

Date: 14 May 2018  
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FAO Phil Twamley  
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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Mr Twamley

**Planning consultation: Beer Neighbourhood Plan: Submission plan May 2018**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 27 March 2018

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.

Natural England welcomes the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and recognise the effort that has gone into its development. We have a number of comments on the Plan which we hope you will find useful. These are set out below.

Natural Environment chapter: page 9

The text in this section of the Plan should explain that the Neighbourhood Plan area contains/lies directly adjacent to areas designated of European and national importance for biodiversity and geodiversity. These include:

- Sidmouth to West Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Beer Quarry Caves SAC and Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC (which are of European importance)
- Sidmouth to Beer Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Beer Quarry Caves SSSI (designated for their national importance).

In addition we suggest that the boxed text on page 11 regarding Beer Quarry Caves states their importance for wildlife and designation as a SAC.

Policy NE2: Locally Important wildlife sites

Policy NE2 identifies 'Hooken Landslide' and 'Rock Pools' as locally important wildlife sites. These sites form part of the Sidmouth to West Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and therefore are designated sites of European importance for biodiversity/geodiversity. Great weight must be given to protection of these sites and development likely to affect these sites should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances as set out in the East Devon Local Plan (strategy 47, page 145) and the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017. As worded policy NE2 sets out a weaker policy test than that set out in the East Devon Local plan, and the Regulations. We advise that policy NE2 is revised to acknowledge the status of these sites and to reflect the weight given to European designations in the East Devon Local Plan.

Page 25. The para at the bottom of page 25 identifies Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) as being of national importance. The para should be corrected to state that SACs are of European importance.

Figure 5 (page 26) shows sites which are designated of European/national importance but labels

them as Locally Important Wildlife Sites (LIWS). This will be confusing to decision makers as it obscures the appropriate weight to be given to such designated sites in decision making. It is suggested that the Plan shows the designated status of these sites (i.e. European and national) but states that these sites are also valued locally. Please also see comments for Policy NE2 above.

Policy H3: Land at Long Furlong

We advise that the policy reflects more closely the conclusions and recommendations set out in the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). The HRA recommends at para 5.4.1 inclusion of the following wording: "Any housing development will be required to undertake a project-level Habitat Regulations Assessment".

In addition the policy should set out, in brief, the mitigation measures referred to in para 5.1.2 in the HRA; namely the need for:

- site design to maintain and enhance connectivity of commuting habitats through and surrounding the site,
- retention of suitable dark corridors,
- inclusion of native planting,
- implementation of long term suitable management of created and maintained habitats and
- appropriate and proportionate monitoring.

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 Carol Reeder on [REDACTED] For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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