

Date: 27 January 2017
Our ref: 203776



West Berkshire Council
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BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Sir/ Madam

Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document – Consultation on Proposed Main Modifications

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 09 December 2016 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

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

Whilst Natural England have no specific comments to make, we offer the following advice in relation to policy HSA 19 (site HUN007) due to the site being within the North Wessex Downs Area of Natural Beauty (AONB):

Landscape

As this site allocation is within the North Wessex Downs AONB we advise that the relevant Management Plan for this area is taken into account. Your authority should also seek the views of the AONB Partnership to avoid significant impacts on protected landscapes and early consideration should be given to the major development tests set out in paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure refers to the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. It is often used in an urban context to provide multiple benefits including space for recreation, access to nature, flood storage and urban cooling to support climate change mitigation, food production, wildlife habitats and health & well-being improvements provided by trees, rights of way, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, rivers and wetlands.

Green infrastructure is also relevant in a rural context, where it might additionally refer to the use of farmland, woodland, wetlands or other natural features to provide services such as flood protection, carbon storage or water purification.

A strategic approach for green infrastructure networks should support a similar approach for ecological networks, as outlined above. Evidence of a strategic approach can be underpinned by Green Infrastructure Strategy. We encourage the provision of green infrastructure to be included within this policy for this housing allocation.

Natural England offers the following advice in relation to policy HSA 19 (allocation HUN007)

Climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation should be considered along with the role of the of the natural environment to deliver measures to reduce the effects of climate change, for example tree planting to moderate heat island effects. In addition factors which may lead to exacerbate climate change (through more greenhouse gases) should be avoided (e.g. pollution, habitat fragmentation, loss of biodiversity) and the natural environment's resilience to change should be protected. Green Infrastructure and resilient ecological networks play an important role in aiding climate change adaptation.

For clarification of any points in this letter, please contact Amy Steel on 0208 225 6386 or amy.steel@naturalengland.org.uk.

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

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Amy Steel
Thames Team
Sustainable Development