By email only
Submitted via the online portal

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Hastings Local Plan Pre-Submission Version 2023-2041 (Regulation 19) September 2026

The Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) recognises the importance of a plan-led system and supports Hastings Borough Council's (HBC) desire to produce a cohesive Local Plan that meets the ambition of creating a town that is taking responsibility for tackling the climate and nature crises (submission plan vision).

SWT hopes that these comments are used constructively to make certain that this submission plan properly plans for the natural capital needed to support the borough and ensures that any development is truly sustainable and supports nature recovery as per paragraphs 187 and 188 of the December 2024 NPPF and plan making policy CC1 of the current NPPF.

Overall, SWT appreciates that the plan is clearly and efficiently set out with limited supporting text. We support the numerous requirements for nature-based solutions and blue and green infrastructure delivery. SWT also supports the references to the importance of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the recognition that development within Areas that Could be of particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB) should demonstrate how ACIB measures will be delivered and maintained. This is vital to HBC contributing to the delivery of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS.

However, we are concerned about the level of development being proposed around Marline Valley SSSI and the impacts this will have on the site and the wider ecological/green and blue infrastructure (GBI) network.

3. Vision and objectives

Vision

SWT strongly supports the vision and particularly HBC's desire for the town to be taking responsibility for tackling the climate and nature crises. We particularly support the desire to protect and enhance the natural environment in line with December 2024 NPPF policy 187.

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Objectives
SWT strongly supports the local plan objectives. In particular, the first objective which aims for addressing climate change through expanding green infrastructure. We welcome the acknowledgement that the health and wellbeing of Hastings' communities will benefit from this action. This is consistent with NPPF paragraph 162.

4. Strategic Policies

Strategic Policy 1 (SP1): Directing Growth
SWT supports HBC's prioritisation of brownfield sites and the proposal to '*resist development proposals on protected green, open and recreational spaces and where this conflicts with other development plan policies*' in line with NPPF paragraph 188 and with the aims of the Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy (referred to as the GBI Strategy from now on).

However, whilst we support this proposal, it is not clear that it has been sufficiently applied when looking at the spatial strategy and specific allocations selected - in particular, the level of development surrounding Marline Valley SSSI, which is a core part of the GBI network, and the allocation for development of locally designated wildlife sites [see comments under site allocations]. Overall, it is not clear how the GBI Strategy has influenced the spatial strategy as required by NPPF paragraphs 32 and 188.

Strategic Policy 3 (SP3): Business Development – Office and Industrial
SWT objects to the allocation of the Queensway Corridor as SIEA1. The policy supports intensification and expansion of industrial floorspace in SIEAs which we do not believe the Queensway Corridor can accommodate without significant adverse impacts on Marline Valley SSSI, contrary to NPPF paragraph 188 and 192 [see comments under site allocations].

Strategic Policy 5 (SP5): Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change
SWT strongly supports this policy which sets out HBC's desire for development to be fit for the future. This is consistent with chapter 14 of the NPPF and national decision-making policies CC2 and CC3.

Strategic Policy 8 (SP8): Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
Paragraph 4.99 is a repetition of paragraph 4.98 and should be deleted from this section.

SWT strongly supports this policy and particular the recognition of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The policy is generally consistent with Chapter 15 of the December 2024 NPPF and national decision-making policies N2 and N6.

Strategic Policy 9 (SP9): Managing Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk
SWT supports this policy and particularly the designation of the Coastal Change Management Area. We are concerned that the support for Natural Flood Management measures is limited to fluvial flooding in section 1 when paragraph 4.109 acknowledges that Hastings is vulnerable to several sources of flooding. NPPF paragraph 172 promotes the use of natural flood management techniques for all forms of flood risk. This is carried through to plan-making policy F2.

To be consistent with national policy, the word 'fluvial' should be removed from section 1 so that it reads:

'The development and improvement of flood defence infrastructure and drainage assets in Hastings will be supported, including Natural Flood Management measures for the management of flooding subject to appropriate environmental impact assessment'.

5. Development Potential Areas and Regeneration Areas

Development Potential Area Policy 1 (D1): Land at Breadsell

SWT strongly objects to the inclusion of this policy. SWT leases and manages Marline Valley Nature Reserve on behalf of Hastings Borough Council. Over the last 20 years there has been significant encroachment from development around the SSSI, particularly through the creation of the Combe Valley Way and development at Queensway South (ES10) and Queensway North (ES1). This is hemming in the site, putting it under further pressure and preventing the site acting as a core component of the Borough's ecological network, contrary to paragraphs 187, 188 and 192 of the NPPF.

D1 lies within a defined Area that Could become of particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB) of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). As page 4 of the LNRS states, nature is in crisis and therefore we need to make our natural environment healthier, more plentiful and more resilient. That means creating more of the habitats which in turn support our species, and making these habitats bigger, better and better connected to each other. Yet this proposal creates less space for nature and more barriers to its movement, hindering the objectives of the LNRS.

This is further recognised in the GBI Strategy which includes policy recommendations such as 'safeguard existing designated sites and species' and 'do not support developments that have an adverse impact on the integrity of statutory or non-statutory designated sites'. D1 is a core component of the GBI network and as such should be protected, restored and enhanced as per the Strategy.

The acceptability of the principle of development on this ecologically sensitive greenfield site has not been established, and it is not appropriate to identify the site within the Local Plan as a broad location for future growth in the absence of a robust ecological and hydrological evidence base to determine its suitability or otherwise.

The site-specific assessments from the SHELAA do not appear to be part of the public evidence base. However, the December 2025 version (now superseded) states that the site was not Suitable or Achievable, with the following narrative:

The site is a large greenfield site located to the north of the borough. The site has several environmental constraints including being adjacent to a SSSI and proximity to ancient woodland. There are specific concerns as to how any development at the site could impact hydrology on the adjacent SSSI. Further work including hydrological monitoring is required to understand whether the site is suitable for development. We will continue to monitor the potential for this site to come forward over the evolution of the plan's development.

The current September 2026 SHELAA now lists the site as suitable, but still not achievable and the narrative simply states: *The landowner is actively planning to bring the site forward*.

It is not clear why HBC now considers the site suitable, and we can find no information as part of the consultation that evidences this change in status. SWT is therefore concerned that this decision has been made prior to the required monitoring of the SSSI taking place. This is fundamental to developing the robust evidence needed to decide whether development at this location is feasible, acceptable and desirable. It cannot be assumed that any impacts identified by future monitoring work can be sufficiently avoided or mitigated.

