

Cannock Chase Council:  
Cannock Chase Local Plan  
Representation Form



Making a representation: We cannot accept anonymous representations. You must provide your contact details but only your name and comments will be published on the website. Your personal data will be held securely and processed in line with our privacy notice [www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/privacynotices](http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/privacynotices). Once the plan is submitted your comments will be shared with the Planning Inspectorate and an independent inspector will review representations. You have the right to withdraw your representation and your data will be destroyed. Data will only be held until adoption of the Cannock Chase Local Plan.

## Part B: Representation Form

Please complete a separate **Part B Representation Form** (this part) for each representation that you would like to make. One **Part A Representation Form** must be enclosed with your **Part B Representation Form(s)**. We have also published a separate **Guidance Note** to explain the terms used and to assist in making effective representations.

### Part B: Representation

Name and Organisation:	Natural England
------------------------	-----------------

#### Q1. To which document does this representation relate? (Please tick one box)

- Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040
- Sustainability Appraisal of the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040
- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040

#### Q2. To which part of the document does this representation relate?

Please see Natural England's letter of 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 Ref: 465917
--

Para-graph:	As above	Policy:	As above	Site:	As above	Policies Map:	As above
-------------	----------	---------	----------	-------	----------	---------------	----------

#### Q3. Do you consider the Cannock Chase Local Plan is:

- A. Legally compliant                      Yes:                       No:
  - B. Sound    Yes:                       No:
  - C. Compliant with the Duty to Co-operate                      Yes:                       No:
- (Please tick as appropriate).*

Cannock Chase Council:  
Cannock Chase Local Plan  
Representation Form



For office use	Part B reference	
----------------	------------------	--

**Q4. Please give details of why you consider the Cannock Chase Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible.**

If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Cannock Chase Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

**Do you consider that the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040 is Sound and Legally Compliant?**

Natural England welcomes the opportunity to comment at this stage of the Local Plan and particularly supports the inclusion of policies on green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain and supporting a greener future. We have reviewed the consultation documents and provide comments that relate to the soundness of the Local Plan and that are most relevant to our interest in the Natural Environment.

Natural England has adopted a robust precautionary approach within this plan response and whilst we welcome the content of the Local Plan, Natural England advises that the plan is currently **not sound or legally compliant due to the impacts of increased vehicle movement on air quality in relation to internationally designated nature conservation sites.**

Further detail relating to air quality is provided immediately below including the changes that we would consider necessary to make the plan sound. Natural England are engaged in continued discussion with your authority with regards to a Statement of Common Ground relating to air quality with a view to agreeing modifications in advance of the Examination if the council wishes.

Natural England have also provided other advice within the submission letter of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 ref: 465917 relating to further improvements that could strengthen plan policies and specific strategic site options and related mitigation.

**Air quality**

Natural England notes that the plan is at the pre-submission stage and as such your authority is seeking confirmation on the soundness of the plan. Having reviewed the Plan and supporting documents, Natural England considers the pre-submission Plan in its current form is not sound or legally compliant for the reasons we have outlined immediately below relating to air quality.

The Local Plan's Habitat Regulations Assessment cannot rule out adverse effects on integrity in relation to air quality from vehicles at the following internationally designated sites:

- Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC),
- Cannock Extension Canal SAC,
- Pasture fields Salt Marsh SAC,
- West Midland Mosses SAC
- Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 site.

This is due to a lack of evidence with regards to air quality and traffic data being collected, thus allowing mitigation works to be identified and secured. However, we are aware that traffic modelling data is nearing completion and air quality work is also making progress.

# Cannock Chase Council: Cannock Chase Local Plan Representation Form



NPPF paragraph 174e states:

*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ... preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.*

*(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)*

## **Q5. Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Cannock Chase Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified at Q4 above.**

Please note that non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination. You will need to say why each modification will make the Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Draft of the Cannock Chase Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

Additional Information is included in Natural England's letter of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 Ref: 465917 including but not limited to the following:

Discussions regarding air quality issues within the Local Plan and its evidence base are ongoing. Further work is required to inform the Habitat Regulations Assessment. Natural England will engage with the Local Planning Authority in order to produce a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) on this matter. This matter is also subject to ongoing discussions with the Cannock Chase Partnership, which Cannock Chase District Council is also a member of. Natural England will continue these discussions with the Partnership.

