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Our ref: 449283
Your ref: n/a



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sir / Madam

Planning consultation: Tollerton Neighbourhood Plan - Regulation 15 Consultation Location: Tollerton Parish

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 25 August 2023 which was received by Natural England on 25 August 2023.

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 have reviewed and commented on relevant policies from the neighbourhood plan below. We welcome the inclusion of multifunctional green buffer for biodiversity, landscape and green infrastructure benefits. Further detail on Green Infrastructure is outlined below due to the opportunities present within the neighbourhood plan.

Strategic Policy Comments

Policy 1: Climate Change

Natural England suggest the importance of Nature-based Solutions in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change be included within this policy. Such as the inclusion of trees for temperature control and the inclusion of natural habitat for carbon sequestration.

Policy 5: Existing (Community) Facilities

We welcome the inclusion of open space and play areas as existing facilities and the protecting and enhancing of these important features of the village. There are no additional comments here.

Policy 6: New Community and Retail Facilities

We welcome the inclusion of community outdoor spaces, sports and recreation spaces and play areas in this policy. Natural England suggests policy stipulates these are of high quality and good design to ensure they are welcoming, accessible and inclusive for all in the community.

Policy 7: The Green Buffer at Gamston Fields

Natural England welcome the allocation of this multifunctional green space within the plan. Further detail on Green Infrastructure is provided below.

Policy 10: Landscape Character

Natural England welcome the inclusion of this policy within the plan. [National Character Areas](#) are

based upon key features of the local landscape and can further inform important detail on features to highlight and protect within this policy.

Policy 11: Local Green Spaces

We welcome the allocating and protection of these important green infrastructure features. More detail on green infrastructure is discussed below.

Policy 12: Biodiversity Enhancement

Natural England welcomes the encouragement within the policy to provide over and above the 10% minimum biodiversity net gain. In terms of the allocated development at the north of the parish, the green buffer at Gamston Fields could provide opportunity for off-site Biodiversity Net Gain units, where it cannot be provided within the redline boundary of the allocated development. This would ensure any off-site units that are needed are kept within the parish and are delivered for nature with the multifunctional benefits for the local community.

Policy 13: Sustainable Modes (of Transport)

Natural England would highlight within the enhancement of existing routes and new routes, the opportunity for improved green infrastructure along linear routes. It is important to ensure that these routes are inclusive and accessible for the whole community. Further discussion of green infrastructure is outlined below.

Policy 15: Tollerton Housing Strategy

Natural England suggest within the Housing Strategy policy the inclusion of accessible green infrastructure, e.g. within 15 minutes' walk from home. See further discussion in the Green Infrastructure Standards outlined below.

Green Infrastructure

Natural England have produced the [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) to fulfil the Governments objectives of the 25 Year Environment Act and the Environmental Improvement Plan. The Green Infrastructure Framework consists of:

- Principles
- Standards
- Design Guide
- Process Journeys
- Green Infrastructure Mapping

Natural England advise that the elements of the framework that would be most helpful at this stage of the Tollerton Neighbourhood Plan would be the process journey, standards, and the first national mapping database of existing GI.

Green Infrastructure Process Journeys

The Neighbourhood Planning Group [Process Journey](#) contains:

1. Two overview diagrams showing recommended stages to take and relationship to the Green Infrastructure Framework.
2. Background information on neighbourhood plans.
3. Detailed description of the suggested actions to take at each of the five stages of the process.
4. Links to useful guidance and tools.

Green infrastructure is increasingly seen as important for its roles in addressing biodiversity, water management, climate change and health inequalities. Neighbourhood plans can also describe policies to achieve these objectives using green infrastructure.

Neighbourhood plans can provide detailed policy on a locality in a way which a local plan covering a

larger area is less well placed to do. Breaking the neighbourhood plan area up into distinctive areas which reflect different characters will be key. That way specific policies relating to local building materials, design details, building layouts and how developments relate to one another can be created. Protecting the heritage of an area will likely bring together policy on buildings, parks and open spaces.

It can be useful in green infrastructure terms to consider these together. Often policies will focus on protecting what is special and already exists but it is also prudent to consider how the character of an area can change. Are there specific drivers of change which will impact on the character of an area? For example, climate change, loss of trees species or needs expressed by the community for allotments or food growing areas. How can these be positively accommodated and supported through policy in the neighbourhood plan?

