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Our ref: 70660  
Your ref: Chesterfield Borough



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Mr Bryant

**Planning consultation: Sites and Boundaries Issues and Options Document and Staveley and Rother Valley Corridor Area Action Plan**

Thank you for your consultation on the above documents which were received by Natural England on 19 November 2012.

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.

**1. Sites and Boundaries Issues and Options Consultation Document**

**Potential residential sites around Town, District and Local Service Centres**

**Staveley Town centre**

**SBRES18 – Bent Lane (Map 2)**

Natural England is concerned that this potential residential site would be located on the Norbriggs Flash Local Nature Reserve and Pinnock North Flash Local Wildlife Site. This protected area is a subsidence flash with old meanders of the River Doe. It forms part of an existing corridor of local wildlife sites that link the River Doe Lea to the River Rother and other sites along the Pools Brook as such this site makes an important contribution to the wider ecological network which is a specific aim of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At paragraph 109 of the NPPF it states that, *"the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures."* Natural England therefore considers that this potential site does not comply with the NPPF. In view of national concerns about the decline of biodiversity, we consider that the site should be reconsidered.

**Home Hall Local Service Centre**

**SBRES46 – Linacre Road (Map 5)**

This site is immediately adjacent to the Ashgate Plantation Local Wildlife Site and particular care should be taken not to damage the nature conservation interest that is present. It is suggested that the immediate surroundings should be left undeveloped and links made to surrounding green infrastructure.

**Brimington Local Service Centre**  
**SBRES45 – Greyhound Track, Wheeldon Mill (Map 7)**

The site is adjacent to the Chesterfield Canal which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site which could support a water vole population. As the water vole is protected under section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) we would need to ensure that before a planning application is made that the developer carries out appropriate surveys to establish whether water voles are present in and adjacent to the area. If water voles are present then the proposal may need to be amended to ensure that the work does not result in an offence i.e. does not result in disturbance to water voles or in loss of their burrows. For more information on the protection of water voles please see our website [www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing)

**Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

Natural England strongly supports this section and considers that it provides a comprehensive coverage of this topic which follows the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). We are particularly pleased to note that at paragraph 10.2 that the multi-functional purposes have been acknowledged. We also welcome the section on ecological networks which will link closely with other green infrastructure assets. We also note the recognition of the Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites in table 31 and would emphasise that the NPPF advises that planning policies should minimise impacts on biodiversity by promoting the preservation, restoration and reconnection of priority habitats and ecological networks of which these Local Sites are an important part.

**Local Green Space and other Open Space**

Natural England believes that everyone should have access to good quality natural greenspace near to where they live. We would generally be against the loss of open spaces but if it proves to be essential that some areas have to be lost then it is important that they are compensated for by other green spaces and that these areas are enhanced and where possible linked to the wider green infrastructure network.

Our Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) are based on three principles:

- a) improving access
- b) improving naturalness
- c) improving connectivity

We would therefore wish to see all open spaces incorporate these principles to ensure a high quality of provision. We would also welcome reference to accreditation schemes such as Green Flag status for urban greenspaces and Country Park accreditation for country parks.

We would also refer you to the ANGSt set of benchmarks for ensuring adequate access to natural and semi-natural greenspace near to where people live. The ANGSt methodology provides a powerful tool in assessing current levels of accessible natural greenspace and planning for better provision. Natural England's most recent wording of the standard is:

- No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of accessible natural green space of at least 2ha in size;
- There should be at least one 20ha accessible natural green space within 2km from home;
- There should be one 100ha accessible green space site within 5km;
- There should be one 500ha accessible natural green space site within 10km;
- At least 1ha of statutory Local Nature reserve should be provided per 1000 population.

Further information on delivering and managing natural and semi-natural greenspace can be found in our report Nature Nearby - Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (Natural England 2010) <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/40004>.



### **Green Belt**

Decisions to change the green belt boundary should be informed by its performance against the purposes of the green belt as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), alongside other relevant evidence and strategic objectives. Natural England's interest relates to the impact of any proposed boundary changes on the natural environment, particularly those that may affect designated landscapes or habitats. We also encourage the environmental enhancement of land within the green belt, in line with NPPF policy.