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment**

We agree with the conclusion of the Habitats Regulation Assessment that for those Habitats sites in the area of search with features sensitive to air pollution, adverse effects on their integrity, alone or in-combination, cannot be ruled out due to a lack of evidence. Adverse effects on integrity have not been ruled out in relation to air quality from vehicles at Cannock Chase SAC, Cannock Extension Canal SAC, Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC, and West Midland Mosses SAC and Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 site. Natural England are currently in discussion with your authority regarding air quality.

The HRA confirms that it is expected that the Appropriate Assessment wording will need to be amended once the traffic data and air quality assessment have been completed. The text should also acknowledge that there may be effects at other European sites besides Cannock Chase SAC and Cannock Extension Canal SAC. Natural England has specifically requested that the effects of ammonia are assessed; this should be added to the identified pollutants in the policy text.

### **Strategic Site Allocations**

Natural England has concerns about several of the '**Strategic Residential Site Allocations**' which could potentially impact on designated sites as a result of increased recreational pressure, water

Cannock Chase Council:  
Cannock Chase Local Plan  
Representation Form



quantity and quality and air. Specific assessments and mitigation measures are likely to be required to ensure habitats are protected and air and water quality are not adversely affected by development. These have not always been listed in the policy wording. We have particular concerns regarding the Green Belt allocations within the zone of influence of the Cannock Chase SAC and in close proximity to the Cannock Extension Canal SAC. We recommend the addition of a cross reference to policy SO7.3, to ensure the delivery of suitable mitigation for Cannock Chase SAC and the Cannock Extension Canal SAC.

**Please note:** In your representation you should provide succinctly all the evidence and supporting information necessary to support your representation and your suggested modification(s). You should not assume that you will have a further opportunity to make submissions.

**After this stage, further submissions may only be made if invited by the Inspector, based on the matters and issues they identify for examination.**

**Q6. If your representation is seeking a modification to the Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Draft of the Cannock Chase Local Plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s)?**

*Please note that while this will provide an initial indication of your wish to participate in hearing session(s), you may be asked at a later point to confirm your request to participate.*

No, I do not wish to participate in hearing session(s)

Yes, I wish to participate in hearing session(s)

*(Please tick one box)*

**Q7. If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:**

*(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)*

**Please note:** The Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate in hearing session(s). You may be asked to confirm your wish to participate when the Inspector has identified the matters and issues for examination.

Signature:	
------------	--

Date:	21/03/2024
-------	------------

Date: 18 March 2024  
Our ref: 465917  
Your ref: Reg 19 pre-submission draft - Cannock Local Plan 2018 - 2040



[planningpolicy@cannockchasedc.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@cannockchasedc.gov.uk)

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Customer Services



Dear Sir/Madam

**Cannock Chase Local Plan: Regulation 19 Pre-submission draft Plan 2018 - 2040**

Thank you for your consultation dated and received by Natural England 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

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 welcomes the opportunity to comment at this stage of the Local Plan and particularly supports the inclusion of policies on green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain and supporting a greener future. We have reviewed the consultation documents and provide comments that relate to the soundness of the Local Plan and that are most relevant to our interest in the Natural Environment.

Natural England has adopted a robust precautionary approach within this plan response and whilst we welcome the content of the Local Plan, Natural England advises that the plan is currently **not sound or legally compliant due to the impacts of increased vehicle movement on air quality in relation to internationally designated nature conservation sites.**

Further detail relating to air quality is provided immediately below including the changes that we would consider necessary to make the plan sound. Natural England are engaged in continued discussion with your authority with regards to a Statement of Common Ground relating to air quality with a view to agreeing modifications in advance of the Examination if the council wishes.

