

# **Standard Response to Issues Raised in Consultation on the Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013**

## **Ecological Issues**

### **Issues raised through the recent consultation exercise**

Concerns were raised about the impact of development on biodiversity, particularly in relation to policy RD 5: New Monks Farm; policy RD 6: West Sompting, and policy RD7: Shoreham Airport.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Para 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states, amongst other things, that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; minimising impacts on biodiversity 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.

Para 113 states that local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.

Para 114 states that planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.

### **New Monks Farm**

An ecological assessment of the site was undertaken in 2012. This found that the most important biodiversity habitats on the site are the network of streams and ditches which flow eastwards through the small pastures to the north west of the site and along Mash Barn Lane. These form part of a wider network of water bodies between Lancing and Shoreham Airport. This study recommends that this network of riparian habitats should be retained and managed as part of an ecological network. There are also habitats in the north-west section of the site which have potential to support a range of protected, rare/notable and BAP species. The study goes on to recommend that construction work that may result in the loss of, or impact on the north-west section of the site, scrub/tree lines along Mash Barn Lane and the network of ditches (and associated riparian habitats) is avoided, and that these habitats should be retained and protected, except where loss is unavoidable,

and only after an appropriate programme of mitigation, compensation and enhancement has been put in place. The policy in the Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013 (RDALP 2013) also requires a landscape and ecology management plan to be undertaken.

The supporting text and policy for New Monks Farm in the Local Plan reflect the above recommendations (Policy RD 5). This policy requires a landscape strategy/green infrastructure strategy as well as the following:

- **Ecological enhancements in the north-west corner of the site in order to address the safeguarding and enhancement of biodiversity assets.**
- **Retention and enhancement of existing network of water bodies on site for drainage and ecological benefits.**
- **A site wide landscape and ecological management plan should be drawn up to cover the long-term maintenance of retained and newly created on-site habitats. (Appropriate mitigation of any issues raised will be required)**

### **West Sompting**

An ecological assessment of the site was undertaken in 2012. This found that the part of the site north of the A27 is dominated by improved grassland which generally has low ecological value. The most important biodiversity habitats in the immediate area are along the site's boundaries and within the adjacent Malthouse Meadow. Malthouse Meadow is outside of the site boundary and will be retained.

Adjacent to the part of the site to the south of the A27 is the Cokeham Brookes Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) consisting of an area of reedbeds and tall fern which is crossed and bordered by wet ditches. It is of considerable importance for wildlife as an area of semi-natural habitat which is especially valuable for birds such as warblers and starlings. The policy for West Sompting in the emerging Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013 (RD Policy 6) seeks to ensure that the SNCI and the buffering habitat to the north of the SNCI will be retained and enhanced and opportunities to extend the SNCI should be investigated. Policy RD 6 also requires a landscape strategy/green infrastructure strategy, and the following:

- **The development must safeguard and enhance the Cokeham Brooks Site of Nature Conservation Importance.**
- **A site wide landscape and ecological management plan should be drawn up to cover the long-term maintenance of retained and newly created on-site habitats.**
- **Appropriate mitigation of any issues raised**

## **Shoreham Airport**

An ecological assessment of the site was undertaken in 2012. The airport is located adjacent to the Adur Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the airport itself may provide a supporting role in terms of wintering/wading birds. Both the policy RD 7 of the Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013 (which relates specifically to proposed development at Shoreham Airport) and the supporting text seeks to ensure that no new development impacts on the SSSI and that opportunities should be taken to improve the SSSI where possible as well as biodiversity within the airport site itself. Policy RD 7 of the RDALP 2013 requires:

- **Mitigation measures will be required to ensure that new development at the Airport does not impact on the ecological value of the airport itself or the adjacent Adur Estuary SSSI. Opportunities for ecological enhancements should also be sought through new development.**
- **A site wide landscape and ecological management plan should be drawn up to cover the long-term maintenance of retained and newly created on-site habitats.**

## **Other Policies in the Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013**

In addition to the above, the Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013 contains other policies which relate to ecology. Policy RD 31: relates specifically to biodiversity, and includes a specific policy on Biodiversity. It seeks to ensure the protection, conservation, and where possible, enhancement of biodiversity, including nationally and locally designated sites, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs), marine habitats and other Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat areas, wildlife corridors, and protected and priority species. It also states that new development must seek opportunities to protect and, where possible, enhance biodiversity. Policy RD 30: Green Infrastructure also states that the ecological characteristics of an area will be taken into account in order to maximise biodiversity benefits. Biodiversity is also referred to in RD Policy 13: Adur's Countryside and Coast, as a factor which contributes to distinctiveness and sense of place.

For full details on these, and other policies, please refer to the Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013 itself.

## **Conclusion**

The Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013 seeks to prevent or reduce impacts on biodiversity and where possible provide enhancements. Policies in the Plan relating to proposed strategic developments contain a range of measures addressing their potential impact on ecology.