Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Draft (Pre-Submission) Part 2 Local Plan for Corby

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 12 July 2019 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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.

We note our previous advice dated 09 April 2019 (Our Ref: 277649) is included within paragraph 2.35 of the Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Cooperate July. Please note that this statement suggests our 09 April advice was provided in a follow-up email, however this letter was provided in response to a draft consultation sent by your Council on 21 March 2019.

As advised within our 09 April 2019 response, we would like clarity on where the “major new tree planting” will be carried out via the Plan in relation to Rockingham Forest (Page 21). As previously stated, we assume that this planting will occur within Green Infrastructure corridors as outlined, since the entirety of the Plan boundary lies within Rockingham Forest Area, however we would appreciate clarity on this.

As reiterated since our Regulation 18 response dated 16 December 2016 (Our Ref: 200686) we note that the draft Plan still does not contain a bespoke policy defining the key native habitats and species within the Plan area. Enhancing native species and habitats are key to effective Green Infrastructure corridors. This Policy would therefore act as a tool to define specific and relevant outcomes within the Green Infrastructure (GI) corridors as emphasised within the Plan.

Within our most recent response dated 09 April 2019, Natural England suggested the Plan should be “identifying additional corridors where there can be an increased tree and hedgerow planting in the Rockingham Forest area”. It remains unclear whether new corridors above and beyond the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) have been devised.

To expand, within your Councill’s comments regarding our 28 August 2018 representation, it is stated that “Expansion of the Green Infrastructure Corridor network through the Part 2 Local Plan will support increased tree and hedgerow planting in accordance with JCS Policy 21 (Rockingham Forest).” We note this wording is not within the Part 2 Plan, and advise that this commitment and linkage is strengthened in Plan wording. We strongly support this commitment, and note that the Statement of Compliance now refers to this commitment as still being considered by the Council.
Further, it remains uncertain whether the draft Plan is intending to promote the expansion of the GI network via neighbourhood corridors, as illustrated by green dashed lines within Appendix 4. However, it still seems that a combination of GI strategies from schemes such as Priors Hall SUE form the basis for the neighbourhood corridors. Natural England would still advise that the Plan goes above and beyond, or enhances, GI schemes already put forward and would like clarity on the above.

As also mentioned within our 09 April 2019 response, we again note that the GI networks mapped within Appendix 4 of the draft Plan (sub-regional and Local GI networks) do not match the outlines within the North Northamptonshire JCS Policies Map for Corby, within Appendix 1 of the JCS. We advise these outlines are consistent between the JCS and Part 2 Plan. Further, Appendix 4 does not show the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area supported within Policy 4 of the JCS. This inclusion is important, particularly since draft Plan Policy H7 is situated within this area, as stated on page 53.

As a final and important point, we would like to emphasise that your proposal of increased tree and hedgerow planting within the expanded GI network (in accordance with JCS Policy 21) should be written into Policy 6 Green Infrastructure Network for clarity and completeness.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Anna Bush on 02080263523. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely