

Date: 09 January 2017
Our ref: 202696
Your ref: -



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Dear Lynette Duncan

Swale Borough Council Local Plan Examination

Thank you for your email of the 14 December regarding the resumed examination of the modifications to the Swale Local Plan.

Whilst Natural England has not asked to appear in person, we felt it may be helpful to provide additional clarity to the Inspector in relation to Matter 1.2 'Has the modified Plan been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment?'. Throughout the Local Plan process, Natural England has worked closely with the Council in developing the Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS). The SAMMS provides a strategic mechanism to manage any increase in recreational pressure that may arise from housing developments within a six kilometre zone around the Thames Estuary and Marshes, the Medway Estuary and Marshes and The Swale Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar Sites).

Natural England welcomes the modified Local Plan referring to the SAMMS however the SAMMS will only help to manage impacts resulting from recreational disturbance. For mixed use developments or those with more of a business or industrial nature then additional impacts to the designated sites may occur from factors such as loss of functionally linked land (that is land outside of the designated site but which supports the special features), noise, lighting, air quality or visual intrusion for example. Where these may occur, then Natural England advises that it would be appropriate for the policies to recommend a project level assessment is carried out to ensure that they are in accord with the requirements of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). This would be in addition to contributing to the SAMMS as a way of managing any increased recreational disturbance impacts.

I trust these comments are helpful but please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone on 0208 0266 064 or by email to sean.hanna@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Sean Hanna

Sean Hanna
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Sussex and Kent Team