

Date: 28 September 2020  
Our ref: 326781  
Your ref: 20NP0044



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Ms Buylla

**Planning consultation: Conversion of kennels / hen house to fishing lodge  
Location: Land east of Harbottle Castle, Northumberland**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 01 September 2020 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.

**SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE**

**FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES**

As submitted, the application could have potential significant effects on River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Natural England requires further information in order to determine the significance of these impacts and the scope for mitigation. The following information is required:

- A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) as detailed by the Environment Agency response dated 21 September 2020.
- Foul Drainage Strategy taking account of the FRA. This should include clarification the outfall design and location, and the water quality standards to be achieved in any discharge to the watercourse.
- Detail of proposed fencing works, taking account of the FRA.
- Clarification of operational impacts of the development on the SSSI and riparian habitat.
- A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) detailing measures to prevent pollution of the watercourse at the boundary of the site during the construction phase.

Without this information, Natural England may need to object to the proposal.

Please re-consult Natural England once this information has been obtained.

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other issues is set out below.

## Additional Information required

Natural England advises that the application lacks sufficient information to determine potential impacts on the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI. The proposed development site is located on the south bank of the River Coquet, within its floodplain (Environment Agency Flood Risk Zone 2 and 3 according to a search of our records).

Details of the SSSI and reasons for designation can be found at Natural England's Designated Sites View (DSV) website – [here](#).

Further information and clarification is required to assess potential impacts on the SSSI; namely its riparian habitat, floodplain connectivity, water quality and aquatic ecology:

- Natural England's Views about Management (VAM) for the SSSI (which can be found at the DSV website above) advise that development in the vicinity of the River Coquet should be "designed to avoid the constriction of the river or blockage of its floodplain" and that "Opportunities should be taken to create additional riparian areas where flooding is acceptable, in order to reconnect the river with its floodplain." Whilst it is positive that the Ecology report acknowledges the SSSI, some of the measures required during construction and some mitigation (e.g. for protected species/bats), the above advice and wider interests of the SSSI does not appear to have been taken into account.

Natural England would welcome appraisal of the potential impacts of the development on river processes, freshwater ecology and riparian habitat (during construction (see below) and operational use (e.g. permanent fencing, fishing access points); any avoidance or mitigation measures required; and potentially, scope for measurable net gain in biodiversity as a result of the development.

- Foul Drainage Strategy – the package treatment plant brochure submitted with the application suggests a DMS2 unit will be installed however the discharge flow rate and water quality standards that will be achieved in the discharge are not stated; these details should be confirmed. The outfall location and proposed design (e.g. whether any headwall construction or sampling access point is required or proposed) should also be clarified and confirmed. Details should be shown on plans of appropriate scale.
- Demolition / Construction Phase - the application lacks clarity on the potential for pollution of the watercourse from contaminated runoff during the demolition and construction phase and control measures that will be in place, noting the former use of the site as animal housing.

A CEMP should be provided, taking account (for example) of any contaminated land or drainage on site and how this will be contained and disposed of. Owing to the location of the site within the flood plain and sensitivity of the SSSI to contamination, site specific controls are necessary to mitigate the risk of pollution from surface water runoff.

The CEMP should provide drawings of appropriate scale and supporting information covering aspects such as timing of works, materials storage, litter control, lighting, pollution control and drainage/flood risk management during construction.

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 28(1)(6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

## Other advice

In addition, Natural England would advise on the following issues.

Further general advice on the protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on [REDACTED]

Should the applicant wish to discuss the further information required and scope for mitigation with Natural England, we would be happy to provide advice through our [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

Please consult us again once the information requested above, has been provided.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Simpson  
Northumbria Area Team

## Annex A – Additional advice

Natural England offers the following additional advice:

### Landscape

Paragraph 170a of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls) could be incorporated into the development in order to respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments.

Where the impacts of development are likely to be significant, a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment should be provided with the proposal to inform decision making. We refer you to the [Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment](#) for further guidance.

### Best and most versatile agricultural land and soils

Local planning authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient detailed agricultural land classification (ALC) information to apply the requirements of the NPPF. This is the case regardless of whether the proposed development is sufficiently large to consult Natural England. Further information is contained in Natural England's [Technical Information Note 049](#).

Agricultural Land Classification information is available on the [Magic](#) website on the [Data.Gov.uk](#) website. If you consider the proposal has significant implications for further loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, we would be pleased to discuss the matter further.

Guidance on soil protection is available in the Defra [Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites](#) and we recommend its use in the design and construction of development, including any planning conditions. Should the development proceed, we advise that the developer uses an appropriately experienced soil specialist to advise on, and supervise soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled and how to make the best use of soils on site.

### Protected Species

Natural England has produced [standing advice](#)<sup>1</sup> to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. We advise you to refer to this advice. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a SSSI or in exceptional circumstances.

### Local sites and priority habitats and species

You should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity sites, in line with paragraph 170a and 174a of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies.

Priority habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. List of priority habitats and species can be found [here](#)<sup>2</sup>. Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

<sup>2</sup><http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

### **Environmental enhancement**

Development provides opportunities to secure a net gain for nature and local communities, as outlined in paragraphs 102d, 118a, 170d, 174b and 175d of the NPPF. We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 175a of the NPPF and firstly consider what existing environmental features on and around the site can be retained or enhanced or what new features could be incorporated into the development proposal. Where onsite measures are not possible, you may wish to consider off site measures, including sites for biodiversity offsetting. Opportunities for enhancement might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Designing lighting to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

You could also consider how the proposed development can contribute to the wider environment and help implement elements of any Landscape, Green Infrastructure or Biodiversity Strategy in place in your area. For example:

- Links to existing greenspace and/or opportunities to enhance and improve access.
- Identifying opportunities for new greenspace and managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network or using the opportunity of new development to extend the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition or clearing away an eyesore).

### **Access and Recreation**

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

### **Rights of Way and Access land**

Paragraph 98 of the NPPF highlights the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land and rights of way in the vicinity of the development. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts.

### **Biodiversity duty**

Your authority has a [duty](#) to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoration or enhancement to a population or habitat. Further information is available [here](#).