Natural England have also provided other advice within this submission relating to further improvements that could strengthen plan policies and specific strategic site options and related mitigation.

**Do you consider that the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040 is Sound and Legally Compliant?**

**Air quality**

Natural England notes that the plan is at the pre-submission stage and as such your authority is seeking confirmation on the soundness of the plan. Having reviewed the Plan and supporting documents, Natural England considers the pre-submission Plan in its current form is not sound or legally compliant for the reasons we have outlined immediately below relating to air quality.

The Local Plan's Habitat Regulations Assessment cannot rule out adverse effects on integrity in relation to air quality from vehicles at the following internationally designated sites:

- Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC),
- Cannock Extension Canal SAC,
- Pasture fields Salt Marsh SAC,
- West Midland Mosses SAC
- Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 site.

This is due to a lack of evidence with regards to air quality and traffic data being collected, thus allowing mitigation works to be identified and secured. However, we are aware that traffic modelling data is nearing completion and air quality work is also making progress.

NPPF paragraph 174e states:

*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ... preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.*

Discussions regarding air quality issues within the Local Plan and its evidence base are ongoing. Further work is required to inform the Habitat Regulations Assessment. Natural England will engage with the Local Planning Authority in order to produce a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) on this matter. This matter is also subject to ongoing discussions with the Cannock Chase Partnership, which Cannock Chase District Council is also a member of. Natural England will continue these discussions with the Partnership.

### **Do you consider that the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040 is compliant with Duty to Co-operate?**

In terms of Cannock Chase SAC and recreational impacts, the Local Plan 2018 - 2040 does comply with the Duty to Co-operate. Natural England can confirm that we have had discussions with the Local Authority regarding air quality issues within the Local Plan and its evidence base.

### **Other matters**

Natural England considers most of the policies within the plan to be sound and deliverable. The plan is consistent with national policy with regard to those policies that are within Natural England's remit. Further information on strengthening policies including but not limited to supporting green infrastructure and preventing fragmentation of habitats is provided below.

### **Vision and Strategy**

Natural England advises that the Plan's vision and emerging development strategy addresses impacts and opportunities for the natural environment and sets out the environmental ambition for the Plan area. The Plan takes a strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, including providing a net gain for biodiversity and considering opportunities to enhance and improve connectivity. We welcome the aspiration to protect and enhance the environment and move towards a zero-carbon economy.

## **Strategic Objective 2: To create community facilities and healthy living opportunities across the district:**

Natural England notes from the Sustainability Appraisal that the Indices of Deprivation 2019 illustrates that several neighbourhoods in Cannock Chase were amongst the 10% and 20% most deprived nationally in relation to poor health and shorter life expectancy in 2019. Rates of physical inactivity are below the England average.

All 5 parts of this policy are strongly supported by Natural England in terms of safeguarding health and amenity and supporting healthy communities, through the protection and provision of high-quality open spaces, including allotments and community food growing sites.

We welcome this policy direction, specifically in reference to environmentally sustainable travel, energy efficiency, climate change, water and air quality, green and blue infrastructure. Further information on joining up Nature Recovery and Green Infrastructure (GI) with health priorities is set out below.

If more cities and towns can be creatively designed and managed, with nature and communities at their heart, we will see nature and people thrive. This is something we set out to inspire at Natural England when developing the [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) and [Design Guide](#).

Natural England's [People and Nature survey](#) tells us that, for 82% of people '*being in nature makes me happy*'. With the cost-of-living crisis, 'free' places like local parks and greenspace, have become even more important. The value of these spaces for the economy is estimated at £28.7 billion per year.

Green infrastructure in towns and cities provides places to relax, exercise, and spend time outdoors; cools urban areas; reduces flooding by allowing water to permeate the ground rather than overwhelm our drains; increases biodiversity and helps to reduce inequalities in access to nature. Options assessments for development sites and related green and blue Infrastructure within and between developments, green spaces and designated sites should; include soft transition and consider potential direct and indirect implications on sustainable use for example visitor pressure and transport / access options.

