Dear [Name]

I have just been forwarded your email from our Planning Mailbox. I am afraid that it was incorrectly logged on our system as having a deadline of 4th July. Luckily, I happened to be working on it at the time anyway. Please accept my apologies for lateness. John Lister retires in 3 weeks time. I will also be off at the end of September so any communications regarding future stages of the Plan should be sent to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk to ensure they are allocated to an appropriate member of the team for a speedy response. This does not apply to reactions to this email which I will be happy to deal with.

My brief comments are as follows:

Screening Opinion

We agree with the conclusion that, as it stands, the Plan should not require assessment under the Habitats Directive as it does not allocate sites and is covered by the HRA of the Core Strategy.

We also agree that, based on the information provided, the Plan should not require a SEA.

Our key concerns in this area are impacts on the hydrology of the area and protection of priority habitats. Generally these initial screening documents appear to recognise the importance of these issues.

Draft List of Policies

Policy 1. We welcome the commitment to avoid harm to the Pevensey Levels. Note that the Plan itself will also need to consider cumulative effects from developments in neighbouring Parishes.

Policy 2. It would be useful if Protected Species were mentioned in relation to Housing Windfall Sites. Care is needed, particularly on rural sites, where there are old or derelict structures and which include (or are close to) features such as mature trees, ponds, ditches and field boundaries, where protected species may be present. Their protection should be one of the central considerations at the detailed planning stage, and early reference to biological records would clarify where these issues may be acute.

Policy 3. It may be useful to also reference the High Weald AONB Management Plan as it has helpful information about good quality design for new developments.

There is currently significant pressure from consultations on land-use proposals and appeals, the completion of local plans, the review of existing plans and work on neighbourhood plans (there are over 500 parishes in Kent and Sussex). This makes it difficult to devote the time that consultations deserve. If there are issues I have not covered, please let me know and I will respond as quickly as possible.

If you wish to comment on the service provided by Natural England please use the appended form.

Kind regards and apologies again for late response
Lead Adviser
Sustainable Development
Natural England
Mobile: [Redacted]

Home-based. Post to:

Mail Hub: Natural England, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing

Teleconference details – 0800 073 0694 access code 739 489 6800
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