SWT understands the need for HBC to allocate as much land as possible to meet the objectively assessed need. However, NPPF paragraph 16 states that plans should be prepared positively in a way that is aspirational but deliverable. SWT does not believe this site is deliverable without significant harm to the SSSI and wider ecological network.

Whilst SWT strongly objects to this proposal, if the policy progresses, a number of amendments are required to ensure it is effective and consistent with paragraphs 187, 188 and 192 of the December 2024 NPPF.

<u>Hydrological Monitoring</u>
Marline Valley Woods SSSI is extremely sensitive to hydrological changes. Section 5.12 acknowledges the 2009 Rigare Study and that the report sets out that significant work is required to understand how development would impact the SSSI. However, the supporting text goes on to only state that 'a period of ecohydrological and geohydrological monitoring' will be required. It does not set any clearer guidance.

Section 4.2 of the 2009 Rigare Study states:

'*A basic understanding of the hydrological functioning of the site could be developed from the results of one full year of monitoring, but* ***at least three years monitoring*** *will be required in order to develop a sufficiently refined understanding to enable detailed design of the hydrological aspects of a development*.'

It has always been Natural England's position that at least 3 years monitoring, covering the detailed list in the Rigare Study, is required to ascertain whether development could occur at this site without significant adverse impacts on the SSSI. The need for multiple years of data is especially apparent given the extremely low rainfall and subsequent drought experienced in Sussex in 2026.

Whilst both paragraph 193 of the December 2024 NPPF and decision-making policy N6 may allow for development that has an adverse impact on a SSSI, this is only where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both the likely impact on the features of special scientific interest, and any broader impact on the national network of SSSIs. It is clear that the likely impacts on the SSSI and their severity must be set out before this test can be applied. Setting out the likely hydrological impacts of a development on this site is fundamental to the question of suitability and at least 3 years of monitoring is required to do this.

Additionally, whilst the supporting text sets out the requirement for ecohydrological and geohydrological monitoring, this is not followed through to the policy wording. This is unacceptable.

SWT supports the requirement for a monitoring programme to be agreed with HBC and NE that includes ecohydrological and geohydrological monitoring, but to be effective, this must be for at least three years as per the 2009 Rigare Study and must be a requirement of policy D1 to be consistent with NPPF paragraphs 188 and 192 and national decision-making policies N2 and N6 (see policy amendments below).

Wider impacts

There is already significant recreational pressure and antisocial behaviour issues on the SSSI. This is acknowledged in paragraph 5.16 of the submission plan, but it is not carried through to the policy wording. Evidence shows that the closer residential development occurs to nature reserves, the more negative impacts occur, with particularly significant effects when development is less then 100m away (Human Impacts on Nature Reserves – The Influence of Nearby Settlements, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, 2017). The policy should be amended to include criteria around these wider issues (see policy amendments below).

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Paragraph 5.16 of the submission plan acknowledges that the D1 area lies entirely within a defined ACIB of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove LNRS. It recommends that the site therefore contributes towards the mapped measures set out in the LNRS. However, this detail is not sufficiently followed through to the policy, which only states that 'opportunities for enhancement should have regard to the LNRS'.

NPPF paragraph 192 states that to protect and enhance biodiversity, plans should identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including… areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation. Additionally, part b states that plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks and secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

To be consistent with national policy, this requirement should be much more explicit in the policy wording (see policy amendments below).

Biodiversity Net Gain

The December 2024 NPPF is clear that development must result in measurable net gains to biodiversity. This is further supported by the legal requirement under the Environment Act 2021 for eligible developments to deliver at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy sets out that a 20% BNG policy is desirable within the borough. Paragraph 6.7.32 states that 'Given the severity of the climate change and biodiversity emergency, the capacity for delivering biodiversity units across the GBI network, and limited financial impact of delivering 20% versus 10% biodiversity net gain, it is highly advised the Council requests developments deliver a 20% biodiversity net gain within the GBI network.'

Further to this, within the evidence presented by DEFRA consulting on the introduction of BNG into the planning system, it was made clear that an increase of 10% would be the absolute minimum necessary to ensure confidence that a net loss in biodiversity would be avoided. The statutory minimum only takes us to a place of ensuring no net loss, which is why many local planning authorities have adopted policies requiring higher levels of BNG e.g. Worthing Borough Council, Guildford Borough Council and Lichfield District Council.

Given the submission plan's vision for Hastings to be a town which is taking responsibility for tackling the climate and nature crises and the plan objective to expand green infrastructure, it

is not clear why a more ambitious target for BNG has not been set for this allocation. D1 is the largest greenfield site potentially allocated in the plan. Given its location adjacent to Marline Valley SSSI and its designation as an ACIB, there is great potential for a development to lead to significant adverse impacts to biodiversity.

SWT believes that should this site be found suitable for allocation after significant and robust monitoring, a requirement for 20% BNG should be set. [Please see the attached Topic Paper (Appendix 1) which further sets out our rationale for 20% BNG in Sussex].

Necessary Policy Amendments

In order to establish the acceptability of the principle of development on this site, it will be necessary to undertake an assessment of the **potential** ecological impact of any proposed development on the adjacent Marline Valley Woods SSSI. This must include:

- **the results of a programme of at least 3 years of ecohydrological and geohydrological monitoring, that has been agreed with by Natural England and Hastings Borough Council**
- the results of an agreed monitoring programme of the adjacent SSSI which sets out the requirements of the species and habitats contained within. The results of the programme must identify mitigations to replicate the current conditions within SSSI to avoid any undue harm to the protected site.

Should the principle of development be established, prior to the submission of a proposal for the development of the site, a Masterplan should be agreed with the Local Planning Authorities. The Masterplan should be informed by relevant technical evidence and take into account the advice within the High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide, with regard to the policy requirements set out below.

Proposals for development on this site should:

1. Take a SuDS-led and landscape-led approach to design and layout, which should maximise greenspace and take into account the results of any hydrological and groundwater monitoring to ensure negative impacts on the Marline Valley Woods SSSI will be avoided and/ or mitigated. This must be guided by:
    a. The results of hydrological and groundwater monitoring which must be informed by trial pits and/or boreholes;
    b. The need to avoid breaching the underlying sandstone layer during the preparation, construction and occupation phases (save for the purposes of (a) above);
    c. The results of a comprehensive Landscape Visual Impact assessment (LVIA) which must assess the impact of the proposal on the nearby National Landscape and incorporate mitigation measures where required.