The natural environment affords the best 'natural' play opportunities for children while offering multifunctional nature-based solutions to climate change etc. These can be blended into wildlife rich green infrastructure and green open spaces that can act as destination play sites for local children (See best practice at [Play England](#) and [Play Wales](#) ) that have proven health and wellbeing value.

Evidence for nature play and health:

[Play, naturally: a review of children's natural play](#)

[Nature for health and wellbeing | The Wildlife Trusts](#)

[Good practice in social prescribing for mental health: the role of nature-based interventions - NECR228 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)

### **Policy 4.4: Sustainable Tourism and the Rural Economy**

We recommend that the supporting text refers to the mitigation for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation. This could be by cross reference to policy SO7.3 Habitats Sites.

## **Strategic Objective 5: Support provision of sustainable transport and communications infrastructure**

Natural England notes the plans Integrated Impact Assessment findings with regards to car dependency in the area being amongst the highest in the UK and that without planning intervention



there is potential for further traffic growth and related implications for air quality in the district. Lack of existing service provision in some areas and the reduction in provision of local bus services also evidence the need for this policy, to support the provision of comprehensive transport networks, to help reduce social exclusion and unsustainable development impacts through low zero carbon transport and proposed recreational footpath and cycle routes.

### **Strategic Objective 7: Protect and enhance the natural environment.**

Natural England strongly supports this group of 8 key policies to protect and enhance the natural environment and work with partners toward Nature Recovery. We welcome the inclusion of a biodiversity net gain policy (SO7.2) which in our view should contribute to significant improvements for both biodiversity and the wider environment in terms of cleaner air and water and to help restore, buffer, and connect existing environmental assets. We look forward to working with your authority on the scheme as it develops and provide further guidance below.

#### **Midlands Heathland Heartland**

We advise that the Midland's Heathland Heartland project should be added to Strategic Objective 7 as an initiative that will receive particular support. The project aims to better manage, protect, expand and enhance lowland heathland and associated habitats to improve biodiversity through a partnership approach from Cannock Chase to Sutton Park. The project will link and buffer existing sites while creating a network of further complementary habitats, while also providing new public access and recreational opportunities and health benefits. This links in with the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and the Council aims to facilitate nature recovery networks. We would welcome it if offsite BNG could be directed to this area.

#### **Policy SO7.1: Protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity**

Natural England supports the inclusion of this policy.

#### **Policy SO7.2: Biodiversity Net Gain**

Natural England supports the inclusion of a policy on BNG. We suggest the following minor amendments to further improve the plan policy.

The BNG policy should make it clear that biodiversity net gain is not applied to irreplaceable habitats, and that any mitigation and/or compensation requirements for Habitats sites should be dealt with separately from biodiversity net gain provision. The policy should also set out how biodiversity net gain will be delivered and managed through the lifetime of the scheme and including monitoring requirements. This should include indicators to demonstrate the amount and type of gain provided through development. The indicators should be as specific as possible to help build an evidence base to take forward for future reviews of the plan, for example the total number and type of biodiversity units created, the number of developments achieving biodiversity net gains and a record of on-site and off-site contributions.

Please note that the [Statutory Biodiversity Metric](#) is now available and replaces all previous versions. We would advise updating the policy accordingly.

Natural England would be pleased to agree amended policy wording with the Local Authority in advance of the Examination, if that would be of assistance.



### **Policy SO7.3: Habitats sites**

Natural England supports the inclusion of this policy, which should ensure the protection and enhancement of the districts designated sites and the features for which they are designated including two Special Areas of Conservation: Cannock Chase; and the Cannock Extension Canal.

### **Policy SO7.5: Protecting, conserving, and enhancing the Cannock Chase National Landscape.**

The Cannock Chase National Landscape forms 39% of the district and is under pressure from development. Natural England therefore welcomes the inclusion of a specific policy for the National landscape.

