

DRAFT WORLINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REGULATION 16 CONSULTATION.

A REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF WORLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL (DOCUMENT 2).

ABSTRACT

This document has been produced on behalf of Worlingham Parish Council. It concerns the proposed addition of a new policy element for biodiversity net gain.

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1. Introduction:

This document has been produced in response to a query raised by the examiner in connection to the plan's approach to biodiversity net gain.

Worlingham Parish Council believes the Neighbourhood Plan would be improved through the adoption of the recommended adjustments that are detailed in Section 3.

2. Background.

Whilst the Submission Version of the draft Worlingham neighbourhood plan (WNP) and the existing local plans for The Broads Authority (TBA) and East Suffolk Council (ESC) have policies and underpinning text that support and encourage biodiversity gain (for example: TBA Policy SP6; ESC (Waveney) Policy WLP 8.34; draft WNP policies WORL12B (iii), WORL14 and WORL16A), the biodiversity net gain requirements of the NPPF (in particular, paragraph 174(d)) and the Environment Act 2021 (which received Royal Assent in November 2021) indicate that the addition of a further policy statement (in the neighbourhood plan) will help meet the aims of the NPPF (e.g. to satisfy sustainable development (basic conditions)).

The proposed textual and policy amendments are set out in section 3.

Section 3. Proposed textual changes for the Worlingham Neighbourhood Plan (relative to the Published Regulation 16 Submission Version).

These amendments are proposed for that part of Section 8 that is currently titled as "Wildlife Corridors". This part of Section 8 will instead be titled: "Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors."

Existing paragraphs numbered as 8.15 to 8.28 in Section 8 of the draft neighbourhood plan will be renumbered as 8.23 to 8.36, with the following new paragraphs inserted.

Policy WORL14 will be amended by	y the inclusion o	of a new policy elemen	t as shown below.
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New supporting text:

Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors

- 8.15 The Local Plan for the Broads and the East Suffolk (Waveney) Local Plan have policies (SP6 and WLP 8.34 respectively) that specifically cover matters surrounding biodiversity protection and enhancement.
- 8.16. The NPPF (particularly para. 174(d)) says that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. NPPF paragraphs 176 and 177 emphasise the importance of landscape and wildlife enhancement for National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 8.17 The Environment Act 2021 contains provisions for the protection and improvement of the environment, including the elevating of "Biodiversity Net Gain" (BNG) to a statutory footing. However, secondary legislation will need to pass through the parliamentary process to bring the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement into force.
- 8.18 There are several Priority Habitats in Worlingham Parish, including floodplain grazing marsh, ponds, wet woodland, mixed deciduous woodland and the historic parkland surrounding Worlingham Hall.
- 8.19 The neighbourhood plan area is spanned by part of the Broads. As nature is clearly blind to organisational boundaries, the proximity to County Wildlife Sites (CWS) such as the River Waveney CWS and the North Cove Alder Carrs CWS should be recognised in local assessments of biodiversity.
- 8.20 Wildlife corridor creation should focus on linking and buffering the existing ecological assets of the neighbourhood plan area, including Priority Habitats and local green spaces and future green space creation within the Beccles and Worlingham Garden

Neighbourhood. This could be achieved with native planting and wildlife friendly verge management as well as the creation of nectar rich arable field margins and ponds.

- 8.21 Worlingham is a stronghold for species such as hedgehogs, with a high number of records across the parish (Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service), that depend on the protection, enhancement and creation of wildlife corridors. Birdlife is well documented with some 76 species recorded adjacent to or on the proposed development site in Worlingham for the Garden Neighbourhood (Policy WLP3.1).
- 8.22 Worlingham has experienced a high level of development (housing and industrial) since 2001. The Beccles and Worlingham Garden Neighbourhood development (Policy WLP3.1) requires much built infrastructure and the largest housing development so far experienced within the neighbourhood plan area. Provision of biodiversity net gain will be an important element in delivering this site.

Amended Policy WORL14:

This policy is renamed and has a new policy element A, with the previous policy elements A and B becoming B and C respectively, but otherwise unchanged with the exception of the change (reproduced below) to the (now) element B as recommended in the 'Document 1' Regulation 16 Stage representation on behalf of Worlingham Parish Council that addressed the unattended-to Suffolk County Council Regulation 14 representations.

Policy WORL 14: Biodiversity Net Gain and Wildlife Corridors

A. Proposals for major development (e.g. 10 or more dwellings) in the Worlingham Neighbourhood Plan area must provide for a minimum Biodiversity Net Gain of 10% that is secured for at least 30 years and is subject to the following criteria:

- The whole of the net gain must be delivered on site unless exceptions permitting offsite delivery within the neighbourhood plan area are formally agreed with the Local Planning Authority;
- In the case of a development site spanning the neighbourhood plan boundary, the 10% (minimum) Biodiversity Net Gain requirement of this policy applies to that part of the site lying within the neighbourhood plan area;
- Biodiversity Net Gain should be measured using the most recently available
 Biodiversity Metric at the time of the submission of the planning application, unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

The requirements of this policy will be superseded by legislative requirements once mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain comes into force.

B. Proposals that identify, protect and enhance wildlife corridors in the Worlingham Neighbourhood Plan area will be supported where they provide a net gain in biodiversity, through creation and enhancement of natural habitats, and restoring fragmented biodiversity networks. These must be designed and implemented to maximise their wildlife

value, provide connectivity through the site for terrestrial and aerial species. They must exploit suitable opportunities to link with the maintained and varied habitats provided by established residential gardens adjacent to the site. They must also be maintained as dark corridors as far as possible to increase their value for nocturnal species.

C. Unchanged, except this was labelled as element B before.