2. Provide affordable housing in line with Policy SP2;

3. Be supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and Ecological Constraints and Opportunities Plan (ECOP), and incorporate appropriate conservation and mitigation measures as recommended by the ECOP.

    a. The ECOP must make specific reference to the presence of onsite and nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ancient Woodland, Impact Risk Zones

for all potentially affected SSSI, the results of site surveys of D1 itself, and to other nearby areas of wildlife sensitivity.

b. The EcIA should recommend **significant** buffers for areas of ecological sensitivity **with at least 100m between the SSSI and any residential development and;**

c. Minimise any additional impacts associated with development such as increased recreational pressure, light pollution, garden escapes and invasive non-native species, and increased predation by domestic pets.

d. **The ECOP and EcIA must ensure the proposal contributes to the delivery of the mapped measures for the site set out within the LNRS**;

4. **Deliver at least a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain as assessed by the most recent metric.**

5. Ensure scheme and construction access is via A2100 subject to agreement with relevant bodies;

6. Maintain and enhance the existing hedgerows within site excluding where access is required which should be reprovided elsewhere on the development site;

7. Provide a lighting plan for both the construction and occupation phases of the proposed development, with regard to the High Weald National Landscape Dark Skies TAN to minimise adverse impacts on the National Landscape and nearby areas of wildlife sensitivity, including the SSSI. The plan should include measures to prevent overspill from internal lighting. The lighting plan must be agreed before permission is granted.

8. Provide publicly accessible open space and natural, unfenced multifunctional play space. Open space and play will be secured in perpetuity by legal agreement;

9. Include a maintenance and management plan for areas of publicly accessible open space and play;

10. Create a layout which incorporates a landscape buffer zone **of at least 100m** along the boundary of the site, the tree and hedgerow belt in the southern fields, adjacent to the Marline Valley Woods SSSI and areas of Ancient Woodland.

11. Consult relevant historic environment records and assess heritage assets using appropriate expertise including, where necessary, a field evaluation.

12. Provide a connection to the sewerage system at the nearest point of adequate capacity, as advised by Southern Water and ensure future access to the existing sewerage and water supply infrastructure for maintenance and upsizing purposes.

13. Ensure that any necessary reinforcement of the water and/or wastewater network is in place to accommodate the quantum and type of proposed development prior to connection, and that such reinforcement is agreed with Southern Water. This will be secured by condition. Early engagement with Southern Water is also recommended.

14. Ensure vehicle access meets acceptable highways standards; a. Be supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. The Transport Assessment must take account of the site's proximity to The Ridge. Proposals must also indicate how the conclusions and recommendations of the Assessment have been incorporated within the proposal;

15. Include walking and cycling links to ensure local connectivity, including to local community infrastructure, green spaces and public transport provision, taking into account site topography.

Regeneration Area Policy 1 (R1): Hastings Central
SWT strongly supports the inclusion of criterion 11 and the need to have regard to opportunities identified in the LNRS.

Regeneration Area Policy 3 (R3): St Johns Road
The supporting text acknowledges that part of the area is mapped as ACIB in the LNRS, however this is not carried through to the policy. Whilst we support the inclusion of criteria 11 and 12, this should include reference to the LNRS as policy R1 does.

6. Site Allocation Policies

Part one – Housing and Mixed-Use Allocations

Policy HA1: Applications for Housing and Mixed-Use proposals
SWT strongly supports the inclusion of paragraphs 6.14-6.16 in the supporting text and the Specific Locational Requirements for Marline Valley Woods SSSI in policy HA1. Specific guidance around the sensitivities of the site is vital to ensure that development does not harm the designated site as required by NPPF paragraph 188. However, the wording should be strengthened to ensure that all potential negative impacts on the site are avoided, not just the hydrological impacts.

Paragraph 5.16 of the submission plan sets out a number of issues associated with development in the vicinity of Marline Valley Woods SSSI:

As well as ecohydrological and groundwater (geohydrological) considerations, significant buffers will be required to minimise any additional impacts associated with development, including but not limited to, increased recreational pressure, light pollution, garden escapes and invasive non-native species, and increased predation by domestic pets.

The NPPF is clear that adverse impacts on designated sites should be avoided. We therefore recommend the following amendments:

Proposals for residential or mixed-use development adjacent to the Marline Valley Woods SSSI must be SuDS-led and maximise greenspace, avoid breaching the underlying sandstone layer, ~~and~~ use borehole and/ or trial pit data to inform relevant groundwater assessments, **create significant buffers and minimise any additional impacts associated with development such as increased recreational pressure, light pollution, garden escapes and invasive non-native species, and increased predation by domestic pets.**

Policy HS5: Former West St Leonards Primary School, Bexhill Road
SWT objects to this allocation because it is sited entirely within South Saxons Local Wildlife Site (LWS), contrary to NPPF Paragraphs 188 and 192. Development should not be promoted on a locally designated site, which is a vital part of the ecological network and designated as an

Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) in the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS.

Hastings Borough contains 25 Local Wildlife Sites, of these 4 have already been lost or partially lost to development. That is 16% of the LWS resource in the borough. With this site, that will be a fifth of this vital ecological resource lost (Please see Appendix 2).

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF instructs local authorities to identify, map and safeguard LWS and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks. Further to this, Planning Practice Guidance (Ref ID: 8-013-20190721) makes clear that 'National planning policy expects plans to identify and map these sites, and to include policies that not only secure their protection from harm or loss, but also help to enhance them and their connection to wider ecological networks.'

HBC have a pattern of loss of LWS which is contrary to the aims of national planning policy to 'safeguard and enhance the natural environment, and reflect the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services' (plan making policy N1). It is also contrary to the plan's vision of Hastings being a town that is taking responsibility for the climate and nature crises and the plan's own evidence base. It is clear that LWS form a key component of the GBI network identified in the GBI Strategy and that the Strategy requires them to be protected and enhanced.

This allocation should be deleted from the plan.

Part two – Employment Allocations

Policy EA1: Applications for Employment Uses
Again, SWT strongly supports the inclusion of paragraphs 6.174-6.176 in the supporting text and the Specific Locational Requirements for Marline Valley Woods SSSI in policy EA1. Specific guidance around the sensitivities of the site is vital to ensure that development does not harm the designated site as required by NPPF paragraph 188. However, the wording should be strengthened to ensure that all potential negative impacts on the site are avoided, not just the hydrological impacts.

