the north and east of the allocation as a means of protecting the ecology of the River Avon. However, the requirement for a minimum buffer should be secured by its inclusion in Policy 26.

Policy 26 – Land North of Downton Road, Salisbury

The allocation site lies immediately adjacent to the [East Harnham Meadows SSSI](#), a site of national importance for wildlife. The presence of the SSSI and the need to protect the site from potential harmful impacts (e.g. through changes in hydrology, pollution and any potential for increased public access) should be set out in the supporting text and be a requirement of Policy 26.

Natural England also supports the need for an ecological buffer as set out in Paragraph 4.141 and illustrated on the allocation's concept plan which will help protect the neighbouring SSSI from harmful effects. However, the requirement for a minimum buffer width should be specified in the policy.

Natural England has no objection to the principle of the allocation and supports the need for a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as set out in Policy 29. It is however unclear from the Policy 26 wording whether the SANG area identified in Policy 29 has been secured for this purpose. If it has been secured then the policy should clarify that a contribution to the SANG will be required, if not then there remains uncertainty as to whether the scheme will be deliverable. The Policy and or supporting text should specify that the necessary SANG provision for the development must be secured prior to commencement of the development and the facility open and available to the public by first occupation.

Similarly, Natural England supports the inclusion of 7.2 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this requirement is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Policy 27 – Land South of Harnham, Salisbury

Natural England has no objection to the principle of the allocation and supports the need for a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as set out in Policy 29. It is however unclear from the Policy 27 wording whether the SANG area identified in Policy 29 has been secured for this purpose. If it has been secured then the policy should clarify that a contribution to the SANG will be required, if not then there remains uncertainty as to whether the scheme will be deliverable. The Policy and or supporting text should specify that the necessary SANG provision for the development must be secured prior to commencement of the development and the facility open and available to the public by first occupation.

The allocation includes the Woodbury Ancient Village Scheduled Ancient Monument as green infrastructure. While Natural England has no objection to this approach confirmation is needed as to whether this area will be used as SANG and whether this will be in addition to the adjacent area of SANG / Country Park proposed by Policy 29. The Policy and or supporting text should also specify that the necessary SANG provision for the development must be secured prior to commencement of the development and the facility open and available to the public by first occupation.

Natural England supports the inclusion of 14.04 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan along with minimum 40 m green space buffers but recommends these requirements are set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Policy 28 – Land West of Coombe Road, Salisbury

Natural England has no objection to the principle of the allocation and supports the need for a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as set out in Policy 29. It is however unclear from the Policy 28 wording whether the SANG area identified in Policy 29 has been secured for this purpose. If it has been secured then the policy should clarify that a contribution to the SANG will be required, if not then there remains uncertainty as to whether the scheme will be deliverable. The Policy and or supporting text should specify that the necessary SANG provision for the development must be secured prior to commencement of the development and the facility open and available to the public by first occupation.

Additional Suitable Area of Natural Greenspace, South Salisbury

Paragraph 4.155 The supporting text should be strengthened to clarify that the SANG should be secured prior to commencement of the schemes allocated under Policies 24, 26, 27 and 28 and be available for public use prior to occupation.

Policy 29 – Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, South Salisbury

Natural England fully supports the proposal for a strategic SANG as set out in Policy 29 and supporting text. The SANG is required to alleviate pressures on the New Forest designated sites from potential increased visitor pressure that would result from residential development allocated under Policies 24, 26, 27 and 28. Natural England also supports and welcomes the proposal to establish the SANG as a new Country Park. We would recommend that this aspiration is included in the wording of Policy 29.

The SANG / Country Park also provides significant opportunities for enhancing biodiversity interests through appropriate tree planting and habitat creation. Natural England therefore recommends that this aspect of SANG delivery is specified in the supporting text and or Policy.

Policy 30 – Land East of Church Road, Laverstock

Natural England supports the Policy requirement for a SANG to mitigate for increased recreational pressures on the New Forest designated sites, however, the allocation site is too small for the necessary SANG provision to be provided within the allocation. Clarification is therefore needed on the location and scale of the SANG for the allocation as well as how the SANG will connect with the public footpath network.

The allocation site is also in close proximity to the Cockley Down SSSI, a nature reserve managed by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. Further, recreational assessments already completed have demonstrated that an increase in recreational activity on the reserve (e.g. dog walking) is likely. The supporting text and Policy wording should recognise that increased recreational activity are likely to result from the allocation and that any resulting increase in reserve management costs, including increased requirements for warden visits, are appropriately compensated.

Salisbury Central Area

The Salisbury Central Area includes stretches of the River Avon SAC. The associated policies should therefore include a requirement to protect and enhance the ecology of the river corridor and ensure development avoids additional light spill into the designated site.

Policy 38 – Porton Down

Paragraph 4.191 Natural England supports the statement that the continued protection of the Porton Down designated sites is a prerequisite for further development. However, this important caveat to the continued development at Porton should also be included within Policy 38.

Land South East of Empress Way, Ludgershall

The supporting text should identify that the allocation is within the hydrological catchment of the Solent Internationally designated sites and will therefore require measures to ensure Nitrogen Neutrality.

Policy 40 – Land South East of Empress Way, Ludgershall

Natural England welcome the provision within Policy 40 for an ecological assessment of lapwing and skylark populations and habitat. However, the policy should also require as far as possible the maintenance of populations within the areas of green infrastructure retained onsite and where necessary unavoidable losses should be compensated through the provision of agreed long term offsite conservation measures. Natural England supports the inclusion of 26 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Policy 45 - Land at Chopping Knife Lane, Marlborough

Policy 45 provides for a significant development on a green field site within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB). Your authority should therefore have a clear justification as to whether the proposals represent a “major” development in the context of paragraph 177 of the NPPF (2022) and if necessary, how the exceptional circumstance tests have been met. A key consideration will be the extent to which landscape impacts on the can be moderated and the advice of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Team will be crucial in establishing whether landscape impacts can be kept to acceptable levels. We would also recommend that the policy includes options for providing appropriate off site landscape moderation measures that would help mitigate any adverse impacts to the National Landscape. This might be achieved through a financial contribution to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for enhancing / managing landscape features within the locality.

Natural England welcomes the policy clause requiring habitat restoration and enhancement in the north of the allocation site as a means of strengthening the River Kennet SSSI corridor. However, no concept plan is provided for the allocation and the policy provides no minimum requirement for this ecological corridor. Natural England recommends that the policy is strengthened by the provision of a minimum ecological corridor requirement for the northern margin of the allocation.

Policy 46 - Land off Barton Dene, Marlborough

Policy 46 provides for a significant development on a green field site within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB). Your authority should therefore have a clear justification as to whether the proposals represent a “major” development in the context of paragraph 177 of the NPPF (2022) and if necessary, how the exceptional circumstance tests have been met. A key consideration will be the extent to which landscape impacts on the can be moderated and the advice of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Team will be crucial in establishing whether landscape impacts can be kept to acceptable levels. We would also recommend that the policy includes options for providing appropriate off site landscape moderation measures that would help mitigate any adverse impacts to the National Landscape. This might be achieved through a financial contribution to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for enhancing / managing landscape features within the locality.

Natural England welcomes the policy requirement for western and eastern areas of the allocation providing to be used for landscape enhancement. However, no concept plan is provided for the allocation and the policy provides no minimum requirement for the undeveloped areas. Natural England recommends that the policy is strengthened by the provision of a minimum requirement for green infrastructure designed to minimise landscape impacts on the western and eastern areas of the allocation.

Policy 48 - Land at Marsh Farm, Royal Wootton Bassett

Natural England welcomes the policy requirement for providing green infrastructure in the southern part of the site as a means of relieving visitor pressure on the nearby Jubilee Lake County Wildlife Site (CWS) / Local Nature Reserve (LNR). However, the concept plan for the allocation does not include this area and the policy provides no minimum requirement for the undeveloped areas. Natural England recommends that the policy is strengthened by the provision of a minimum requirement for the green infrastructure in the southern section of the allocation.

Given the close proximity of the allocation to the Jubilee Lake LNR Natural England recommends that the policy includes a requirement to provide additional support for ongoing visitor management on the LNR.

Policy 49 - Land at Midge Hall Farm, Royal Wootton Bassett

Given the close proximity of the allocation to the Jubilee Lake LNR Natural England recommends that the policy includes a requirement to provide additional support for ongoing visitor management on the LNR.

Natural England supports the inclusion of green infrastructure as set out in the concept plan for the allocation but recommends this is supported by a minimum green infrastructure area requirement within Policy 49.

Policy 50 - Land West of Maple Drive, Royal Wootton Bassett

The allocation site lies immediately adjacent the Jubilee Lake CWS / LNR. Natural England supports the requirement to retain the northern sections of the site for green infrastructure that complements the habitats within the Jubilee LNR. Natural England recommends that the policy is strengthened by the provision of a minimum area requirement for the green infrastructure in the northern section of the allocation.

Given the very close proximity of the allocation to the Jubilee Lake LNR Natural England recommends that the policy includes a requirement to provide additional support for ongoing visitor management and the provision of enhanced recreational infrastructure on the LNR.

Policy 51 - Land at Woodshaw, Royal Wootton Bassett

Natural England supports the inclusion of 13.8 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan as a means of reducing recreational pressure on the Morningside Farm County Wildlife Site but recommends this is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Morningside Farm County Wildlife Site is managed by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve. Given the proximity of the development to the reserve Natural England recommends the policy recognises that increased recreational activity are likely to result from the allocation and that any resulting increase in reserve management costs, including increased requirements for warden visits, are appropriately compensated.

Policy 52 – Trowbridge Principal Settlement

Natural England supports Policy 52 clauses 5 and 7 and the requirement to protect and enhance bat habitats through the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy and enhance the River Biss and Kennet and Avon Canal ecological corridors.

Policy 53 – Land North-East of Hilperton, Trowbridge

Natural England welcomes reference to the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS) within Policy 53. However, the allocation lies on a known bat commuting corridor with limited alternative commuting routes around the site. Natural England advises that the proposed 50 m ecological corridors on the east and through the development as shown on the concept plan are critical to the allocation and should be identified as minimum requirements within the Policy 53.

Natural England also supports the inclusion of 14 hectares of green infrastructure within the concept plan but recommends this is set out in the policy as a minimum area requirement for the scheme.

Policy 54 – North Trowbridge Country Park

Natural England fully supports the provision of a 65 ha Country Park as set out in Policy 54 and Figure 4.39.

Policy 55 – Land at Innox Mills, Trowbridge

Natural England fully supports the Policy 55 requirement for enhancing the River Biss corridor. The measures should include enhancing the river as an ecological corridor and include a requirement to avoid additional light spill from the developed areas onto the river corridor.

Policy 57 – Bradford on Avon Market Town

We welcome the recognition in the policy that the town has significant environmental constraints, and no new allocations are therefore proposed.

There is a reserve site at Land on Former Golf Course, which would only be brought forward under Policy 3. Natural England's initial view on this is that the River Avon Corridor that this site sits in is especially important for rare bats protected as part of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, as well as forming an important green corridor for other environmental and land scape interests, and so the scale of development envisaged may not be possible.

Policy 58 – Warminster Market Town

Policy 58 clause 8 includes a requirement to "ensure solutions to improve conditions within the River Avon SAC are prioritised". Due to the location of the Warminster WWTWs in relation to the town it is recognised that the provision of phosphorus neutrality measures at Warminster will be particularly difficult. While clause 8 is no doubt intended to reflect this concern, the current wording is confusing and suggests measures will be possible to "improve" the SAC, whereas in fact achieving phosphorus neutrality (i.e. not making the situation worse) will be a significant challenge in itself for new development. Natural England therefore recommends the policy is reworded to ensure policy support for measures that may come forward that will help to achieve the necessary levels of phosphorus mitigation required for new residential development.

Policy 59 – Land At Brook Street, Warminster

Natural England supports the allocation of the land specified for delivering phosphorus mitigation measures on the River Avon SAC.

Policy 61 – Land west of Mane Way, Westbury

Natural England welcomes the concept plan for this location which aims to protect and enhance natural habitats and watercourse corridors as well as landscape and heritage assets but advises that the policy makes the overall area for green and blue infrastructure of 17.7 ha is made a minimum requirement for the allocation. We support the proposal to assess the extent water meadow across the site and the outputs of this should inform any future concept or master plan.

We support the policy requirements relating to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, including protection of core habitat on-site and for mitigation to be informed by TBMS.

We also support the requirement to make a proportionate contribution to the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace at Westbury, detailed in Policy 63.

Policy 62 – Land at Bratton Road, Westbury

We support the requirements relating to the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, including the need for TBMS to apply to new development proposals and inform mitigation.

Again, we welcome the land indicated as green and blue infrastructure in the concept plan but advise that it is expressed as a minimum area of 3.1ha in the policy wording.

While we welcome the reference to landscape sensitivity to the south of Westbury and the ridgeline, we consider that the policy should explicitly reference the proximity of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the need for new development to avoid adverse effects to its special qualities.

The future land for battery storage and/or renewable energy installations shown at Fig 4.46 appears to be within the area mapped as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace in Policy 63. These uses would be incompatible, and the land would not be accessible, so we advise that either this is relocated outside of the proposed SANG, or the SANG is extended.

Policy 63 – Westbury Country Park

We support the location of the proposed Country Park and the supporting text on its proposed design. We consider it capable of providing the functionality required to act as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace as part of the mitigation strategy for protected sites in the district.

Policy 64 - Additional Employment Land

This policy makes provision for protecting key landscape and heritage interests but not those for biodiversity. We advise that this is rectified.

Policy 66 - Military establishments

Natural England supports Policy 66 clause (iii) as a means of ensuring protecting biodiversity and landscape interests.

Policy 69 - Tourism and related development

Natural England supports the policy requirements to avoid harm to biodiversity and landscape interests.

Policy 70 - Sustainable transport

This policy is welcomed by Natural England.

Policy 71 - Transport and new development

This policy is welcomed by Natural England, but we recommend the list of considerations is prioritised with the most sustainable / important forms of transport given precedence over less sustainable options.

Policy 73 - Transport: demand management

Natural England welcomes policy as a means the inclusion promoting and supporting sustainable transport options.

Policy 77 - Rural exceptions sites

To ensure appropriate protection of biodiversity and landscape interests, Natural England recommends that the policy includes the caveat that schemes will only be considered “provided that environmental, landscape and heritage assets and their settings considerations can be suitably addressed”, as is applied to Policy 78.

Policy 78 - Meeting Wiltshire's housing needs

Natural England supports the policy requirement to ensure schemes are only considered if potential adverse impacts on environmental, landscape and heritage interests can be suitably addressed.

Policy 79 - First Homes exception sites

Policy 79 clause (4) should include reference to biodiversity and landscape interests.

Health and wellbeing

Paragraph 5.88 Natural England welcomes the recognition that the availability of public open space plays a key role in health and wellbeing. We are working with other government bodies and partners to achieve the new and ambitious commitment that everyone should live within 15 minutes’ walk of a green or blue space set out in the Environment Improvement Plan. Green and blue spaces are important health assets; however, they are not currently being enjoyed equally by different groups and therefore the benefits they offer are not being equitably shared. Natural England recommends using co-

design principles with the community to design these spaces including safety, facilities, and activities, to reduce barriers for people to access green and blue spaces.

There are a number of information sources on the links between nature and health that may be of use:

- Links between natural environments and mental health (EIN065) [Links between natural environments and mental health - EIN065 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
- Links between natural environments and physical health (EIN066) [Links between natural environments and physical health - EIN066 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
- Connection to Nature (EIN068) [Connection to Nature - EIN068 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
- How the Natural Environment can support Children and Young People (EIN067) [How the Natural Environment can support Children and Young People - EIN067 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
- Methodology for Natural England evidence information notes EIN065, EIN066, EIN067 and EIN068 (EIN069) [Methodology for Natural England evidence information notes EIN065, EIN066, EIN067 and EIN068 - EIN069](#)

Policy 83 - Health and wellbeing

The current wording includes the promotion of access to green and blue infrastructure under “Healthy food environment”. In our view this is confusing and downplays the importance to health and wellbeing of the provision of public open space in its own right, including access to high quality blue and green infrastructure. Through the Plan and Policy 83 there is also a tendency only to link improving mental and physical health to sport and physical activities, which misses the role of nature.

We recommend greater acknowledgement is given of nature’s role in healthy lifestyles and environments and how improving access to nature reduces health inequalities.

Natural England however welcomes the commitment to the provision and enhancement of community orchards and allotments.

Open space and play facilities

Paragraph 5.94 Natural England recommends that appropriate NGOs (eg wildlife charities) are included in the list of possible managers of new areas of PoS which should be considered in the first instance before resorting to management companies.

Policy 84 - Public open space and play facilities

The policy is welcome and supported by Natural England. However, we would recommend that the policy is expanded to include a requirement to provide appropriate financial contributions for local existing public open spaces, including locally accessible nature reserves that will be used by new residents. This support should compensate the managers of the Public Open Space / Nature Reserves for any increased visitor manager costs that would be incurred and provide for improved infrastructure to increase the resilience and visitor capacity of the sites affected.

Policy 85 - Sustainable construction and low carbon energy

This policy is welcomed by Natural England.

Policy 86 - Renewable energy

Natural England recognises the need to expand renewable energy generation. However, like any other form of development, if poorly designed or located, renewable energy installations and the ancillary infrastructure to connect them can cause harm to wildlife, habitats and landscapes, especially given the trend towards larger scale proposals.

We consider that the policy should more clearly steer large scale renewable energy installations away from more sensitive locations such as National Landscapes and their settings with a clear presumption against such facilities in these locations. Similarly, the policy should set a clear presumption against schemes being located within designated wildlife sites, or on priority habitats.

In our view, part 'h' of the policy is also misleading. As written, it could give the impression that providing grazing is maintained for solar farms, harm to Bats SAC sustenance zones can be avoided. This is not the case and recent research has raised significant concerns that bats may avoid solar farms.

https://theconversation.com/bats-are-avoiding-solar-farms-and-scientists-arent-sure-why-211074?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter&s=03#Echobox=1691779536

There will also be other considerations in the location and design of installations that determine effects on foraging and commuting for bats. Natural England therefore advises that clause h) is replaced with a requirement to ensure all renewable energy installations are required to protect bat foraging and commuting habitats, while schemes within defined SAC bat sustenance zones should be required to demonstrate a clear enhancement of bat habitats.

Natural England also recommends the Council consider extending the policy to promote renewable energy generation schemes within the existing built environment. For example, in association with employment sites, car parking, and community facilities.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Natural England welcomes the supporting text's emphasis on Wiltshire's diverse natural assets and features, some of which are internationally important and supports the approach set out in relation to the application of the mitigation hierarchy, demonstrating conservation and enhancement and the provisions for enhancing biodiversity in the built environment.

Paragraph 5.118 Natural England strongly supports the list of features with nature conservation value. However, in line with NPPF paragraph 180 the list should be expanded to include specific mention of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees).

Cotswolds Water Park

Paragraph 5.131 Natural England welcomes the clear approach to the need for new development to conserve and where possible enhance the biodiversity value of the Cotswold Water Park (CWP) and the aspiration to ensure the CWP is an "exemplar of sustainability".

Biodiversity within the built environment

The supporting text focus for achieving enhancements for the natural environment within the built environment is welcomed.

Paragraph 5.135 Natural England recommends the examples of enhancement measures mentions specifically the use of swift bricks. The inclusion of the provision of wildflower verges and meadows is particularly welcome but should be expanded to include the “provision *and means to manage...*” Ongoing management of such features typically requires suitable cut and collect mowers along with consideration in the design of arising deposal areas (ie established compost heaps).

Policy 88 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Natural England strongly supports the standards that the policy sets out for protecting and enhancing habitats, species and geological interests, and doing so in the context of strengthening ecological networks and the local and national goals for nature recovery.

For clarity, we would recommend that the policy or supporting text includes the definition of “UK National Network Sites”.

Policy 88 Protection

Natural England strongly supports the protection afforded to the hierarchy of protected sites and habitats, including UK National Network Sites (ie SAC SPA and Ramsar sites). However, Natural England has a number of concerns regarding the scope of the policy which are set out below:

- The policy in relation UK National Network Sites should make it clear these include proposed and potential sites as set out in NPPF paragraph 181.
- In relation to UK National Network Sites the policy should make it clear that any development that would have an adverse impact on a UK National Network Site (including proposed or potential sites) *and or their supporting habitats* that cannot be fully mitigated shall be refused unless Imperative Reasons of Over Riding Public Interest can be demonstrated, *and* suitable compensatory measures are available.
- The policy should set out the protection afforded to sites designated as nationally important (SSSI and NNR) as set out in NPPF (2022) paragraph 180. That is that development that is “likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest”.
- The policy should also clearly set out the protection afforded to irreplaceable habitats as set out in NPPF (2022) paragraph 180. A reference to Natural England and the Forestry Commission’s standing advice for ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees is also recommended.
[Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions)

- Natural England recommends that the policy also includes a requirement for all development to meet Natural England's standing advice for protected species. [Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protected-species-and-development-advice-for-local-planning-authorities)

Natural England supports Policy 88 provisions for the protection of local sites, priority habitat and habitats of principal importance, local ecological networks and wildlife corridors.

We expect the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Wiltshire to play an important role in targeting biodiversity enhancements, funded through a wide range of obligations, schemes and investors. Local Plans and planning decisions will need to take account of the LNRS and we await national guidance on what that means in practice.

Policy 88 Biodiversity in the built environment

Natural England welcomes and supports Policy 88 provisions for providing biodiversity enhancements within the built environment. We recommend that the provisions could be strengthened through a requirement to provide street trees wherever practical to do so.

Policy 89 - Biodiversity Net Gain

We strongly support the policy to seek 20% biodiversity gain. We also welcome the reference to the need to use the latest Biodiversity Metric, the clear hierarchy set out for on- and off-site delivery and the emphasis on the CIEEM good practice principles.

Natural England also welcomes the provision for Policy 89 to support development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geodiversity interests. It would however be useful if this provision specifically mentioned projects designed to provide mitigation for impacts on UK National Network Sites (as well as other nationally designated wildlife sites) including schemes designed to deliver nutrient neutrality (e.g. wetlands or land use change projects) and mitigation for recreational impacts (eg provision or SANG or other accessible greenspace) as well as schemes designed to deliver biodiversity net gain credits or carbon sequestration.

Trees, hedgerows, and woodland

Natural England welcomes the recognition of the importance of Wiltshire's woodland, ancient trees and hedgerows, ecologically and in terms of landscape, history and for climate resilience. Protecting, enhancing and expanding these features is a national and local priority. We also support the emphasis within the supporting text on the provision of urban street trees and the attention given to supporting the Great Western Community Forest and creating and expanding woodlands that can be easily accessed by more people

Policy 90 - Woodland, Hedgerows and Trees

Natural England supports the policy and welcomes the reference to ensuring the right trees are delivered in the right places and in terms of realising this and other objectives of the policy we would encourage you to consider incorporating reference to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards Framework (see also comments on Policy 93 below).

Conserving and enhancing Wiltshire's landscapes

Paragraph 5.159 It is recommended that this paragraph is amended to ensure the best and most versatile agricultural land is protected. The paragraph currently refers to grade 1 and 2 however, national policy considers grades 1, 2 and 3a to be best and most versatile soil. Reference to the protection of these valuable soils should be included in policy 91. The wording of the policy should be strengthened to remove 'where possible', requiring developers to protect and enhance the existing soil structure.

The conservation and sustainable management of soils is reflected in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), particularly in paragraphs 170 and 171. When planning authorities are considering land use change, the permanency of the impact on soils is an important consideration. Particular care over planned changes to the most potentially productive soil is needed, for the ecosystem services it supports including its role in agriculture and food production. Plan policies should therefore take account of the impact on land and soil resources and the wide range of vital functions (ecosystem services) they provide in line with paragraph 118 of the NPPF.

Policy 91 - Conserving and Enhancing Wiltshire's Landscapes

Natural England supports the policy and welcomes the requirement for development within and affecting designated landscapes to demonstrate consideration of objectives included in the relevant management plans. The policy should also make it clear that all development affecting a designated landscape must meet the necessary tests as set out in NPPF (2021) paragraph 177.

Policy 91 should also be expanded to include provision for further moderating and compensating adverse impacts on nationally designated landscapes through appropriate offsite measures. These might include financial contributions for the delivery of projects that help meet the objectives of the designated landscape's management plan.

