

Miguel Martinez
Planning and Building Control
Hart District Council
Harlington Way
Fleet
GU51 4AE

01489 774400

To: planningadmin@hart.gov.uk

12/02/2026

Dear Mr Martinez,

Re: 25/02564/OUT Outline application for up to 415 dwellings, landscaping, open space, SANG, SuDS, and associated works with access from Newnham Road (principle and access to be considered)

Thank you for consulting the Wildlife Trust in relation to this application. As you will be aware we are the owners of the adjacent College Copse Farm and the manager/owner of the nearby Hook Common and Bartley Heath SSSI.

As one of our Sanctuary Sites, College Copse Farm, consists of Ancient Woodland, species rich grassland hay meadows, woodland lakes and veteran trees. Hook Common and Bartley Heath SSSI, which is located to the south of the A30 London Road, but within 200m of the proposed development site, is designated for its nationally important heathland and invertebrate assemblages.

With regard to this application, we have serious concerns regarding its scale and location and we therefore **OBJECT** to the proposals. Our reasons for objection are as follows:

Policy NBE3 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

We do not believe the SANG design, in particular the circular path, which consists of several pinch points and repeating loops is adequate, and will fail to act as an attractive alternative to the Thames Basin Heaths. Furthermore, we believe this will fail to mitigate increased pressure on Hook Common SSSI, resulting in a negative impact to functionally supportive habitats and degradation to sensitive nationally important habitats.

College Copse Farm is a working farm, used for the breeding and rearing of our conservation grazing livestock. These livestock are essential for the landscape scale management of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This development will increase recreational pressure on the area, including disturbance from people walking with dogs. This may impact on our ability to graze the Heaths, therefore negatively affecting the conservation status of the SPA. This should be identified and assessed within the HRA.

Policy NBE 4 Biodiversity

We believe the proposals will have an adverse effect on College Copse SINC and will result in the loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodland, an irreplaceable habitat, and is therefore contrary to local planning policy.

College Copse has over 180 protected and notable species recorded, including 40 ancient woodland indicators, furthermore it supports thirteen birds of Conservation Concern including willow tit. The woodland edge and farmland habitats are known to support woodlark, an SPA bird species and should therefore be considered as functionally supportive to the SPA; impacts to this species at this location should be identified and assessed in the HRA.

The proposed SANG and accessible green space are bordered to the north by Ancient Woodland of special value (HBIC, 2024) at College Copse Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The proposed buffer area consists of accessible greenspace up to the boundary of the woodland. This will therefore fail to mitigate impacts from antisocial behaviour and trespass, nor will it avert habitational lighting, recreational disturbances, and physical damage.

Our ability to manage the woodland to maintain its biodiversity interest will be significantly impacted. We carry out a programme of deer management for fallow, roe and muntjac, essential for the protection of its woodland flora, ecological function and structure. Deer damage was highlighted as a major risk factor in the HBIC report in 2024. Not only will deer pressure be increased through the loss of habitat available for these species by the footprint of the development, but the potential for people entering the wood from a development of this size is extremely likely, thus making it impossible for us to safely manage the deer population.

There will also be a loss of SINC meadow habitat, and we believe the plans to uplift grassland habitats through BNG are unviable. There is an inherent conflict between managing grasslands for public amenity and biodiversity. The only available option for creating the species rich grassland is to cut to waste (due to the presence of dog faeces within any hay cut) and this will be financially unviable for any site manager. As identified in the submitted SANG Management Plan, grazing in a small SANG with high levels of recreation and dog access is also non-viable in its proposed form, requiring significant additional fencing and infrastructure.

Policy NBE2 Landscape

We believe the development will have an adverse impact on important local, natural and historic features, specifically ancient woodlands and meadows. The Ancient Woodlands of College Copse, Shirlens, Great Nightingale Copse, Twelve Acre Copse SINC's will be surrounded along their total southern length by development under these proposals, the cumulative effect of which is a significant reduction in landscape connectivity, contrary to local planning policy.

For a wilder Hampshire and Isle of Wight

A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales Number: 676313 | Registered Charity Name: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Registered Office: Beechcroft House, Vicarage Lane Curdridge, Hampshire, SO32 2DP | Registered Charity Number: 201081

Policy NBE1 Development in the Countryside

The site is located outside the settlement boundary of Hook in an area designated as countryside. In addition, it is located in a defined Local Gap between Hook and the village of Newnham, as such it is contrary to adopted policies. The development of this site will lead to the coalescence of the village with Hook, thereby significantly impacting on the local character of the area

We also believe our ability to operate our rural operations will be negatively affected. The housing will be in range of our calving and lambing locations (fields and barns) and likely result in statutory noise and odour complaints. There are likely to be increased incidences of damage to fences, with risk of livestock escape, disturbance and stress to cows, calves, sheep and lambs, as well as physical harm to the livestock from the increased likelihood of dogs worrying livestock.

The above advice is given based on the information made available at this time and may change should further or amended details be submitted. We trust that you will find our comments helpful and if you wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to do so. I also ask that you keep the Trust informed of the progress and outcome of this application.

Yours sincerely,

Lorna Selby

Policy & Advocacy Officer

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