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Our ref: 471920
Your ref: DC/24/0771/OUT & 24/00172/OUTFL



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning consultation: Outline Application (With All Matters Reserved) - Hybrid Application – Full Planning Permission for the means of external access/egress to and from the site. Outline planning application (all matters reserved) for a mixed use development for up to 660 dwellings (Use Class C3), up to 400 sq m (net) of non-residential floorspace falling within Use Class E and/or Use Class F2(b), an Early Years facility, and associated vehicular access and highway works, formal and informal open spaces, play areas, provision of infrastructure (including internal highways, parking, servicing, cycle and pedestrian routes, utilities and sustainable drainage systems), and all associated landscaping and engineering works

Location: Land North-East Of Humber Doucy Lane, Humber Doucy Lane, Ipswich

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 2 April 2024, 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.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

NO OBJECTION - SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE MITIGATION BEING SECURED

We consider that without appropriate mitigation the application would have potential significant effects on:

- European sites identified within the Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)
- Deben Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA
- Sandlings SPA
- Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar
- Deben Estuary Ramsar

Damage or destroy the interest features for which the underpinning Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) of the above European sites have been notified:

- Deben Estuary SSSI
- Orwell Estuary SSSI

- Stour Estuary SSSI
- Ramsholt Cliff SSSI
- Sutton SSSI
- Sandlings Forest SSSI

In order to mitigate these adverse effects and make the development acceptable, the following mitigation measures should be secured:

- A minimum 10ha area of suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANGS), which includes all the measures outlined in the SHRA and a requirement to provide a detailed plan and a long term funding, maintenance and management strategy for the SANGS at a future planning application stage.
- A suitable contribution per new dwelling to the Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy ('RAMS') to ensure that the delivery of the RAMS remains viable.

We advise that an appropriate planning condition or obligation is attached to any planning permission to secure these measures.

A lack of objection does not mean that there are no significant environmental impacts. Natural England advises that all environmental impacts and opportunities are fully considered and relevant local bodies are consulted.

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other issues is set out below.

NATURAL ENGLAND'S DETAILED ADVICE

1) Advice under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Natural England notes that the applicant has submitted a document titled 'Information to Inform Habitats Regulations Assessment' (CSA Environmental, February 2024), hereafter referred to as the Shadow Habitats regulations Assessment (SHRA). As competent authority, it is your responsibility to produce the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and be accountable for its conclusions.

Natural England notes that an appropriate assessment of the proposal has been undertaken. Natural England is a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the HRA process, and a competent authority should have regard to Natural England's advice.

Suffolk Coast RAMS:

It has been identified that this development falls within the 'Zone of Influence' (Zol) for one or more of the European designated sites scoped into the Suffolk Coast RAMS. It is anticipated that new residential development (including new tourist accommodation) in this area is 'likely to have a significant effect' on the sensitive interest features of these European designated sites, through increased recreational pressure when considered either alone or 'in combination' with other plans and projects.

Natural England worked collaboratively with all the relevant councils to set up the strategy. We fully support the aims of the strategy; in our view it is the best way to provide appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures for the European sites in question. As such, we advise that a suitable contribution to the Suffolk Coast RAMS should be sought from this development. It is noted that the SHRA is uncertain about whether the development falls entirely within zone A or is partially within zone B. Natural England advises that your authority should be certain that the contribution sought from this development ensures that the delivery of the RAMS remains viable. If this does not occur

then the per house tariff in the adopted RAMS will need to be increased to ensure the RAMS is adequately funded. We advise that you should not grant permission until this measure has been secured by a suitably worded condition or legal obligation.

Furthermore, it is considered that for larger residential developments (50 units +, or equivalent, as a guide) within the 13 km Suffolk Coast RAMS zone of influence, or some smaller residential developments that are in very close proximity (200 m or less) to designated sites are not able to fully mitigate the adverse impacts on European designated sites with a RAMS payment alone. Natural England recommends therefore that these developments include the provision of well-designed open space / GI, that is proportionate to its scale to minimise any predicted increase in recreational pressure to designated sites, by containing the majority of recreation within and around the development site boundary and / or bespoke mitigation measures.

Recreational disturbance and the provision of green infrastructure:

The SHRA identifies that a likely significant effect from recreational disturbance cannot be ruled out on the aforementioned European sites and an appropriate assessment was undertaken.

The appropriate assessment concludes that the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) and a suitable financial contribution to Suffolk Coast RAMS will mitigate any adverse effects of recreational disturbance to the relevant European sites.

The development site is allocated in the adopted Ipswich Local Plan with the policy requirements provided in 'Policy DM6: Provision of New Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation Facilities'.

The SANG proposed (as detailed in the SHRA report) includes:

- 11.5ha of open space and green infrastructure
- High-quality, informal, semi-natural areas
- Circular dog walking routes of 2.7 km within the site and/or with links to surrounding Public Rights of Way
- Dedicated 'dogs-off-lead' areas
- Signage/information leaflets to householders to promote these areas for recreation
- Dog waste bins
- A commitment to the long term maintenance and management of these provisions

Natural England's advice is that your authority secure these measures, through a suitable obligation or legal requirement, as part of the Outline planning consent. Furthermore, your authority should give consideration as to how the design of the SANGS, in line with the measures outlined in the SHRA, will also be secured.

