

Inspector's changes IC7 - Joint Core Strategy for Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk

Dear Louise

Natural England has the following comments to make in relation to IC7 – Soundness changes and amended green infrastructure diagrams:

Natural England welcomes the embedding of additional green infrastructure maps into the main Joint Core Strategy document, which confirms the centrality of a high quality natural environment to planned growth, by placing green infrastructure at the heart of sustainable development. We believe that the green infrastructure strategy and subsequent delivery plan commissioned by the GNDP should be seen as more than just an evidence base for the core strategy, and the inclusion of these biodiversity enhancement and green corridor maps weave the concept of green infrastructure through the strategy in much the same way as we would wish to see accessible natural greenspace integrated into all new development in this area. The biodiversity enhancement map highlights opportunities to buffer, extend and link those fragmented habitats at risk from further fragmentation when new development takes place, and should serve as a reminder to planners and developers of the need to protect the internationally significant existing environmental assets of this area.

The green infrastructure network map, meanwhile, delineates the potential areas for developers to target new infrastructure provision, with a particular emphasis on new opportunities for access to the countryside and new recreational sites for the growing population of Greater Norwich. This would fulfil a dual role in meeting Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) and also delivering alternative leisure destinations away from the potentially vulnerable designated sites and species already under pressure from excessive visitor disturbance, thus meeting the mitigation requirement of the Joint Core Strategy's Appropriate Assessment.

A great deal of time and work from a number of organisations has gone into developing the concept of ecological networks in this area, and work continues with the Green Infrastructure Steering Group to deliver projects on the ground. We are therefore supportive of the Inspector's proposed change to raise the profile of green infrastructure by the inclusion of these additional maps in the Joint Core Strategy.

Thank you.

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