

Date: 29 November 2024
Our ref: 494165
Your ref: HPK/2024/0400



High Peak Borough Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

Dear Pet Twigg

Planning consultation: Change of use from C1 hotel to C2 for residential care home
Location: 4, South Street, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6LB

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 13 November 2024 which was received by Natural England on 13 November 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.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES

As submitted, the application could have potential significant effects on [The Peak District Dales SAC](#). Natural England requires further information in order to determine the significance of these impacts and the scope for mitigation

The following information is required:

- Calculations indicating the likely change in foul water discharge from the site as a result of the proposal.

Without this information, Natural England may need to object to the proposal.

Please re-consult Natural England once this information has been obtained.
Natural England's advice on other issues is set out below.

Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation:

The proposed development lies within the catchment of Unit 70 and 71 of The Wye Valley SSSI¹, a component site of the Peak District Dales SAC. The site is currently in unfavourable condition and failing to meet its conservation objectives because of nutrient enrichment in the water. Point Source, i.e. foul water discharges from development (including via mains sewage treatment works), are one of the main contributors to nutrient enrichment. As such, any development which will cause an increase in overnight stays within the catchment must calculate a nutrient budget and provide

¹
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S2000186&SiteName=wye%20valley&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=>

mitigation which will prevent any increase in nutrients entering the river.

Natural England have updated our advice regarding the Peak District Dales SAC and the River Wye SSSI. Our full updated advice was sent to your authority on 16th March 2022².

For more information regarding the site's designated features, condition assessment and conservation objectives visit Natural England's [Designated Sites View](#).

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA):

In advising your authority on the requirements relating to Habitats Regulations Assessment, it is Natural England's advice that the proposal is not necessary for the management of the European site. Your authority should therefore determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on any European site, proceeding to the Appropriate Assessment stage where significant effects cannot be ruled out.

The following advice should be taken in to account by the competent authority within the HRA.

Further information required:

Surface Water

As the proposal does not involve any external alterations, the surface water discharge from the site remains unchanged. As such, no additional likely significant effects to the Peak District Dales SAC are likely from the surface water discharging from the development site.

Foul Water

As it stands, it is unclear whether the proposed development will alter the volume of foul water discharging from the site. Any increase in foul water discharge from the site is likely to have a significant effect on the Peak District Dales SAC. As a result, Natural England advise that further information is provided regarding the existing & proposed foul water discharge from the site.

This should consider:

- Occupancy of the existing hotel (both the average number of guests per room & the proportion of time the rooms are likely to be occupied).
- Occupancy of the proposed care home (both the expected number of occupants & the proportion of time the rooms are likely to be occupied (including any staff bedrooms))
- Water use per person (This document [British Water flows and loads.pdf](#), offers reasonable assumptions regarding water use for hotel & nursing homes, however amendment based on the specific circumstance may be suitable)

Where the proposed care home is shown to discharge less foul water than the existing hotel, there would be no likely impact upon the Peak District Dales SAC.

However, where the proposed care home is shown to discharge more foul water than the existing hotel, a likely significant effect upon the Peak District Dales SAC could not be ruled out and, where appropriate, bespoke mitigation measures must be put in place to achieve Nutrient Neutrality. Amendment to the proposal (i.e. number of rooms in the care home) may also alter the outcome of the calculations, avoiding the need for bespoke mitigation. Natural England would expect to be reconsulted on any bespoke mitigation proposals, as these must be considered at the Appropriate Assessment stage of HRA, for which Natural England are a statutory consultee

Other advice

Further information regarding Nutrient Neutrality can be found in the suite of documents located

² <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4792131352002560>

[here](#).

Further general advice on the consideration of protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A. The LPA should also be aware of the recent rulings and implications of the People Over Wind and Dutch Nitrogen Cases. A summary of these can be found below in Annex B.

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 281 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

Should the applicant wish to discuss the further information required and scope for mitigation with Natural England, we would be happy to provide advice through our [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

Please consult us again once the information requested above has been provided.

Yours sincerely

Robbie Clarey
Senior Sustainable Development Officer – East Midlands Area Delivery

Annex B - Recent Rulings

Competent authorities undertaking HRAs should be aware of a recent ruling made by the Court of Justice of the European Union (the CJEU) on the interpretation of the Habitats Directive in the case of *People Over Wind and Sweetman vs Coillte Teoranta* (ref: C-323/17). The case relates to the treatment of mitigation measures at the screening stage of a HRA when deciding whether an appropriate assessment of a plan/project is required. The Court's Ruling goes against established practice in the UK that mitigation measures can, to a certain degree, be taken into account at the screening stage.

As a result, Natural England advises that any "embedded" mitigation relating to protected sites under the Habitat Regulations 2017 Regulation 63 (1) should no longer be considered at the screening stage, but taken forward and considered at the appropriate assessment stage to inform a decision as whether no adverse effect on site integrity can be ascertained. In light of the recent case law, any reliance on measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects at the likely significant stage is vulnerable to legal challenge. You may also want to seek your own legal advice on any implications of this recent ruling for your decisions

Your authority should also be aware of a recent Ruling made by the Court of Justice of the European Union (the CJEU) on the interpretation of the Habitats Directive in the case of *Coöperatie Mobilisation* (AKA the Dutch Case) ([Joined Cases C-293/17 and C-294/17](#)).

The *Coöperatie Mobilisation* case relates to strategic approaches to dealing with nitrogen. It considers the approach to take when new plans/projects may adversely affect the ecological situation where a European site is already in 'unfavourable' conservation status, and it considers the acceptability of mitigating measures whose benefits are not certain at the time of that assessment.

Competent authorities undertaking HRA should be mindful of these cases and should seek their own legal advice on the implications of these recent rulings for their decisions.