Policy 92 - Conserving and enhancing dark skies

Natural welcomes and supports the policy.

Green and blue infrastructure

The Plan recognises GBI as essential infrastructure and that is a welcome and necessary starting point that has informed the concept plans for allocated sites. It is important to consider green infrastructure an approach as much as an outcome and the application and integration of the GBI policy in tandem with other policies, including for transport, health, biodiversity, climate and economic development, is essential if multi-functional benefits are to be maximised in place-making.

Natural England has worked with a range of practitioners and partners, including local authorities, to produce a framework of national standards and good practice. We acknowledge that Wiltshire Council published its Green Infrastructure strategy in 2022, prior to the Framework being available. However, while we consider that there is much to commend in the provisions made for green space and green and blue infrastructure in the Plan, particularly at strategic growth locations, we would encourage you to

consider application of Natural England's standards where most appropriate. That might include the access to greenspace standard, for example, in locations with higher levels of deprivation and poor access to quality green space.

Policy 93 - Green and Blue infrastructure

Natural England supports the policy on green and blue infrastructure (GBI).

We recommend that the policy is expanded to include a requirement for providing appropriate support for offsite GBI which would otherwise be adversely affected by an increase in visitor pressure resulting from a development. This should include the provision of enhanced facilities for managing visitors on locally accessible areas of green space (eg footpath enhancement), as well as compensation for increased management costs by the site owner / manager (eg increased wardening or habitat management costs).

Policy 94 - Wiltshire's canals and the boating community

Natural England supports this policy. We welcome the new links proposed to join up and restore the waterway network and the recognition in the policy on the role that canals and waterways have in providing opportunities to strengthen GBI and ecological networks.

Policy 95 - Flood Risk

The Plan should take full account of any comments provided by the Environment Agency on this matter.

Water resources

Policy 96 – Water resources

Considering Wiltshire's status as a water stressed area and the potential impacts on designated rivers and wetlands Natural England strongly supports the policy requirement for new residential development to achieve a predicted water consumption of 85 litres per person per day, along with the prescribed consumption standard for non-household development. We also note that in many cases the reduced water consumption standard for new houses will also facilitate achieving nutrient neutrality requirements.

Policy 98 - Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

Natural England welcomes the recognition of the value of landscaping and natural features for ensuring high quality design and place setting as set out in Policy 98 clause ii), along with the requirement for street trees and promotion of parks and orchards as set out at clause vii).

Policy 99 - Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment

The Plan should take full account of any comments provided by the Historic England on this matter.

Policy 100 The Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites World Heritage Site

The Plan should take full account of any comments provided by the Historic England on this matter.

Air quality

Paragraph 5.259 The paragraph should be amended to make it clear all development that may harm a designated wildlife site via aerial deposition will require an air quality assessment in accordance with published guidance, this includes SSSIs as well as UK National Network Sites (i.e. SAC SPA and Ramsar sites).

Policy 101 – Air quality

Natural England supports the principle of the policy, however, the pollutants of particular concern should be expanded to include Ammonia and acid deposition both of which can have harmful effects on designated wildlife sites.

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

Yours faithfully,

John Stobart
Planning and Conservation Senior Advisor
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07825 844475

Date: 26 April 2024
Our ref: 470438
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Dear Mr Dring

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole publication draft Local Plan (2024-2039) March 2024 consultation

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.

General comments

Natural England advise that the Draft Local Plan is generally of a high standard and sets out policy approaches which are consistent with national policy and legal requirements for the natural environment.

Policy areas which provide multiple benefits such as health, biodiversity and environmental improvements are well embedded and mutually supportive within the Plan increasing the likelihood of successful deliver in accordance with the overall aim.

Natural England has however a number of specific concerns relating to the following policies:

- Policy E4: Talbot Village
- Strategic Policy P10 Christchurch Town (allocations CT 4 and 5)
- Strategic Policy P12 Creekmoor
- Strategic Policy P15 (allocation H3)
- Strategic Policy P20 (allocation MSWH.3)

The conclusions reached in the HRA documents are agreed in principle subject to the specific additional information sought in this advice.

Existing SPD/Strategic mitigation measures

Natural England note that a number of the existing strategic mitigation approaches set out in adopted SPD are scheduled to end in 2025. The authority will need to provide a level of certainty for the examiner to demonstrate that these mitigation and avoidance measures will be secured to facilitate ongoing development over the Local plan period to 2039

Local Plan Objectives

Natural England welcome the plan objective:

- conserve and enhance our outstanding natural environment

Natural England welcome the support and priority afforded across other objectives such as Carbon neutrality and in the delivery of high quality places, to :

- protect and enhance our existing green infrastructure network
- ensure a net gain in biodiversity
- embed green infrastructure in new development

Natural England support the objectives for sustainable transport and a modal shift towards less combustion based transport which will increase the quality of air by reducing pollutants harmful to both people and biodiversity.

Strategic Policy S1: Natural England support the policy and specifically sections b, c, e, m.