The obligation should ensure a detailed plan of the SANGS is provided at a future stage of the application process together with a detailed long term funding, maintenance and management strategy. We advise that Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Standards](#) are considered, which define what good GI 'looks like' and how to plan it strategically to deliver multiple benefits for people and nature.

Natural England advise that the walking route and SANG land should be implemented and available to use before first occupation of the development.

Air quality:

Natural England acknowledges that Air Quality assessment conducted by Air Quality Consultants (dated February 2024, reference: J10/14994A/10) as well as the outcome of the appropriate assessment included in the SHRA concludes that the proposals will not negatively impact on

existing air quality levels. Due to this conclusion the SHRA states that mitigation is not required, however several good design and best practice measures have been proposed as part of the scheme design (section 4.31). We therefore concur with this conclusion.

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 281 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

Other advice

In addition, Natural England would advise on the following issues.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS):

We support the inclusion of SuDS to manage surface water disposal. The [CIRIA guidance \(susdrain.org\)](https://www.susdrain.org) provides useful information about integrating SUDs and biodiversity. The maintenance of SuDS should be provided for the lifetime of the project.

Further general advice on the protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

Should the developer wish to discuss the detail of measures to mitigate the effects described above with Natural England, we recommend that they seek advice through our [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me at alice.canningtye@naturalengland.org.uk.

We would not expect to provide further advice on the discharge of planning conditions or obligations attached to any planning permission.

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

Yours sincerely

Alice Canning Tye
Norfolk & Suffolk Team

Annex A – Additional advice

Natural England offers the following additional advice:

Landscape

Paragraph 174 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland, or dry-stone walls) could be incorporated into the development to respond to and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments. Where the impacts of development are likely to be significant, a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment should be provided with the proposal to inform decision making. We refer you to the [Landscape Institute](#) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for further guidance.

Best and most versatile agricultural land and soils

Local planning authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient detailed agricultural land classification (ALC) information to apply NPPF policies (Paragraphs 174 and 175). This is the case regardless of whether the proposed development is sufficiently large to consult Natural England. Further information is contained in [GOV.UK guidance](#). Agricultural Land Classification information is available on the [Magic](#) website on the [Data.Gov.uk](#) website. If you consider the proposal has significant implications for further loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, we would be pleased to discuss the matter further.

Guidance on soil protection is available in the Defra [Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites](#), and we recommend its use in the design and construction of development, including any planning conditions. For mineral working and landfilling separate guidance on soil protection for site restoration and aftercare is available on [Gov.uk](#) website. Detailed guidance on soil handling for mineral sites is contained in the Institute of Quarrying [Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings](#).

Should the development proceed, we advise that the developer uses an appropriately experienced soil specialist to advise on, and supervise soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled and how to make the best use of soils on site.

Protected Species

Natural England has produced [standing advice](#)¹ to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. We advise you to refer to this advice. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Local sites and priority habitats and species

You should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity sites, in line with paragraphs 175 and 179 of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies.

Priority habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and are included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. List of priority habitats and species can be found on [Gov.uk](#). Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Biodiversity and wider environmental gains

Development should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the NPPF paragraphs 174(d), 179 and 180. It is anticipated that major development (defined in the [NPPF glossary](#)) will be required by law to deliver a biodiversity gain of at least 10% from January 2024 and that this requirement will be extended to smaller scale development in April 2024. For nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) it is anticipated that the requirement for biodiversity net gain will be implemented from 2025.

Further information on the timetable for mandatory biodiversity net gain can be found [here](#). Further general information on biodiversity net gain can be found [here](#).

The Government's [Biodiversity Metric](#) should be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and intertidal habitats and can be used to inform any development project. For small development sites the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of the [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met.

We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 180 of the NPPF and firstly consider what existing habitats within the site can be retained or enhanced. Where on-site measures are not possible, provision off-site will need to be considered.

Development also provides opportunities to secure wider biodiversity enhancements and environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 73, 104, 120, 174, 175 and 180). Opportunities for enhancement might include incorporating features to support specific species within the design of new buildings such as swift or bat boxes or designing lighting to encourage wildlife.

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside the [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is available as a beta test version.

Further information on biodiversity net gain, the mitigation hierarchy and wider environmental net gain can be found in government [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

Green Infrastructure

Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) provides evidence-based advice and tools on how to design, deliver and manage green infrastructure (GI). GI should create and maintain green liveable places that enable people to experience and connect with nature, and that offer everyone, wherever they live, access to good quality parks, greenspaces, recreational, walking and cycling routes that are inclusive, safe, welcoming, well-managed and accessible for all. GI provision should enhance ecological networks, support ecosystems services and connect as a living network at local, regional and national scales.

Development should be designed to meet the [15 Green Infrastructure Principles](#). The Green Infrastructure Standards can be used to inform the quality, quantity and type of green infrastructure to be provided. Major development should have a GI plan including a long-term delivery and management plan. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where

appropriate.

GI mapping resources are available [here](#) and [here](#). These can be used to help assess deficiencies in greenspace provision and identify priority locations for new GI provision.

Access and Recreation

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to urban fringe areas should also be explored to strengthen access networks, reduce fragmentation, and promote wider green infrastructure.

Rights of Way, Access land, Coastal access and National Trails

Paragraphs 100 and 174 of the NPPF highlight the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, rights of way and coastal access routes in the vicinity of the development. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts on the any nearby National Trails. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts.

Biodiversity duty

Your authority has a [duty](#) to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoration or enhancement to a population or habitat. Further information is available [here](#).