Green Infrastructure Standards

It will be beneficial to consider Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Standards](#) to help target the creation or enhancement of GI in local policy. These include standards for new major developments and area wide standards. A Neighbourhood Plan could, for example:

- Promote the use of the Accessible Greenspace Standards to set minimum and aspirational neighbourhood-wide ambitions for the amount of accessible greenspace and natural greenspace. Also, aspirations for minimum walking distances from housing areas to greenspace. The Government has set the target for everyone in the country having access to green space within 15 minutes' walk from their home.
- Suggest using Urban Greening Factors for development in urban areas. This can work alongside Biodiversity Net Gain by helping to set the amount of on-site green infrastructure as part of development.
- Include Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standards to set goals for the quantity and quality of woodland cover. This standard will help deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation. In addition to this it will help deliver human health benefits by reducing peak temperatures and associated health issues as we experience ever increasing heatwaves.
- Specify the use of existing standards which enhance the quality of existing green infrastructure, for example [Green Flag Award](#).

Green Infrastructure Mapping Database

The Natural England Green Infrastructure [Mapping Database](#) is designed to provide technical evidence on the Green Infrastructure of England. The Natural England Green Infrastructure Mapping Database aims to be:

- A publicly accessible data, analysis and mapping resource.
- A resource providing a nationally consistent approach to Green Infrastructure spatial evidence.
- A resource that can be used to provide evidence to inform a variety of national to local planning, strategy and targeting exercises involving Green Infrastructure.
- A baseline evidence resource providing a consistent level of data and analysis across England capable of being adapted and/or supplemented with additional and/or local data as required by the end user.

Current Green Infrastructure Picture in Tollerton Parish

Natural England advise that areas of Rushcliffe have average provision for Green Infrastructure. However, Tollerton Parish is lacking in Green Infrastructure provision with only very small areas of the parish delivering two of the six buffers used to assess green infrastructure quantity and the majority only benefiting from one appropriate green open space. The two buffers that are achieved are:

1. The regional buffer Holme Pierpont which covers the whole parish
2. The Tollerton play area to the Northwest of the village deliver the Doorstep standard for a very small section of the village.

Much of the parish has the lowest score compared to all other parishes in England in for Green Infrastructure provision. Natural England believes that the plan could set ambitions to tackle inequality in access for local residents by applying the thinking from the Green Infrastructure Framework outlined above. This could be done with a dedicated Green Infrastructure policy, as well as weaving into the existing policies as discussed above.

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

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

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

Yours faithfully

Planning & Environment Lead Advisor
East Midlands Area Team

Annex A – Additional advice

Natural England offers the following additional advice:

Landscape

Paragraph 174 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 to respond to 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 NPPF policies (Paragraphs 174 and 175). This is the case regardless of whether the proposed development is sufficiently large to consult Natural England. Further information is contained in [GOV.UK guidance](#). 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. For mineral working and landfilling separate guidance on soil protection for site restoration and aftercare is available on [Gov.uk](#) website. Detailed guidance on soil handling for mineral sites is contained in the Institute of Quarrying [Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings](#).

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](#)¹ 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 Site of Special Scientific Interest 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 paragraphs 175 and 179 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 are 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 on [Gov.uk](#). Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or 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](#).

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

Annex A – Additional advice

Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Environmental gains

Development should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the NPPF paragraphs 174(d), 179 and 180. Development also provides opportunities to secure wider environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 73, 104, 120, 174, 175 and 180). We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 180 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 should consider off site measures. Opportunities for enhancement might include:

- 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.

Natural England's [Biodiversity Metric 3.1](#) may be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and intertidal habitats and can be used to inform any development project. For small development sites the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of [Biodiversity Metric 3.1](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. It is available as a beta test version.

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside [Biodiversity Metric 3.1](#) and is available as a beta test version.

Green Infrastructure

Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) provides evidence-based advice and tools on how to design, deliver and manage green infrastructure (GI). GI should create and maintain green liveable places that enable people to experience and connect with nature, and that offer everyone, wherever they live, access to good quality parks, greenspaces, recreational, walking and cycling routes that are inclusive, safe, welcoming, well-managed and accessible for all. GI provision should enhance ecological networks, support ecosystems services and connect as a living network at local, regional and national scales.

Development should be designed to meet the [15 Green Infrastructure Principles](#). The Green Infrastructure Standards can be used to inform the quality, quantity and type of green infrastructure to be provided. Major development should have a GI plan including a long-term delivery and management plan. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

GI mapping resources are available [here](#) and [here](#). These can be used to help assess deficiencies in greenspace provision and identify priority locations for new GI provision.

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 urban fringe areas should also be explored to strengthen access networks, reduce fragmentation, and promote wider green infrastructure.

Annex A – Additional advice

Rights of Way, Access land, Coastal access and National Trails

Paragraphs 100 and 174 of the NPPF highlight the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, rights of way and coastal access routes in the vicinity of the development. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts on the any nearby National Trails. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer. 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](#).