

Date: 28 June 2024  
Our ref: 480518  
Your ref: W/23/02112/OUT



Wychavon District Council  
Gillian McDermott

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

[gillian.mcdermott@malvern hills.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.mcdermott@malvern hills.gov.uk)

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Gillian

**Planning consultation:** Planning application for the demolition of existing farmhouse, agricultural buildings and structures, the erection of a phased development of up to 300 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and associated public open space, drainage, infrastructure and engineering works with all matters reserved except access.

**Location:** Orchard Farm, Defford Road, Pershore, WR10 3BX

Thank you for the opportunity to provide updated comments on this proposal.

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 is required to determine impacts on the following designated sites:**

- Tiddesley Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Malvern Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar site

Natural England objected to this proposal on 30 November 2023 (our reference, 456640), as we considered that it would damage or destroy the interest features for which Tiddesley Wood SSSI had been notified. We also asked for further information in relation to recreational impacts on the Malvern Hills SSSI and recommended undertaking a Habitat Regulations Assessment screening to determine likely significant effects on the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar site. These issues are still in discussion.

#### **Tiddesley Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

Natural England officers attended virtual meetings with the developer's consultants, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Wychavon District Council, to discuss the impacts on Tiddesley Wood SSSI.

The consultants shared the following information with us on 1 May 2024:

- Minutes of the meeting of 19 April 2024
- Cover letter on approach to mitigation for Tiddesley Wood SSSI
- Portfolio of Case Studies
- Plan 6596/REC1 Plan of On-site POS / Recreational Capacity
- Plan 6596/REC2 'Plan of Off-site Walking Opportunities'

- Visitor Access Management – List of Options for Further Mitigation Measures

We consider that the offer of onsite green infrastructure is of good quantity. The quality is largely acceptable, although as it stands a chunk of the circular walk passes in close proximity if not through the housing estate. We have suggested looking again at the circular walk offer to see whether an additional loop can be added in, away from the homes, towards the boundary of the wildlife refuge area. This does not need to be an all-weather surface; a mown loop would be acceptable.

The list of additional SSSI measures seems comprehensive and represents our discussions. However, it is at present a list of potential options. Similarly, while the case studies are useful in demonstrating what has been done elsewhere, mitigation needs to be tailored to the local situation. More certainty is required on what package of SSSI measures are proposed and what the financial offer would be, including to ensure future maintenance. This should be agreed with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, as site owners and managers.

This site is not allocated for development as it was removed from the draft Local Plan due in part to the risk of ecological impacts. This indicates that there are more suitable development sites in the local area, which would not pose these risks.

### **Malvern Hills SSSI**

The proposed development is located within the Zone of Influence for the recreational impacts on the Malvern Hills SSSI. The SWDPR Regulation 19 consultation was supported by an evidence report [Malvern Hills recreational impacts report FINAL.pdf \(swdevelopmentplan.org\)](#) and subsequently a mitigation strategy report [Malverns Mitigation Strategy 160822.pdf \(swdevelopmentplan.org\)](#) was developed describing developer contributions. We advise your authority to liaise with the South Worcestershire Council's Policy Team and the Applicant to understand on how the mitigation requirements should be met.

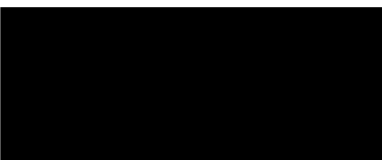
### **Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar site**

The application site is hydrologically linked to the Severn Estuary SAC which is a Habitats Site, by watercourses on the development site which flow into the River Avon. We have advised that Habitat Regulations Assessment should be undertaken. The first step is a HRA Screening.

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 281 (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.

If you have any queries relating to this case or the advice in this letter please contact [hayley.fleming@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:hayley.fleming@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely



Emma Johnson  
Area Deputy Director