Paragraph 4.16: Natural England support and welcome the scope

Strategic policy S2

Natural England has no objection to the policy but is concerned that the use of the term Habitat under 1.a) is unclear. Habitats sites has a specific meaning under the NPPF referring to SAC and SPA sites, it appears from the context that the policy is broader than simply these two designations and Ramsar sites as a matter of Government policy. Natural England advise that the policy should be reworded to:

“Habitats sites, SSSIs and public open...”

It is clear in NPPF para 186 that strict tests must be applied to SSSIs as well as habitats/internationally protected sites.

Strategic Policy S3: Natural England support the policy sections a,b,d and e which are prioritising modal transport shift, green infrastructure and reduced light and air pollution.

Strategic Policy C1: Natural England supports the policy, specifically sections a(i),b(11), (iv) and c(i) which seek to encourage modal transport shifts, sustainable drainage schemes, water efficiency and biodiversity conservation and enhancement.

Strategic Policy C3: Water efficiency: Natural England is concerned that parts of the Local Plan area are identified as seriously water stressed eg Bournemouth. In the absence of an approved Water Resources Management Plan for the water suppliers there is uncertainty about the supply of water for public consumption given increasing demand. In particular there is a concern that water abstracted from the River Avon SAC is already leading to the site failing to meet its water flow objectives. Natural England advise that Wiltshire Councils draft Local Plan proposes a water use standard of 85 litres per person for the River Avon catchment which has been supported and should be considered by BCP. The Council should also consider acknowledging the need to regularly review water usage restrictions as a result both of increasing demand but also to avoid harm to habitats sites and SSSIs as Climate Change impacts increase.

Strategic Policy C4: Natural England support sections b and f.

Strategic Policy C5: Natural England welcome sections 1 b. Natural England are concerned that particularly at Rockley Park the mobile units are increasingly being occupied on a residential basis. The Council, as land owner, should take a more proactive approach with the tenant to ensure that the policy can be complied with.

Natural England welcomes section 2 b and e.

Strategic Policy C7: SuDs

Natural England welcome this policy. Natural England advise that in some locations eg Poole Harbour and the River Avon catchments SuDs may also be designed to reduce nutrient loads from new developments. The authority is advised to insert suitable wording about this function into the policy.

Strategic Policy NE1: Natural England welcome this policy.

Para 6.15 the first sentence should be reworded replacing will with may, as not all applicants will need such an assessment. It may be advisable to provide an indicative threshold?

Para 6.18/6.29 Natural England advise that subject to an anticipated Government announcement the nutrient neutrality requirements may alter.

Strategic Policy NE2: Habitats sites, Natural England warmly welcomes this policy. Section 4 needs to be reworded to include reference to the New Forest SAC.

Strategic Policy NE3: Biodiversity : Natural England welcome this policy.

Strategic Policy NE4: Green infrastructure : Natural England welcome the policy.

Para 6.63 Natural England advise that the Council should make reference to the priority to plant native locally sourced species which are appropriate to the local conditions and in particular the *Right Tree in the Right Place* approach to maximise effectiveness of the policy.

Strategic Policy NE5: Coastline, this policy or its supporting text should make reference to the National Coast Path which is an important facility linking BCP with both the marine and terrestrial aspects of the coast but also to neighbouring authorities. Insertion of a reference at section 1 to confirm development which facilitate or do not prevent use of the Coastal Path will be acceptable should be considered.

Strategic Policy NE6: Countryside, this policy is supported by Natural England.

Strategic Policy NE7: Open space, Natural England welcome this policy.

Strategic Policy BE1: Natural England support points vii and viii of the policy.

Strategic Policy BE2: Townscape: Natural England support section 3 of the policy.

Strategic Policy H8: Houses in Multiple Occupation: the Council should consider a reference to the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework (2020 – 2025) SPD which also provides guidance on the need for appropriate levels of mitigation for new HMOs.

Policy Em4 Bearwood and Merley This is a substantially sized site close to Canford Heath. The policy need to ensure that there is no worker access southwards directly onto Canford Heath. Section 3. D) iii) should be amended to specify the need for impervious fencing suitable for the business park use.

Policy E3: Bournemouth Airport

Para 9.18 Natural England is concerned that current water quality impacts on the Moors River SSSI need to be referenced in this paragraph. At current levels of use there are existing adverse impacts, planned business and airport expansion need to be tied into securing waste water management at the nearby Wessex Water STW rather than allowing the private STW to continue to be used. Natural England support section 2. iv) of the policy which will reduce air pollution impacts.

Policy E4: Talbot Village

Natural England support 1. a), 2. e)

Para 9.24 refers to **residential** use in the Innovation Quarter, this area is all within 400m of the designated sites and therefore the wording needs to be removed. Policy E4 2 d, also refers to residential outside of the 400m but does not specify which area, it should specify T1 as T2 is within the 400m area.

Strategic Policy T1: Transport Strategy

Natural England support the general thrust of the policy and specifically T1 b, c and h.