### **Policy SO7.6: Protecting, conserving, and enhancing the green belt**

### **Policy SO7.7: amendments to the Green Belt.**

Natural England notes that amendments to the Green Belt boundary are proposed in this Local Plan to accommodate the growth requirements of the district and the wider conurbation, including beyond the plan period, or following a review of this Plan. In Natural England's opinion the plan has been positively prepared in so far as it requires "Green Belt release in order to provide sufficient land to meet Cannock Chase District's housing need with an element of flexibility; A further 500 dwellings will be delivered to help meet a shortfall arising from the wider housing market area, (increasing total delivery 6,303 dwellings at a rate of 283 dwellings per annum;". However, we are concerned about the potential impacts of some of the sites selected on the natural environment.

We note the LPA's intention to release and compensate for the loss of green belt and prioritise the use of suitable brownfield land. However, these site allocations in the green belt would result in the loss of Soil and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. This is contrary to draft plan policy SO8.5. The council should satisfy itself that it is making a balanced decision for sustainable development. We welcome the reference to the Defra Code of Practice for the sustainable use of soils, in paragraph 6.378. Natural England has no further comments on this matter.

Natural England has concerns about several of the '**Strategic Residential Site Allocations**' which could potentially impact on designated sites as a result of increased recreational pressure, water quantity and quality and air. Specific assessments and mitigation measures are likely to be required to ensure habitats are protected and air and water quality are not adversely affected by development. These have not always been listed in the policy wording. We have particular concerns regarding the Green Belt allocations within the zone of influence of the Cannock Chase SAC and in close proximity to the Cannock Extension Canal SAC. We recommend the addition of a cross reference to policy SO7.3, to ensure the delivery of suitable mitigation for Cannock Chase SAC and the Cannock Extension Canal SAC.

We previously advised a requirement for green/blue infrastructure to help alleviate increased recreational pressure on Cannock Chase SAC. It is noted that new community parks are proposed on part of the southern part of site SH1 and as compensation within site SE1. Natural England would be keen to work with your Authority to explore these mitigation measures further and ensure that spaces and interlinkages being created in these areas and beyond can support the greater carrying capacity of people that these additional housing allocations will bring.

Additional comments on specific sites:

- **SH1 - Land south of Lichfield Road A5190, Cannock;** The entire site is released from Green Belt for residential development and associated infrastructure. The site is directly adjacent to local biodiversity designations including: the Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI which is located approximately 800m east of the site.

The Cannock Chase SAC lies approximately 4.2km to the north of the site and the development will therefore be subject to the adopted charge which supports management of the SAC.

- **SH2 - Land east of Wimblebury Road;** The entire site is released from the Green Belt for residential development. The Chasewater and the Southern Coalfield Heaths SSSI lies close to the site's eastern boundary. The site is close to 2 locally designated Sites of Biological Importance. The Cannock Chase SAC lies approximately 3.3km to the north of the site. Development will be subject to the adopted charge which supports management of the SAC. The site is also hydrologically connected to Cannock Extension Canal SAC.
- **SE1 - Strategic Site-Specific Policy - Kingswood Lakeside Extension 2;** The site is located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone. Development will be subject to the adopted charge which supports management of the SAC. This site will be released from the Green Belt for an extension to the existing employment land, with a net developable area of circa 8.6 ha (40% of site). Natural England notes that to compensate for the loss of land from the Green Belt, a new community park will be created which will enhance the existing habitats and increase biodiversity on site whilst providing public access for recreation and leisure use. The development will incorporate new or enhanced attenuation ponds and SUDS features.

