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Our ref: 155880
Your ref: -



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BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Mr Anelay

Revised HRA document for North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 04 June 2015 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.

We have considered the revised Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1, dated June 2015, and are generally satisfied that it meets the requirements of the Habitat Regulations and is fit for purpose. We would however like to make the following comments:

Core Strategy - ongoing uncertainties

The HRA refers to the Core Strategy and the Inspector's conclusion that the housing requirement for North Somerset should be increased to 20,985 dwellings and notes that this has consequences for a further eight policies, as these primarily relate to site allocations. The HRA also advises that the Secretary of State has subsequently indicated his intention to intervene in the process to review and consider the Inspector's decision.

Until the overall housing number and the locations where additional housing is to be allocated are determined, Natural England accepts that it is not possible to meaningfully assess the likely effects of these on European sites - such an assessment will need to take place once these decisions have been made.

Proposed amendments to the Sites and Policies Part 1

Natural England welcomes the Council's proposal to amend Policy DM8 in line with our previous advice, which we consider will help to ensure the Severn Estuary European Site is taken into account by relevant proposed new development. We are also pleased to note a specific reference to producing detailed guidance on the North Somerset & Mendip Bat Special Area of Conservation for future development in and around the 5km consultation zone, which we consider will be necessary to ensure potential impacts of new development on the European site can be adequately understood and appropriately addressed.



We note and accept the Council's rationale for not amending Policy DM22 relating to existing and proposed railway lines. We would in any case expect the proposed upgrade to the Portishead to Pill line to be subject to a project level HRA.

Appendix 1: Map of European Sites within North Somerset

The map identifying European sites in Appendix 1 does not show the Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which extends some distance from the North Somerset coastline, over 10km in some places. We have attached a map showing the correct boundaries for information and recommend that Appendix 1 is revised accordingly.

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 Amanda Grundy 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 sincerely

Amanda Grundy
Somerset, Avon & Wiltshire Team