Policy T4: Transport Infrastructure Natural England support the policy and its encouragement for modal shifts from combustion based transport, particularly section T4 2).

Policy T6: Air quality, Natural England support the policy approach set out which complements the need to seek air quality improvements for habitats sites in BCP and nearby.

Strategic Policy P7: Burton and Grange

Natural England support P7 Section 4 a) vi) relating to Allocation BG1 which requires a footpath link to Roeshot SANG.

Natural England advises that the wording either supporting or in the policy as it relates to the Avon Valley Path should be modified to reflect the need to adjust the route as Climate Change is resulting in greater levels and frequency of flooding in the valley. The path should avoid areas where new habitats and wetlands are establishing.

Strategic Policy P9: Canford Heath: section 4. b) is correct to reference the 400m restriction on residential developments.

Strategic Policy P10: Christchurch Town: Proposals CT 4 and 5 are allocating in the region of 540 dwellings. CT3 is already the subject of an application with provision for a SANG.

Natural England advise that the scale of the development proposed and the proximity to heathland sites at Town Common lead to a conclusion that there is insufficient identified and secured SANG capacity for these two allocations. The absence of such avoidance/mitigation measures raises serious concerns about the deliverability/soundness of both the plan and the allocations.

Strategic Policy P12: Creekmoor: Natural England notes that the policy allocates two sites with 150 dwellings in total. Natural England would seek further confirmation from BCP about the delivery of additional SANG capacity through expanding Upton SANG to confirm deliverability and suitability/scale of provision in order to confirm adverse impacts on Upton Heath may be avoided.

Strategic Policy P15: Hamworthy: Site H.1 policies are generally at a high level and appear to be consistent with previous advice eg ix). Natural England note that because of the scale and complexity of the site and its ecological sensitivities some sections appear to conflict, the council should consider minor rewording eg vii) insert "along the Backwater Channel". The same might be applied to H.2 v) and H4. V).

Allocation H.3 Natural England has previously advised the authority about a number of avoidance and mitigation measures eg infrastructure and SANG to be considered. Natural England is concerned that with out confirmation of a mitigation approach it will not be possible to conclude no Likely Significant Effect on the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar and Dorset Heaths SAC as well as Poole Harbour SPA and Ramsar. This allocation and the supporting policy detail are insufficient at this time.

Strategic Policy P17: Kinson Natural England note the restrictions highlighted in the policy for allocations K1 and K2 which are welcomed.

Strategic Policy P20: Mudeford, Stanpit and West Highcliffe Natural England advise that allocation MSWH.3 for 80 units should provide suitable heathland mitigation in the form of SANG, this site should be considered in-combination with MSWH.2 which is making provision for an unspecified number of dwellings at a tourist facility.

Strategic Policy P29: Talbot and Branksome Woods Natural England does not object to the allocation of TBW.3 on the basis that the SNCI can be avoided and the population of sand lizards secured through appropriate fencing and habitat/predator management.

The note relating to TBW.4/Em.2 is welcome clarification of the agreed position.

Evidence documents

SD6d Habitats Regulations Assessment Draft Local Plan Air-quality : Natural England concur with the conclusions reached relating to additional air pollution impacts on habitats and International sites from greater vehicle activity related to increased housing.

SD6b Habitats Regulations Assessment Draft Local Plan Recreational pressure : Dorset heathlands

Natural England concur with the conclusion that policy NE2 provides a break on allocated developments coming forward with out adequate HIPs. However Natural England advises that at this stage there are a number of significant allocations which either alone or in-combination merit further consideration in order to be certain that a suitable mitigation HIP may be delivered in principle. These are identified above. In some cases the Council may provide confirmation of details around the proposals but in other locations promoters will need to consider delivery options. Allocations close to the New Forest without suitable HIP mitigation for the Dorset heathlands face an increased risk of adverse effects.

At this time Natural England cannot agree that adverse effects may be ruled out.

Poole Harbour SPA/Ramsar

Natural England agree with the conclusion reached in the HRA.

New Forest

Natural England agree with the overarching conclusion reached in the HRA.

SD6c Habitats Regulations Assessment Draft Local Plan Water quality

Natural England observe that whilst the focus of the HRA is on WRC catchments, particularly in the east of the area there are a small number of developments coming forward which are within the river catchment and where waste water is discharged to ground through a PTP system. The current nutrient calculators provide a mechanism for calculating appropriate offsetting requirements.

Natural England note that at the time of writing there was uncertainty about the WRC discharge levels which would be required under the LURA 2023. The April 2024 communication is now delayed.

Following the confirmation of the WRC discharge concentration and time table for delivery this report should be revised accordingly. Natural England would seek some points of clarification regarding the calculation of pre and post upgrade requirements.

Natural England would support the conclusions reached in principle for nutrient neutrality in both catchments subject to a reconsideration of the figures when further details are released. There are a number of factors which the Councils advisors may not have considered. One example is the opportunity to increase nutrient reduction levels by reducing waste water through higher water efficiency which also addresses water stress.

I trust this advice will assist the Council.

Yours sincerely

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