Paragraph 5.16 of the submission plan sets out a number of issues associated with residential development in the vicinity of Marline Valley Woods SSSI:

As well as ecohydrological and groundwater (geohydrological) considerations, significant buffers will be required to minimise any additional impacts associated with development, including but not limited to, increased recreational pressure, light pollution, garden escapes and invasive non-native species, and increased predation by domestic pets.

Whilst these are not all relevant to employment uses, there is some overlap and the NPPF is clear that adverse impacts on designated sites should be avoided. We therefore recommend the following amendments:

Proposals for commercial development adjacent to the Marline Valley Woods SSSI must be SuDS-led and maximise greenspace, avoid breaching the underlying sandstone layer, ~~and~~ use borehole and/ or trial pit data to inform relevant groundwater assessments, **create significant buffers and minimise any additional impacts associated with development such as increased recreational pressure, light pollution and invasive non-native species.**

Policy ES1: Queensway North, Queensway
SWT strongly objects to the inclusion of this allocation. We do not believe it is deliverable, given the requirements of the NPPF to avoid harm to nationally designated sites. There has been a long history of occasional attempted development at this site. However, the proposals put forward consistently fail to avoid impacts on the adjacent Marline Woods Valley SSSI and as such no permission has been granted.

The most recent planning application for this site, HS/FA/21/00327 was 'finally disposed of' on 18 September 2024 after non-determination due to Natural England (NE) not being satisfied that adverse impacts on the SSSI would not occur. An inappropriate drainage scheme and therefore impacts on hydrology were the primary issues, but there were numerous other elements to NE's repeated objections, including adverse impacts on ancient woodland and an overall loss to biodiversity on site.

One fundamental issue is the desire to develop 'plot 2.1' which is the western end of the allocation that is directly adjacent to the SSSI on two sides. NE has made clear in numerous responses to the above planning application that this area is not suitable for development.

'*As previously noted, the removal of Plot 2.2 from the Proposed Development does not avoid impact to the area of the Site which is of highest risk and it remains unclear how the proposed drainage scheme and storage tanks represent the approach which will be of least impact. Natural England require further evidence that the mitigation hierarchy has been adequately followed and, if avoidance is not possible, that the proposed mitigation is adequate. We consider that due to a combination of hydrogeology and location,* ***developing Plot 2.1 presents a significant risk and therefore should be removed***.' (NE further response to HS/FA/21/00327 6/4/22).

The policy specifically calls for the intensification of this site, which we do not believe is deliverable given the need for substantial buffers to the SSSI and SuDs areas. The policy is not effective and is not consistent with paragraphs 188 and 192 of the NPPF. It should be deleted from the plan.

If the policy goes forward, then the area should be reduced to exclude the 'plot 2.1' area and the requirement for intensification in part b should be deleted.

Policy ES8: Land at the junction of The Ridge West and Queensway
SWT objects to this allocation as it includes part of Hollington Valley Local Wildlife Site (LWS), contrary to NPPF Paragraphs 188 and 192. Development should not be promoted on a locally designated site, which is a vital part of the ecological network and designated as an Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) in the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS.

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF instructs local authorities to identify, map and safeguard LWS and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks. Further to this, Planning Practice Guidance (Ref ID: 8-013-20190721) makes clear that 'National planning policy expects plans to identify and map these sites, and to include policies that not only secure their protection from harm or loss, but also help to enhance them and their connection to wider ecological networks.'

Hastings Borough contains 25 Local Wildlife Sites, of these 4 have already been lost or partially lost to development, including part of Hollington Valley LWS. That is 16% of the LWS resource in the borough. Allocation HS5 will bring this up to 5, which will be a fifth of this vital ecological resource lost (Please see Appendix 2).

HBC have a pattern of loss of LWS which is contrary to the aims of national planning policy to 'safeguard and enhance the natural environment, and reflect the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services' (plan making policy N1). It is also contrary to the plans vision of Hastings being a town that is taking responsibility for the climate and nature crises and the plans own evidence base. It is clear that LWS form a key component of the GBI network identified in the GBI Strategy and that the Strategy requires them to be protected and enhanced.

It is also identified as APIB in the LNRS and as the LNRS states on page 4, nature is in crisis and therefore we need to make our natural environment healthier, more plentiful and more resilient. That means creating more of the habitats which in turn support our species, and making these habitats bigger, better and better connected to each other.

Hollington Valley is already damaged and therefore HBC should be working to prevent any further damage and to protect and restore what is left. As such, this allocation should be deleted from the plan.

Policy ES10: Marline Fields, Enviro21 Business Park, Land West of Queensway
SWT strongly objects to the inclusion of this allocation. We do not believe it is deliverable, given the requirements of the NPPF to avoid harm to nationally designated sites. This site sits within a ACIB in the LNRS and as such HBC should be promoting habitat restoration here to help support the adjacent SSSI and create a more resilient ecological network for Hastings.

SWT does not believe that the in-combination impacts of allocating this site along with ES1 and D1 have been properly considered. As the LNRS states on page 4, nature is in crisis and therefore we need to make our natural environment healthier, more plentiful and more resilient. That means creating more of the habitats which in turn support our species, and making these habitats bigger, better and better connected to each other. Yet these allocations surround the SSSI creating less space for nature and more barriers to its movement.

This allocation should be deleted from the plan.

7. Development Management Policies

Policy SC1: Key Design Principles
SWT supports the inclusion of criterion 1e in this policy in line with paragraphs 164, 187 and 188 of the NPPF.

Policy SC3: Sustainable Design and Construction
SWT strongly supports the inclusion of this policy. It is vital that the local plan encourages development that is fit for the future and mitigates and adapts to climate change as per NPPF paragraphs 162 and 163.

Policy SC9: The High Weald National Landscape and Other Areas of Landscape Value
SWT supports the inclusion of this policy.

Policy SC10: Habitat Protection, Biodiversity and Net Gain
SWT supports the inclusion of this policy and particularly the support for the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove LNRS. However, we are concerned that there is no explicit requirement to avoid harm to Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Paragraph 7.249 underplays the significance of LWS to the borough. LWS are a core component of the ecological/GBI network. This is recognised in the GBI Strategy and in LWS being designated as Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs) in the LNRS. As the LNRS states on page 4, nature is in crisis and therefore we need to make our natural environment healthier, more plentiful and more resilient. That means creating more of the habitats which in turn support our species, and making these habitats bigger, better and better connected to each other.