### **Policy SA1: Site Allocations**

Natural England welcomes the site-specific policies H1 through to SM1 - within the Allocations Section 6 of the plan including but not limited to:

- Incorporate existing hedgerows, trees and water courses where possible within the proposed development and provide suitable ecological mitigation and/or compensatory and enhancement measures within the site and green infrastructure connectivity.
- Incorporate new or enhanced attenuation ponds and SUDS features within the greenspace to provide suitable drainage systems on the site, subject to the findings of a site-specific flood risk assessment.
- Incorporate existing trees where possible within the proposed development and provide suitable ecological mitigation and/or compensatory and enhancement measures within the site and green infrastructure connectivity.
- Design of the development should be respectful of the proximity of the site to sensitive environmental and landscape designated areas including Cannock Chase National Landscape and Cannock Chase SAC.
- Incorporate suitable water harvesting and drainage systems on the site to minimise water use and limit water run-off from the site.
- Provide appropriate soft landscaping such as street trees and green roofs where possible, and enhancement features for wildlife where appropriate, within the scheme to benefit nature and enhance the street scene.

### **Policy SO7.8: Protecting, conserving and enhancing green infrastructure.**

Natural England supports this policy. Well-designed cross boundary multi-functional green infrastructure contributes greatly to a number of benefits both for people and nature. Your green and blue (for example cross boundary canals) infrastructure should dovetail with your biodiversity net gain strategies to maximise benefits.

Natural England also supports the related allocation of safeguards including but not limited to:

- sites S1 to S3: to provide enhanced connectivity for active travel and biodiversity between Newlands Lane and Cannock Chase, including Fair lady Coppice, and across Hednesford road through to Wimblebury Road, Wimblebury mound and the former Bleak House open cast site and Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI.

- and site S4: to provide enhanced connectivity for recreation and walking and cycle routes along with a safe crossing between the area of the former Grove Colliery and Norton Canes village across the A5. There is potential to deliver enhancements to the biodiversity and strategic green infrastructure links to the Cannock Extension Canal SAC and enhance the habitat connectivity to Wyrley Common, the SBI fronting the A5 and the dismantled railway line which forms the district boundary. Well-designed cross boundary multi-functional green infrastructure contributes greatly to a number of benefits both for people and nature. Your green and blue (for example cross boundary canals) infrastructure should dovetail with your biodiversity net gain strategies to maximise benefits.

We would advise that the Local Authority also considers Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework of Principles and Standards for England. As stated in our document, *Green infrastructure (GI) is part of the solution to many of the challenges we face; health inequalities, biodiversity crisis, climate change, nature recovery and levelling up. The GI framework supports local authorities, developers, parks and greenspace managers and local communities to enhance and create new good quality green infrastructure.*"

We would also suggest reference is made to the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Preparing Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021. LNRS are designed to work closely alongside other measures in the Act including supporting the delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain and providing a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. They will also underpin the [Nature Recovery Network](#), alongside work to develop partnerships and to integrate nature into our incentives and land management activities.

Each LNRS will be specific and tailored to its area. The responsible authorities and people involved in preparing a strategy can choose how they want it to look, but every strategy must contain:

1. A local habitat map.
2. A written statement of biodiversity priorities.

[Statutory guidance for responsible authorities](#) explains in detail what these 2 things should contain. Together they set out what the strategy is aiming to achieve and what practical actions will help do this. They will also propose where actions could be carried out for best effect and to connect and expand existing areas that are important for nature.

We expect local nature recovery strategies to propose actions such as the:

- creation of wetlands
- restoration of peatlands
- planting of trees and hedgerows
- more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands

These actions are intended to help nature itself and to also help improve the wider natural environment.

Whilst the Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is currently a work in progress, Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018 – 2040 should still be consistent with NPPF Paragraph 185 in terms of setting out local habitat priorities and identifying potential measures by which they can be achieved, alongside mapping areas that could become of particular importance in the future.

Natural England encourages Cannock Chase District Council via their Local Nature Recovery Strategy to actively develop cross border cooperation between other Local Planning Authorities (LPA) (for example Lichfield District Council) in coordinating land development projects that impact on local biodiversity sites to ensure that local biodiversity corridors are maintained and link up other local important sites for nature conservation.

This is a good way of achieving nature recovery and preparing to deliver the LNRS alongside enabling the local authority and its partners to identify, map and safeguard site areas, including green and blue infrastructure opportunities and interlinkages.

