

Date: 30 June 2017
Our ref: 216101
Your ref: -



Planning Policy & Environment Team
Bath & North East Somerset Council
BY EMAIL ONLY
Neighbourhood_Planning@BathNES.gov.uk

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
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Dear Sir/Madam

Whitchurch Village Neighbourhood Plan Proposal

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 19 May 2017 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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

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

The draft Plan appears to be based on a good understanding of the plan area and to be in general conformity with existing and emerging higher tier plans.

We welcome the consideration given to landscape character and the important environmental and historic features within Whitchurch Parish in the preparation of the Plan. Although the Plan area does not contain nationally designated sites or landscapes, it does include important habitats and landscape features, which also provide foraging and commuting opportunities for greater and lesser horseshoe bats, both of which have been recorded in the parish. These species are associated with North Somerset & Mendip Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC.

With the above in mind, we are pleased to note **Policy WV 2.4-Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Network**, which should help to protect existing ecological assets, *including any features of Importance for foraging and for maintaining habitat connectivity*. We would also expect new development to provide ecological enhancements wherever possible, the details of which might be agreed and delivered through the Landscape and Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan referred to in the supporting text of the policy. This would accord with NPPF Para 9. *Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to): ...moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature.*

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

We have considered the HRA and SEA screening assessments. Based on the information provided we concur with the Council's conclusion that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, including with respect to national and European designated sites, and that further assessment in relation to these is not necessary.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter please contact me on 07900 608311. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to 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 faithfully

Amanda Grundy
Somerset, Avon & Wiltshire Area Team