

Date: 18 February 2019

ANNEX D

The logo for Natural England, featuring the words "NATURAL ENGLAND" in white capital letters on a green rectangular background.

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Alison

Lower Derwent Valley SPA/SAC & Skipwith Common SAC and Strensall Common SAC Visitor Surveys

Thank you for sharing the Visitor surveys for Lower Derwent Valley SPA/SAC & Skipwith Common SAC and Strensall Common SAC with Natural England. As requested at our meeting on 4 February 2019 our initial thoughts on these surveys are provided below.

Lower Derwent valley SPA/SAC and Skipwith Common SAC

The Visitor Survey for the Lower Derwent Valley and Skipwith suggests that additional visitor pressure resulting from housing allocations within the York Local Plan is unlikely to result in an adverse effect on integrity to the designated site. That said, Natural England's own observation and anecdotal information received does suggest that recreation pressure, particularly that arising from village communities adjacent to the site is a significant issue. This takes the form of dog walking, horse riding, cycling, wildfowling, boating etc. both within and adjacent to the designated site. Some of this access involves trespass into areas where there is no right of way. Unfortunately the visitor survey did not assess visitor pressure from key access area e.g. adjacent villages such as East Cottingham, Ellerton and Thorganby and consequently is likely to have under recorded recreational pressures.

Strensall Common SAC

The Visitor survey for Strensall very clearly identifies the high level of public use that Strensall Common SAC already receives. It also suggests a significant increase (24%) in access as a result of housing allocations within the draft Local Plan. A significant proportion of this increase is associated with allocations closer to the SAC (0-500m) with the ST 35 QEII allocation perhaps the most important contributor to this increase. Consequently the visitor survey concluded, "Given the scale of increase in access predicted from the visitor surveys, the proximity of new development and concerns relating to current impacts from recreation, adverse integrity on the SAC cannot be ruled out as a result of the quantum of development proposed. In addition, for individual allocations that are adjacent to the site it will be difficult to rule out adverse effects on integrity." Natural England concurs with this conclusion.

The visitor survey goes on to consider potential approaches to mitigation. The effectiveness of the various approaches are however caveated within the survey and from the information supplied, Natural England does not believe it is possible to rule out an adverse effect on the integrity of the Strensall Common SAC as a result of allocations currently included with the draft York Local Plan.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on 07717692927.

Yours sincerely

Lauren Forecast
Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire Team