

Date: 07 January 2013
Our ref: 72830
Your ref: -



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BY EMAIL ONLY
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Dear Ms Dring

Backwell Future Neighbourhood Plan: Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

Thank you for consulting Natural England regarding the above. 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.

General

We note the Backwell Future Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared within the framework of the recently adopted Core Strategy as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Sustainability Appraisal

We consider the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) provides a clearly presented and systematic assessment of the emerging Backwell Neighbourhood Plan, in terms of its consistency with the principles of sustainable development, including social and economic as well as likely environmental effects. We also consider it to be compliant with Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements. We particularly note and welcome the additional sustainability objective 8a) *Protect existing green infrastructure and where possible seek enhancements which provide local benefits and contribute to the wider network.*

Appendix 6 Summary of results for policies and objectives

We note the SA finds that in general the Backwell Forward plan objectives do not have a significant effect on the Sustainability Objectives, but also suggests that the effects of the Backwell Future plan could be enhanced by inserting the words "green infrastructure" into BF objectives 3 and 8 (SO 8a). We agree and trust this will be given positive consideration by the Backwell local community.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

We consider the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) provides an appropriately detailed assessment of likely effects of the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan on the Mendip and North Somerset Bat Special Area of Conservation. We are satisfied that the Council's conclusion that implementation of the Plan not likely to result in significant effect on this or other European protected sites is reasonable.

Draft Joint advice

Natural England has prepared draft joint advice regarding Neighbourhood Plans with the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and English Heritage outlining our role in the process and signposting sources of information and advice. Link to document:
<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/GEHO0212BWAZ-E-E.pdf>.

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 0300 060 1454. 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
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