

Date: 13 July 2015
Our ref: Canterbury LP
Your ref: Strategic greens gaps



Sarah.Parker@CANTERBURY.GOV.UK
Programme.Officer@CANTERBURY.GOV.UK

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sarah,

Planning consultation: Strategic Green Gaps in relation to Stodmarsh - Canterbury Local Plan

Location: Westbere / Chislet

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.

In April 2015 it was drawn to Natural England's attention (and we provided support in emails) that Westbere and Chislet Parishes were proposing strategic green gaps at Hoplands Farms and the field between the Lakesview International Business Park and Port Farm, Upstreet, Chislet. These proposed green gaps are adjacent to the designated site at Stodmarsh which is protected at a national and international level as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and internationally protected Ramsar wetland site and also a National Nature Reserve, managed by Natural England. The surrounding area also includes the former colliery site which is a local wildlife Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) managed by Kent Wildlife Trust (see appendix 1, map 1, local SNCIs are indicated in yellow with green boundary and the national and international designations of Stodmarsh are also shown). In addition fields including both at Hoplands Farm and Upstreet are under environmental stewardship agreements (see appendix 1 and map 2), to deliver environmental / wildlife gain in the area through farming.

Natural England would like to add their support to the proposal of strategic green gaps at these locations which would help provide a buffer and ecological network for wildlife to utilise and contribute to the designated site at Stodmarsh. This approach would add to the landscape scale requirements for biodiversity and the establishment of ecological networks set out in the Lawton Report and in the National Planning Policy Framework and contributes to the aims of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy, of buffering protected sites and making them bigger and more joined up, (maintaining connectivity on a landscape scale), in order to deliver wildlife conservation at a landscape scale which otherwise will fail to deliver wildlife targets on designated sites alone.

Opportunities such as these green gaps and maintaining the SNCI in this location would therefore provide wide scale benefits to wildlife over and above those provided by the designated sites and Natural England would support such a proposal.

Natural England has previously provided advice on the principle of development at the former colliery and Hoplands farm through our pre-application non-statutory advice requested by a



developer during the site allocation process.

To clarify, this advice was limited to whether it was likely that a significant effect (the Likely Significant Effect test under the Habitats Regulations) would occur on the internationally designated sites if this site was allocated in the local plan. Natural England's officer advised that there was a low risk of impact from the information provided at that time by the developer.

Detailed proposals for any planning application have yet to be seen and will still require assessment for the possible impacts on the designated sites. However, whilst Natural England will advise on the potential impacts, we would also highlight the importance and benefits of the wider landscape scale approach of buffering the sites and improving connectivity, that the proposal of the strategic green gaps would deliver in this area.

I hope that this has made this distinction clear.

If you require any further clarification please do get back in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Marlow

Sussex and Kent Team

Appendix 1 Maps

Map 1 of the designation sites (local, national and international)