### **Renewable Energy**

Natural England is generally supportive of renewable energy schemes provided that they are located in suitable areas that ensure the protection of designated landscapes and statutory nature conservation sites. We would wish to ensure that development management policies address the biodiversity and landscape impacts of hydro power and wind energy projects, including the cumulative landscape and visual impacts.

### **Chesterfield Strategic Cycle route**

Natural England supports the principle of the idea of a strategic cycle route as we generally support initiatives aimed at sustainable transport modes that help to reduce carbon emissions.

### **Network of Walking Routes**

Natural England supports the principle of a network of walking routes as we generally support initiatives aimed at sustainable transport modes that help to reduce carbon emissions and also help improve the health and well being of local residents.

### **Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report**

Natural England considers that the scoping report is comprehensive in its coverage of topics including our particular interests regarding the protection of the Natural Environment.

We would recommend that the "Appropriate Assessment" should be more correctly termed as the Habitat Regulations Assessment Scoping Report. The term "appropriate assessment" has caused some confusion because it is the same term as that used for a particular step in the HRA process.

In the first paragraph of section 2 of the report it should be clarified that the most recent version of the Habitat Regulations was issued in August 2012 (The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ). In addition there is a more recent edition of the David Tyldesley report issued in 2009 for Natural England, which should be referred to.

Apart from these updates we are satisfied that the report has provided a schedule of European sites that will be considered as the HRA process progresses and we note that further evidence is awaited on conservation objectives and ecological trends of these sites. Natural England will welcome continued involvement in the HRA process.

## **2. Staveley and Rother Valley Corridor Area Action Plan – Preferred Action**

Natural England is generally supportive of the Area Action plan and considers that it provides a valuable opportunity to enhance the green infrastructure of the site and protect and enhance biodiversity.

### **Spatial Portrait**

We consider that the spatial portrait includes the features that Natural England has a particular interest in including the Bluebank Pools Local Nature Reserve and its associated species, the restored Chesterfield Canal, the River Rother and the Trans Pennine Trail walking and cycling route.

## **Vision and Objectives**

Natural England is generally supportive of the nine strategic development principles particularly "strengthening and enhancing the natural environment."

## **Key Issues**

Under the heading "Connections" we support paragraph 4.17 regarding improvements to footpaths and cycleways and the potential new greenway north of the River Rother. We note that Hall Lane landfill site is reinstated as a valuable green open space for recreation and habitat conservation which can link to the wider green infrastructure network.

In the Green Infrastructure section we particularly support paragraph 4.21 which encourages the extension and enhancement of the green infrastructure network which includes the green corridors of the Chesterfield Canal and the River Rother.

We acknowledge that a Landscape Character and Green Infrastructure Framework has been prepared together with an extended Phase I Ecology Survey. We are also pleased to note that the AAP follows the "Greenprint for Chesterfield" (the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan) which recommends that regeneration must protect and where possible increase priority species and habitats.

In the section on Water Management at paragraph 4.26 we welcome the creation of new structured wetland habitat along the new flood defences.

We support paragraph 4.33 in the section on Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency which acknowledges the importance of compensatory habitat phased to allow a gradual process of change including the use of green and rubble roofs which can provide new habitat.

## **Masterplan Proposals**

Natural England welcomes the extensive network of green and "blue" infrastructure that will be included in the masterplan which will link to the wider green infrastructure network. We generally support the key objectives of the Works Road area particularly the enhanced network of footpath and cycleways.

Within the Lagoon Area we welcome the extension of the Bluebank Pools Local Nature Reserve and the retention an enhancement of existing landscaping alongside the Chesterfield canal and River Rother.

In the Hall Lane Area we particularly welcome the enhanced access to the River Rother and the inclusion of a new area of wetland habitat.

## **Sustainability Appraisal**

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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 Roslyn Deeming on 0300 060 1524. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto: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

Roslyn Deeming  
Land Use Adviser

