

Alison Osborne-Newbold

From: McLean, Grady <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 21 November 2023 15:44
To: Planning Policy
Cc: Driver, Gillian; Burlachka, Yana
Subject: Local Plan Review - Natural England comments
Attachments: Nuneaton LPR.pdf

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Good afternoon

Please find attached Natural England's comments on the above consultation.

Many apologies for the delay

Regards

Grady McLean

Lead Adviser – Planning

West Midlands Team

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Date: 21 November 2023
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Consultation: Regulation 19 pre-submission draft of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above

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.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Natural England welcomes the content of the Local Plan and we have the following comments to make.

Soundness

Natural England notes that the plan is at the publication stage and as such your authority is seeking confirmation on the soundness of the plan. As far as Natural England is concerned the plan is largely considered sound i.e the plan is positively prepared as demonstrated by policies supporting green infrastructure and preventing fragmentation of habitats. The plan is justified, the evidence base appears largely robust as far as Natural England's remit is concerned and alternatives have been considered throughout the plan stages. As far as Natural England is concerned the policies within the plan are deliverable and flexible and therefore the plan should be effective and the plan is consistent with national policy with regard to those within Natural England's remit.

Duty to co-operate

Natural England can confirm that the local plan largely incorporates the areas of Natural England's concerns such as:

Water quality and quantity, air pollution, biodiversity and geodiversity, landscapes, both nationally designated and local landscape character, green infrastructure including priority habitat creation, climate change, soil, waste, strategic mitigation solutions and biodiversity net gain .

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Natural England notes the Habitats Regulations Assessment prepared in support of the plan. We agree with your conclusions with regard to Ensor's Pool Special Area of Conservation. However, the draft plan makes reference the area being within the catchment of the River Humber, this site is internationally protected and while at some distance, proposals within Nuneaton and Bedworth have the potential to affect the designated site especially in-combination. It may be possible to conclude that proposals within the plan area would have no Likely Significant Effect on the site or there would be no Adverse Effect On the Integrity of the site as a result of the plan but the Humber Estuary is a Ramsar, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area and as such is highly sensitive. The most likely environmental pathway would be through hydrology, the quality and quantity of water reaching the site downstream of the plan area.

The Plan's vision and strategy

Natural England advises that the Plan's vision and emerging development strategy addresses impacts and opportunities for the natural environment. We note the aspiration to protect and enhance the environment and move towards a zero carbon economy.

Policies

Strategic Policy DS1:

Natural England supports this strategic policy for Sustainable development. The policy is strongly supported by Natural England and incorporates biodiversity protection and enhancement and measures to reduce carbon emissions from future developments. It should provide protection to the most aspects of the natural environment and we are pleased to see net gain has been incorporated into the plan, in our view this could contribute to significant improvements for biodiversity and contribute to wider environmental benefits such as clean air and water and to help restore, buffer and connect existing environmental assets.

Strategic Policy SA1 Development Principles on Strategic Sites:

As above Natural England considers that if the principles within this policy and the explanatory text that lead to the provision of sustainable developments for these strategic allocations

NE 1 Green and Blue Infrastructure:

Natural England supports this policy. Well designed multi-functional green infrastructure contributes greatly to a number benefits both for people and nature. Your green infrastructure should dovetail with your biodiversity net gain strategies in order to maximise benefits. You may find Natural England's [Urban Greening Factor for England](#) of use

NE3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity:

Natural England strongly supports this policy which provides protection for internationally, nationally and locally important designated sites. It should be noted that development at some distance from designated sites can impact them indirectly, through air and water quality or recreational impacts for example. We also support the aims to address habitat fragmentation.

Sites of Least Environmental Value

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the plan's development strategy appears to avoid areas of high environmental value. Natural England notes the evidence in the HRA, which demonstrates that sites of least environmental value are allocated i.e. they avoid designated sites and landscapes. This is with the exception of the allocations within the catchment of the River Clun SAC as discussed above.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Grady McLean on 07881 835753. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully

Grady McLean
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West Midlands Team

