By email: Anna.Bush@naturalengland.org.uk

Dear Anna,

Re: South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2: Habitats Regulations Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.

Further to your recent correspondence with Andy D’Arcy, Planning Policy and Growth Manager regarding the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 (P2 Plan), I am writing to confirm the conclusions of the revised Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and subsequent Appropriate Assessment (AA).

At the pre-submission stage (2017) HRA screening that concluded that an AA was not required for the P2 Plan. However, subsequent concerns were raised by Natural England with regard to the likely impacts of the P2 Plan on the integrity of the Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA through recreational pressure as a result of additional growth within 3km of the SPA beyond levels envisaged within the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS). In order to properly assess the impacts of the proposed P2 Plan, South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) commissioned Ramboll to carry out a revised HRA and provide SNC with the necessary information to enable an informed decision to be made with regard to the nature of these effects and the proposed mitigation contained within the Plan.

On the 19th September 2018, SNC as the competent authority under Regulation 7 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (“the Regulations”), acting through the Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee (PPRSC) endorsed the “South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report” (September 2018) and confirmed that the findings of the AA report are those of SNC.

For your records, I enclose the following reports with this letter:

- A copy of the revised Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) screening;
- The Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the P2 LP, which was adopted by South Northamptonshire Council on the 19th September 2018.
- A copy of the report presented to members of the committee, which details the findings and the reasons for recommending adoption of the AA.

These documents, together with a copy of this letter and the revised Sustainability Appraisal will be made available on the Council’s website.

Adrian Colwell
Executive Director - Place and Growth

We will show strong leadership across South Northamptonshire to preserve what’s special, protect our quality of life, secure a sustainable and prosperous future and enhance the council’s performance.

The information in this document can be made available in other formats on request.
The Draft Submission Plan (Regulation 19) approved by members for publication incorporates policy measures suggested by Natural England. This includes a new policy NE1: Upper Nene Gravel Pits, together with a commitment to prepare and adopt a supplementary planning document within 12 months of the adoption of the plan. We look forward to working with NE on this SPD to ensure that it is effective, deliverable and will help to protect the integrity of the SPA.

For the avoidance of doubt, I would like to take this opportunity to make clear the two large strategic sites included within the Pre-Submission Draft as options are not carried forward within the P2 Plan. These sites, together with any additional sites required to meet the future needs of the area, will need to be assessed as part of the revision of the WNJCS itself. The publicity period for the P2 Plan will commence on Thursday 4th October for a period of six weeks. You will be notified separately of the arrangements for making representations in accordance with the relevant Regulations.

Finally, I would like to thank Natural England for the on-going, informative and practical advice that has provided during the preparation of the plan and hope the changes that have been made to the P2 Plan as a result of the advice will help to ensure that all three dimensions of sustainable development are delivered.

Should you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact Andy D’Arcy on 01327 322289 or myself on 01327 322289.

Yours Sincerely

Eleanor Gingell MRTPi
Principal Planning Officer