LWS are some of the Borough's most valuable wildlife areas and are identified and selected locally using scientifically determined criteria and ecological surveys. Since LWS are non-statutory they rely on good local planning policies and decisions, so it is vital that they are properly represented and protected by the Local Plan. Paragraph 192 of the NPPF instructs local authorities to identify, map and safeguard LWS and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks.

Further to this, Planning Practice Guidance (Ref ID: 8-013-20190721) makes clear that 'National planning policy expects plans to identify and map these sites, and to include policies that not only secure their protection from harm or loss but also help to enhance them and their connection to wider ecological networks.' Given the loss to local wildlife sites in Hastings to date, it is vital that the remaining sites are protected going forward.

Part 2 of policy SC10 appears to allow any development that has an adverse impact on biodiversity, so long as the impact is minimised. This is not consistent with national policy, which states that developments should be refused if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for (national decision-making policy N2 part 2).

Additionally, national decision-making policy N6 part 1c states that development should only be supported if it would not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of a locally designated site or the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the likely impact on the features of the site which make it valuable for nature conservation.

Additionally, it is not clear why HBC have not followed the recommendations of the GBI Strategy which sets out that a 20% BNG policy is desirable within the borough. Paragraph 6.7.32 states that 'Given the severity of the climate change and biodiversity emergency, the capacity for delivering biodiversity units across the GBI network, and limited financial impact of delivering 20% versus 10% biodiversity net gain, it is highly advised the Council requests developments deliver a 20% biodiversity net gain within the GBI network.'

Further to this, within the evidence presented by DEFRA consulting on the introduction of BNG into the planning system, it was made clear that an increase of 10% would be the absolute minimum necessary to ensure confidence that a net loss in biodiversity would be avoided. The statutory minimum only takes us to a place of ensuring no net loss, which is why many local planning authorities have adopted policies requiring higher levels of BNG e.g. Worthing Borough Council, Guildford Borough Council and Lichfield District Council. Others are progressing their local plan reviews with a policy of 20% BNG e.g. Wealden and Rother District Councils.

Given the submission plan's vision for Hastings to be a town which is taking responsibility for tackling the climate and nature crises and the plan objective to expand green infrastructure, it is not clear why a more ambitious target for BNG has not been set. Please see the attached Topic Paper (Appendix 1) which sets out a full rationale for 20% BNG in Sussex, including in relation to the new NPPF.

As it stands, policy SC10 is too permissive and must be amended as follows to be consisted with national policy.

1. Development proposals will be supported:
   a. Where they deliver benefits to wildlife, habitats (including priority habitats) and ecosystem services in line with the measures identified in the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Local Nature Recovery Strategy and relevant local strategies and action plans.

   b. Where they are supported by appropriate ecological appraisals undertaken by a suitably qualified person, showing the potential impact of the proposed development on habitats and species both onsite and in nearby areas of wildlife sensitivity, and where relevant, include recommended measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy. Ecological appraisals must take into account the findings and recommendations of any hydrological, groundwater and/ or ground condition and land stability reports.

   c. Where feasible, the proposals include integral swift and bird bricks which comply with British Standard BS 42021:2022 Integral Nest Boxes or other appropriate measure as informed by site specific ecological surveys.

2. Where proposals will have an unavoidable adverse impact, they must demonstrate:
   a. That the proposal minimises the adverse impacts and there are no reasonable, less damaging solutions,
   b. The design and layout of the scheme maximises onsite mitigation and compensation.
   c. If a significant adverse impact cannot be avoided, mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, the application will be refused.

3. Locally designated sites will be safeguarded. Proposals impacting on a locally designated site must demonstrate that there would not be a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site. If this is not possible, the benefits of the development in the location proposed must clearly outweigh the likely impact on the features which make the site valuable for nature conservation.

4. Where development is permitted, the council will impose appropriate conditions or seek a legal agreement to secure the protection, enhancement, compensation, and management of the conservation interest of any site affected, directly or indirectly by development proposals or appropriate off-site compensation to ensure biodiversity net gain is achieved, including the cost of monitoring the delivery of biodiversity net gain.

5. **With the exception of development which is exempt from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, all development proposals will be required to demonstrate a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain calculated using the most recent Statutory Metric, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that provision in excess of the statutory minimum 10% would make development unviable**.

Policy SC11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
SWT supports the inclusion of this policy.

Policy SC12: Green and Blue Infrastructure
SWT strongly supports this policy and particularly the need to retain, restore, protect and enhance existing GBI within the GBI network. We also strongly support the reference to the LNRS. This will ensure development contributes to the outcomes of the GBI and Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy in line with NPPF paragraphs 164, 188 and 192.

Policy SC13: Urban Greening Factor
SWT strongly supports the inclusion of this policy. It is necessary to ensure urban developments contribute to nature recovery in line with NPPF paragraphs 164 and 188.

Policy SC16: Flood Risk and Drainage
SWT supports the inclusion of this policy and particularly the support for natural flood management.

Policy SC17: Coastal Change Management
SWT strongly supports this policy as a necessary step towards adaptation to climate change as per NPPF paragraph 162.

SWT has submitted this response in sections via the online portal. We would like the option to attend the hearings and speak directly to the Inspector about our concerns.

Yours sincerely

Jess Price
Conservation Officer
Sussex Wildlife Trust

Appendix 1
Local Plan Review Topic Paper: Delivering 20% Biodiversity Net Gain

Summary and recommendations

The 23% uplift in annual housebuilding targets for Sussex, introduced in 2024, puts increased pressure on the county's natural environment and biodiversity. A higher than 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) local plan policy is justified for local authority areas in Sussex to address the exceptional pressures on biodiversity and failing condition of 50% of the county's nationally designated wildlife sites, by ensuring future growth and development deliver significant gains for biodiversity and contribute to strategic nature recovery.

Many local planning authorities in England have adopted or emerging policies requiring 20% BNG, including Worthing Borough Council, South Downs National Park Authority, Guildford Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, The Broads Authority, and Greater Cambridge. However, changes to national planning policy mean new local plans submitted after 31st December 2026 may need to adopt higher than 10% BNG requirements at both a policy level and on a site-by-site basis.

In Sussex, two Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)[1] provide further statutory basis for site-specific BNG policy requirements above 10% for eligible development proposed on land identified as having the potential to become important for biodiversity and which would result in the permanent loss of opportunities to create or enhance habitats for nature recovery in line with the LNRS.

We urge Sussex local authorities to adopt overall policies for BNG above 10% (aiming for a minimum of 20%) and for all allocated sites and for eligible development in LNRS-mapped nature recovery areas (Areas that Could become Important for Biodiversity, or 'ACIB') to meet their duties to conserve and enhance biodiversity under the Environment Act 2021 and play their part in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by translating global biodiversity goals into local and regional action.

Recommendations for local authorities reviewing Local Plans in Sussex:

1. Undertake to adopt a plan wide policy requiring a minimum 20% BNG for all eligible sites.

2. Undertake to adopt site-specific policies requiring a minimum 20% BNG for all allocated sites, subject to site-level viability assessments.

3. Carry out site-level desktop BNG baseline and viability assessments for all sites being considered for allocation, to demonstrate the deliverability of 20% BNG.

4. Explore the potential for a higher BNG policy requirement (20% minimum increasing to 30% for allocated sites) for eligible development proposed on land prioritised for strategic nature recovery in the LNRS (identified in the LNRS Local Habitats Map as ACIB).

[1] https://www.sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications

Detailed Information and Rationale
In the following sections of this topic paper, we discuss the justification for, and deliverability of, higher than 10% BNG requirements for development in Sussex.

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach that sets out to ensure development leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state. Where development impacts on wildlife habitats it must create or enhance the condition of suitable habitats to increase net biodiversity value.[2]

In February 2024, BNG became mandatory for development in England under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021)[3], marking a step change in how planning and development deliver biodiversity outcomes.

BNG is in addition to, not instead of, protections for designated wildlife sites and irreplaceable habitats and the requirement for proposals to follow the mitigation hierarchy. BNG is only concerned with impacts to habitats; existing protections and consideration for species such as bats and nesting birds remain in place.[4]

Current regulations require at least a 10% gain in biodiversity value (110% of the baseline value) to be secured as part of planning permission for all development subject to the BNG requirement, with the "value" calculated using a nationally applied biodiversity metric.

Why is Biodiversity Net Gain required at all?
Nature is remarkable and is essential to our lives. It is the source of the air we breathe, the water we drink, the soil we live on (and off) and the food we eat. It provides us with clothes to wear, materials to build with and medicines to cure. It gives us places for leisure, recreation and reflection, as well as great joy and interest; as such it is important for our mental health and wellbeing as well as our physical sustenance.

Despite its importance to our very existence, nature is facing a crisis. The Living Planet Report[5] shows that wildlife populations have declined by more than half in less than 50 years and that the variety of life on earth is disappearing fast. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has reported that globally one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction[6]. The 2023 State of Nature Report[7] found that one in six species in England is under threat of extinction, with wildlife on average declining by 19% since monitoring began in 1970.

The planning system is a critical place where the natural world regularly meets with the actions of government. With the need to build more homes for growing populations, BNG offers a framework to promote sustainable growth. However, to be successful, BNG must be applied ambitiously, with care, and be effectively monitored and enforced. The Wildlife Trusts have a policy position, shared by many eNGOs, that in the context of the ecological crisis,

[2] Government Guidance: Understanding BNG: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain
[3] Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021): https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/schedule/14/enacted
[4] Planning practice guidance on biodiversity net gain: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain
[5] WWF Living Planet Report (2018): https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/wwfintl_livingplanet_full.pdf
[6] IPBES press release: Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented' Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating' https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment#_By_the_Numbers
[7] 2023 State of Nature Report: https://stateofnature.org.uk

developments should be required to go beyond 10% BNG and strive to deliver at least 20% BNG to protect and enhance nature and support its recovery[8].

Why do we need >20% BNG in Sussex?

With more than 58% of Sussex included within a protected landscape designation, it could be expected that Sussex biodiversity is flourishing, but a landscape designation does not automatically indicate a thriving environment. The South Downs National Park Authority estimates that we have lost 80% of the country's chalk grassland, with this habitat now covering only 4% of the National Park Area[9]. Chichester Harbour has lost 58% of this biodiversity-rich habitat since 1946[10].

When it comes to sites specifically designated for biodiversity, there is also concern. Nature needs to thrive outside these areas to recover, but worryingly, current pressures mean that nature is struggling to thrive even on designated sites. For SSSIs, Sussex is below the national average for sites in favourable or recovering condition (approximately 62%) with about 49% of SSSIs in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove meeting these criteria, and about 51% of SSSIs in West Sussex[11].

The condition of Local Wildlife Sites in Sussex is less certain but available data suggests just 41% of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LWS and 55% of West Sussex LWS are being managed positively for biodiversity[12].

We also know which habitats in Sussex have been most severely impacted by past actions. In 2019, the Sussex Nature Partnership identified Sussex's 'natural capital at risk', habitats that are:

- Not adequately protected under existing mechanisms
- Fragile or vulnerable and/or already highly fragmented
- Of particular significance in a Sussex context
- Irreplaceable or not easily re-created if destroyed (either on-site or elsewhere)

The habitat types identified are lowland heathland, mudflats and saltmarsh, coastal vegetated shingle, reedbed, fen and grazing marsh, floodplain woodlands and species-rich grassland[13]. For

example, virtually the whole of the Crumbles – a 160ha shingle foreland at Eastbourne, and one of only six sites over 100ha in the UK – has been lost to development[14].

Sadly, there is a similar story for species. Corn Bunting has suffered an 82% decline since the 1960s and is considered lost in neighbouring Surrey[15]. Spiked Rampion, an endangered and legally protected plant, is only found at eight sites in the UK, all of which are in East Sussex,

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[8] The Wildlife Trusts (2024) Biodiversity Net Gain Briefing: https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2024 02/February_2024_Biodiversity_Net_Gain_Briefing.pdf
[9] https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wildlife-habitats/habitats/chalk-grassland/
[10] https://www.conservancy.co.uk/the-state-of-nature-and-chichester-harbour/
[11] Sussex's two Local Nature Recovery Strategies set out this information: https://sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications
[12] Sussex's two Local Nature Recovery Strategies set out this information: https://sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications
[13] Sussex's two Local Nature Recovery Strategies set out this information: https://sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications
[14] https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/habitat-management/coastal-vegetated-shingle/
[15] https://www.birdguides.com/news/sussex-ornithological-society-launches-corn-bunting-survey/

and 85% of its population is found on a single site[16]. Greater Mouse-eared Bat was declared extinct in the UK in 1992 when the last known maternity roost was lost. Since then, just two separate individuals have been found hibernating in West Sussex[17].