### **Objective 8: Support a greener future.**

Natural welcomes this groups of 7 policies that collectively focus on sustainable development and working toward achieving net zero including requirements for sustainable water management measures to reduce water use, natural flood protection features and sustainable drainage systems.

### **Policy SO8.5: Avoiding Air, Water, Noise or light pollution and soil contamination policy.**

Natural England continues to work with the LPA on understanding air pollution in the area and has the following advice relating to the plans policies and supporting text relating to soils:

#### **Soil and Best and Most Versatile agricultural land**

The Local Plan should give appropriate weight to the roles performed by the area's soils. These should be valued as a finite multi-functional resource which underpin our well-being and prosperity. Decisions about development should take full account of the impact on soils, their intrinsic character, and the sustainability of the many ecosystem services they deliver, for example:

- Safeguard the long-term capability of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the Agricultural Land Classification) as a resource for the future.
- To avoid development that would disturb or damage other soils of high environmental value (e.g. wetland and other specific soils contributing to ecological connectivity, carbon stores such as peatlands etc) and, where development is proposed.
- Ensure soil resources are conserved and managed in a sustainable way.

Currently within the plan best and most versatile agricultural land is referred within Objective 8.5 stating that "All major development proposals will protect and conserve soil resources and safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land" There is however no definition of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land nor high quality agricultural land within the Plan, and this should be rectified.

The Council may find it helpful to look at [Natural England's Technical Information Note 049 on Agricultural Land Classification \(ALC\)](#) which describes the ALC system including the definition of BMV land, existing ALC data sources and their relevance for site level assessment of land quality and the appropriate methodology for when detailed surveys are required.

We would advise that the plan refers to sources of ALC and BMV mapping and data which will include but not limited to: the [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk) website and Natural England. For example [Agricultural Land Classification map West Midlands Region \(ALC004\)](#) and [Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile \(BMV\) Agricultural Land - Strategic scale map West Midlands Region \(ALC016\)](#).

### **Policy SO8.6: Brownfield and despoiled land and under-utilised buildings policy.**

Natural England recommends that the plan should recognise that development (soil sealing) has a major and usually irreversible adverse impact on soils. Mitigation should aim to minimise soil disturbance and to retain as many ecosystem services as possible through careful soil management during the construction process. We advise that the policy should support developments that enhance soils, avoid soil sealing and provide mitigation to avoid soil disturbance.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment

We agree with the conclusion of the Habitats Regulation Assessment that for those Habitats sites in the area of search with features sensitive to air pollution, adverse effects on their integrity, alone or in-combination, cannot be ruled out due to a lack of evidence. Adverse effects on integrity have not been ruled out in relation to air quality from vehicles at Cannock Chase SAC, Cannock Extension Canal SAC, Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC, and West Midland Mosses SAC and Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 site. Natural England are currently in discussion with your authority regarding air quality.

The HRA confirms that it is expected that the Appropriate Assessment wording will need to be amended once the traffic data and air quality assessment have been completed. The text should also acknowledge that there may be effects at other European sites besides Cannock Chase SAC and Cannock Extension Canal SAC. Natural England has specifically requested that the effects of ammonia are assessed; this should be added to the identified pollutants in the policy text.

For all other matters, Natural England confirms that we agree with the conclusions regarding adverse effects on the integrity of European sites being ruled out relating to physical loss of habitat, recreation pressure and water quantity/quality, due to safeguards provided within Local Plan policies. We welcome that your HRA includes the Humber Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar site which is c.125 kilometres away (in a direct line) but hydrologically connected to the rivers of Cannock Chase. If the Local Plan resulted in significant water pollution, this European site could be affected and has therefore been screened in, in relation to water quality only, on a precautionary basis.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: 

Yours sincerely



Sally McLaughlin  
Lead Adviser

Hayley Fleming  
Senior adviser

Land use planning – West Midlands Area Team

Planning for a Better Environment – West Midlands Team.