

Date: 25 March 2024
Our ref: 465875

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BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Strategic Planning Team,

Crawley Borough Local Plan 2024-2040: Inspectors' Letter and Main Modifications consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 05 February 2024 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.

Natural England has reviewed:

- The Submission Crawley Borough Council Local Plan 2024-2040 - dated May 2023
- The Inspectors' Post Hearings Advice Letter – 31st January 2024
- The Main Modifications schedule to the Submission Local Plan – February 2024
- The updated Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment report - February 2024
- The Main Modifications Habitats Regulations Assessment report - February 2024

Summary of Advice

Natural England has no concerns regarding the soundness of the Plan.

We have provided some further comments in Annex 1 below which cover the following:

- The Plan's Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)
- Main Modifications Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Policy SDC4: Water Neutrality

Please note that we have not provided comments on all policies but those which have the most influence on environmental issues.

Furthermore, Natural England has no additional comments to make on the policies not covered in this response, but which were included in our letter of 28th April 2023 in response to the Crawley Borough Local Plan Review 2024-2040 Regulation 19 pre-submission consultation.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter only, please contact me on

nancy.warne@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Nancy Warne
Senior Advisor
Sussex & Kent Area Team

Annex 1

Comments on the updated Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)

We note that the SA/SEA has been updated in February 2024, but we have no significant comments to make concerning the Plan's SA/SEA.

Comments on Main Modification's Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

We note that the HRA dated February 2024 concludes that there will be no new Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) upon any habitat site as a result of the proposed modifications and that the main modifications will not change the findings of the 2023 HRA report.

We concur with these conclusions of Main Modification's HRA and appropriate assessment insofar that the proposed Local Plan will have no adverse effects on the integrity of any internationally designated sites, either alone or in-combination.

Policy SDC4: Water Neutrality

We welcome the recommendation in paragraph 22 of the Inspectors' Letter that this policy be made a strategic policy as a Main Modification (MM33). We also welcome the recommendation here of the insertion of proposed policy criterion 7 to Policy SDC4 as a main modification to address the potential for a future strategic solution to water neutrality being secured through forthcoming water resource planning.

In addition, we welcome the inclusion within MM33 in policy criterion 6 (previously policy criterion 4) of the additional wording we recommended in our advice letter of 28th April 2023 which seeks to give greater clarity on alternative water supplies.