In Sussex, space for development is one of the biggest demands on land-use and therefore one of the biggest pressures on nature. We acknowledge that new housing is needed to accommodate a growing population, with the population of East Sussex projected to increase around 8% in the next 15 years, from 560,900 in 2024 to 609,300 in 2039[18].

However, under the revised methodology for calculating local housebuilding targets, mandatory housebuilding targets across Sussex local authorities have increased on average by 23% from 11,539 new homes a year to 14,232. This average hides great variability, with some local planning authorities having their targets increased by 58% (Chichester) or even 168% (Worthing)[19]. Alongside the need for new homes comes the requirement for new infrastructure needed to support growth including transport, education, health and social care, utilities and community facilities. This all requires space (land) and resources, putting increased pressure on habitats and species, including some of the most iconic wildlife in Sussex: Turtle Dove, Swift, Water Vole, Hedgehog and Adder. This is in addition to the pressures they are already facing due to climate change, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, drought, water scarcity, habitat fragmentation, and pollution.

The continuous growth in development and urbanisation means Sussex now has a highly fragmented landscape, particularly in the low weald, the 'unprotected landscape' where most development is focused. The Lawton Report *Making Space for Nature*[20] has emphasised the importance of networks and connectivity for biodiversity; fragmentation impairs species movement and migration, meaning these isolated populations are less able to survive or adapt to changing landscapes and are put at further risk.

With these exceptional pressures facing nature in Sussex and the scale of biodiversity losses already occurring, >20% Biodiversity Net Gain policies are desperately needed to ensure that future growth and development contribute positively to nature recovery and that councils are meeting their Biodiversity Duty[21].

A 10% minimum gain has been set by the Environment Act, as this is the lowest level that Defra consider would deliver genuine biodiversity gains. Defra's 2018 BNG Impact Assessment report[22] states (our emphasis):

"… in simple terms, [10%] is the lowest level of net gain that [Defra] could confidently expect to deliver genuine net gain, or at least no net loss, of biodiversity and thereby meet its policy objectives."

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[16] https://www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk/spiked-rampion

[17] https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/01/greater-mouse-eared-bat-population-doubles-to-2-this-is-a-hugely-important-discovery

[18] https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/new-population-projections-briefing-2/

[19] https://www.cpresussex.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2024/08/New-Standard-Method-New-Assessed-Housing-Needs-for-Sussex-Local-Planning-Authorities.pdf

[20] Lawton *et al*. (2010) Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network. Report to DEFRA

[21] Guidance for public authorities on complying with the biodiversity duty: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty

[22] Defra (2018) Biodiversity Net Gain Consultation Impact Assessment https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net gain/supporting_documents/181121%20%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20p u blication.pdf

We consider the mounting pressures facing the county's biodiversity, including those resulting from significantly increased mandatory annual housebuilding targets, justify a greater ambition of >20% BNG to provide confidence that development will deliver meaningful biodiversity gains.

How will Biodiversity Net Gain affect development and is >20% achievable?
There is sometimes a misconception that increasing BNG from 10% to 20% is doubling the required delivery. This is not the case. The increase is from 110% to 120% of pre-development biodiversity levels. Most of the cost of BNG is incurred in getting to 100% of pre-development levels, or 'no-net-loss'. A 20% gain can be achieved at a small extra cost compared with a 10% gain, while doubling the biodiversity uplift and increasing development's contribution to nature recovery.

Several studies have considered the impacts of BNG on the economics and viability of development and concluded that a 20% BNG requirement would not affect the financial viability of housing developments.

One widely cited study by Natural England (Vivid Economics, June 2018)[23] found that for biodiversity net gain scenarios up to 20%:

- With careful design and early consideration, on site biodiversity net gain can be delivered at no or little cost
- If it can be delivered on site, biodiversity net gain is usually cost-neutral – biodiversity onsite can attract customers, speed up sales and even increase values
- If biodiversity net gain costs are significant, it is the landowner that will bear them rather than the developer through reduced land prices; however, according to the study, most developers considered it unlikely to have a significant impact on land values
- After a transition period, incidence of a biodiversity net gain requirement on developers was expected to be minimal or positive.
- Biodiversity net gain is not expected to reduce the number of affordable housing units
- An increase in the biodiversity net gain requirement does not need to impact the number of dwellings, as some of net gain can be delivered off-site
- Where there are higher costs associated with off-site delivery, these will be passed through to the landowner but represent less than a 1.5% uplift

The Defra BNG Impact Assessment[24] similarly concluded that the additional costs are likely to be passed on to landowner through the prices paid for development land. Their assessment states that when mandatory requirements that are transparent and clearly defined are imposed across all developers, developable land prices should fall to absorb the policy cost as developers 'pass through' the cost.

[23] Reported in Kent Local Nature Partnership's 2020 publication: Justification for a Biodiversity Net Gain target of 20% in Kent https://kentnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Justification-for-biodiversity-net-gain-in-Kent-Sept 2020.pdf
[24] Defra (2018) Biodiversity Net Gain Consultation Impact Assessment https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net gain/supporting_documents/181121%20%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20p u blication.pdf

We are encouraged by evidence from other local authorities in England that 20% is a realistic and deliverable policy goal. Six local authorities have adopted area-wide 20% BNG policies, and 23 others have emerging BNG policies at 20% or higher[25]. Worthing Borough Council's adopted local plan includes a 20% BNG requirement for developments on previously developed land and strongly encourages a 20% net gain wherever achievable. The emerging South Downs Local Plan proposes a minimum 20% net gain, rising to 33% BNG on Strategic Greenfield Sites.

The impact of changes to national planning policy

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in August 2026 introduces changes that prevent local authorities from adopting area-wide BNG policies above 10% for new local plans submitted after 31st December 2026. It is still possible, however, for local plans to include higher than 10% BNG requirements for sites allocated for development in the local plan on a site-by-site basis, as laid out in Plan-making Policy N1 of the NPPF[26]:

"Development plans should only set local standards for biodiversity net gain which are in excess of the statutory net gain requirement where this is for specific site allocations, and is fully justified and deliverable."

A Pre Action Protocol letter was submitted by Lifescape to the Government in response to this change in national policy due to the impact it could have on BNG provision[27]. In response to this letter the Secretary of State clarified that:

"*If in future an LPA submits for examination local plan policies setting local standards that are contrary to the national policy, the inspector will consider whether the LPA's evidence base and local circumstances justify the LPA's proposed local standards. If they conclude that the standards are justified and the local plan policy is adopted, then more weight may be given to it than to the new national policy in subsequent decisions on planning applications" (PAR, §35d).*

We have set out the justification for a higher than 10% BNG requirement for new development in Sussex. The deliverability of this policy for specific site allocations can be determined by site-level BNG baseline and viability assessments like those carried out by Great Yarmouth Borough Council in the development of their adopted 20% BNG policy[28].

Example wording of a 20% policy is provided below, taken from the Uttlesford Local Plan[29]:

"With the exception of development which is exempt from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, all development proposals will be required to demonstrate a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain calculated using the most recent Statutory Metric, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that provision in excess of the statutory minimum 10% would make development unviable."

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[25] Reported by The Lifescape Project in their pre-action protocol letter to Government on NPPF changes limiting local authorities' ability to adopt policies for BNG above 10%, 15 September 2026, Annex 1: https://lifescapeproject.org/uploads/lifescape-pre-action-letter-nppf.pdf

[26] National Planning Policy Framework 2026, Policy N1: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6aabe97844ec1aa417346c0b/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

[27] https://lifescapeproject.org/lifescape-challenges-government/

[28] Great Yarmouth Biodiversity Net Gain Topic Paper (December 2024) Local Plan evidence base Document B31& GYBC Local Plan Viability Assessment (December 2023) Local Plan evidence base Document B15. Available in the GYBC Local Plan Examination library: https://localplan.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/examination-library

[29] Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/10132/Local-Plan-2021-2041

Changes to this wording would be necessary for a policy specific to a given allocated site. For example:

"Development proposals within this allocation will be required to demonstrate a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain calculated using the most recent Statutory Metric, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that provision in excess of the statutory minimum 10% would make development unviable."

The Local Plan (Regulation 19 draft) for the Broads includes within a Biodiversity Net Gain policy a minimum of 20% net gain[30], and considers how this policy interacts with the new NPPF within a Topic Paper[31] which states that the Authority Members propose to retain the 20% requirement.

Acknowledgements
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Sussex Wildlife Trust
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[30] https://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/236763/Regulation-19-Local-Plan-FINAL November-2025-with-para-numbers.pdf

[31] Local Plan for the Broads Examination (2026) Topic paper relating to the New 2026 NPPF and potential emerging Local Plan issues https://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/239833/New-NPPF-and Potential-emerging-Local-Plan-issues-formatted.pdf

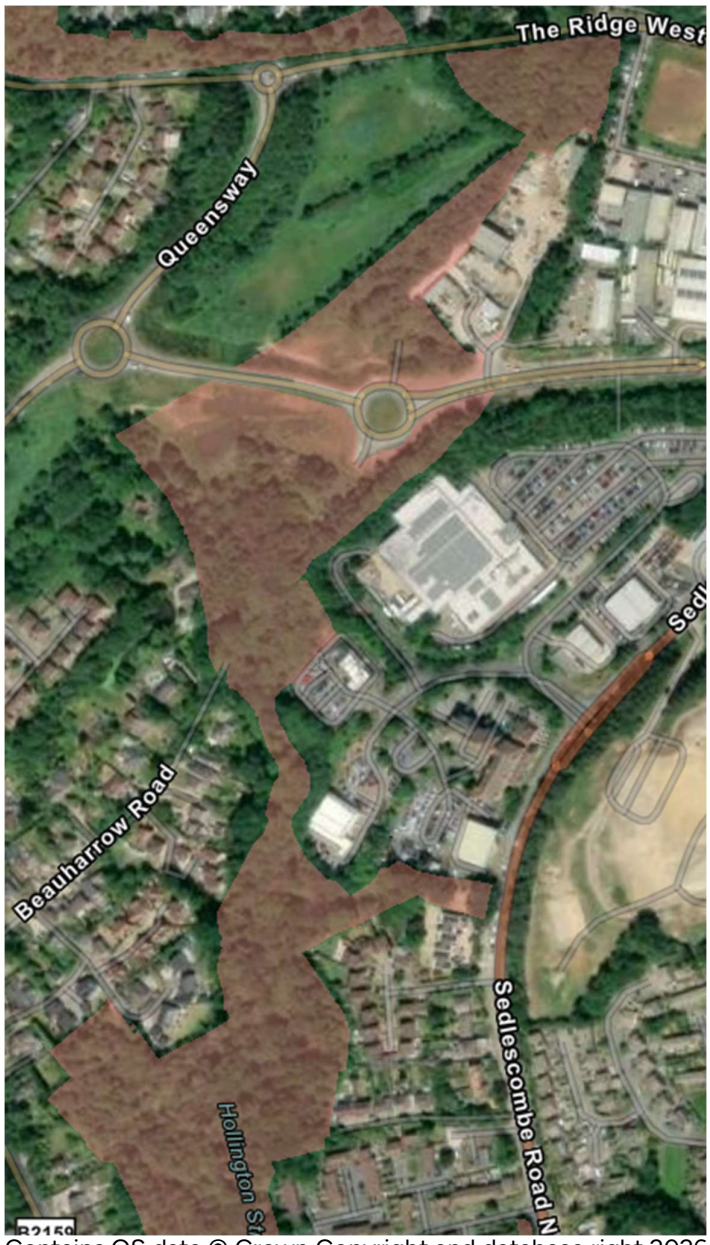
Appendix 2
State of Local Wildlife Sites in Hastings Borough

SWT undertook a desktop assessment looking at aerial photography of all 25 LWS in the borough and assessing them for loss and harm. We also considered the boundary amendments set out in the Hastings Local Wildlife Sites Review. Of the 25 sites, the following 5 have clearly been impacted by development:

Ha07 Caves Road Cliffs
As part of the 2020 LWS review the boundary to this LWS was amended 'to exclude the building under construction'.

Since this review, 3 more sites have clearly been impacted by development:

Ha14 Hollington Valley



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A road has been built through the LWS with signs that further development is proposed.

Ha18 Ponds Wood

The 2020 review noted that the boundary had previously been amended to remove areas of residential development which is shown right up to the new boundary. A further area of residential development within the LWS can now be seen off Ironlatch Avenue.



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Ha26 Holmhurst St Mary

Large areas of development can be seen within and adjacent to the LWS.



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