



**Hampshire &
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Wildlife Trust**

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Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust response to Hart District Council Local Plan Scoping Consultation

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to Hart District Council's Local Plan Scoping Consultation. The Trust is an independent charity founded in 1961 and part of The Wildlife Trusts movement. Locally, we have more than 29,500 members and manage around 5,000 hectares of land for wildlife across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

We have been a key partner in the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, providing ecological evidence, mapping nature-based solutions and supporting community engagement. We are now helping to drive implementation through local restoration projects, partnership working and ambitious place-based programmes. Our Wilder 2030 strategy can be found [here](#).

Nature recovery should be a central strategic priority within the Hart Local Plan. It should be embedded across the plan's vision, objectives, spatial strategy, site allocations and development management policies, helping Hart to meet housing and infrastructure needs while strengthening climate resilience, public health, local prosperity and ecological networks.

Strategic planning context

Planning is a critical place-shaping tool. It should not treat nature as a constraint, but as essential infrastructure that supports healthy communities, resilient places, sustainable growth and long-term economic wellbeing.

It is essential that, as we move through Local Government Reorganisation, planning reform and Devolution, we proactively harness the opportunity to align Local Plan policy with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and emerging strategic planning arrangements across Hampshire and the Solent in order to deliver truly sustainable development for the region.

We are keen to work constructively with Hart District Council by providing local ecological expertise, supporting community and stakeholder engagement and helping to deliver a nature-positive, sustainable Local Plan.

1. Nature recovery and spatial strategy

Make nature recovery a strategic objective of the Local Plan

The Local Plan should include nature recovery as a strategic objective and use the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) as a core spatial framework for plan-making, site selection and development management.

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This will help the Council meet its biodiversity duty, support delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain, avoid harm to priority habitats and strengthen ecological connectivity across Hart and neighbouring authority areas. It will also help align the Local Plan with wider strategic planning, including emerging Spatial Development Strategies for Hampshire and the Solent.

The guiding principle should be that development gives back more to nature than it takes away. Nature-based solutions should be embedded throughout the Local Plan, ensuring that they contribute to:

- Adapting to the impacts of climate change
- Preventing the loss of biodiversity and protecting our natural capital
- Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities
- Building stronger and more resilient communities

Support delivery of 30x30 and the Nature Recovery Network

The UK has committed to protect and conserve at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 and to halt the decline of species abundance by 2030. Local plans are an important mechanism for translating these national commitments into local delivery.

Hart should set clear, measurable targets for nature recovery and report progress transparently, including the proportion of land protected and managed for nature. Current LG Inform data indicates that 12.5% of Hart's total land area is protected, including land designated as Green Belt. The Local Plan should set out how this will increase and how LNRS priorities will be delivered.

The Hampshire LNRS identifies Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) and Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACB). These should directly inform the spatial strategy, site allocations and mitigation requirements.

Use the LNRS to guide development and avoid harm

The Nature Recovery Network is based on the Lawton principles of making habitats bigger, better, more numerous and more joined up. Hart's Local Plan should strengthen ecological networks within the district and across administrative boundaries.

Development should be directed away from APIB areas. Development affecting ACB areas should only be considered where it avoids undermining LNRS objectives and delivers enhanced mitigation, including higher Biodiversity Net Gain and high-quality green infrastructure.

Plan strategically across boundaries

The Local Plan should support a coherent cross-boundary approach to nature recovery, climate resilience, river catchments, nutrient neutrality, coastal systems and green and blue infrastructure.

We recommend that Hart works with neighbouring authorities, Hampshire County Council, the Hampshire and Solent Combined County Authority and environmental partners to ensure that future strategic planning aligns growth with environmental capacity and LNRS priorities.

2. Reflect the Council's biodiversity duty through strong nature-based policies

The Local Plan should translate the Council's biodiversity duty into clear, deliverable policy requirements. These should be robust, measurable and capable of monitoring and reporting, while going beyond minimum national requirements where local evidence justifies higher ambition.

Biodiversity

Policy should protect and enhance designated and non-designated wildlife sites, embed the mitigation hierarchy, safeguard protected species and require development to contribute to the LNRS and wider Nature Recovery Network.

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Biodiversity Net Gain

The Local Plan should encourage and, where justified by evidence, require Biodiversity Net Gain above the statutory 10% minimum. We recommend that Hart assesses the viability of a minimum 20% BNG requirement, particularly for strategic sites and development affecting LNRS opportunity areas.

A higher BNG target would better reflect the scale of the ecological crisis, support the Council's biodiversity duty and help ensure that development contributes meaningfully to nature recovery rather than simply meeting a minimum threshold.

Hart should also ensure that BNG delivery is secured, monitored and enforced effectively over the long term, with preference given to measures that align with LNRS priorities and deliver multiple benefits for people and nature.

Green and blue infrastructure

The Local Plan should include a strong green and blue infrastructure policy that supports biodiversity, climate adaptation, flood resilience, water management, public health and access to nature.

New development should provide high-quality, multifunctional green infrastructure designed from the outset, rather than added as residual landscaping. Existing communities should also benefit from improved access to nature-rich spaces.

We recommend that the Council uses Building with Nature, or an equivalent local standard, to secure consistent quality across wellbeing, biodiversity and water outcomes.

Nutrient neutrality

Policy should prioritise nutrient mitigation schemes that also deliver wider environmental benefits. Where possible, nutrient neutrality, Biodiversity Net Gain and habitat creation should be integrated and aligned with LNRS priorities.

The Trust is experienced in delivering nitrates mitigation and wider nature-based solutions and would welcome further discussion with the Council on delivery opportunities.

Water efficiency

Water scarcity is a growing strategic risk. The Local Plan should require ambitious water efficiency standards for new development, particularly given water stress across much of southern England.

We recommend that the Local Plan includes a target of 90 litres per person per day or less for new homes, supported by water reuse, sustainable drainage and nature-based approaches to water management.

Recreational disturbance

The Local Plan should include clear policy to avoid, mitigate and monitor recreational pressure on designated and non-designated wildlife sites. On-site provision should be the first preference; where this is not possible, alternative greenspace should be nearby, accessible, attractive and capable of genuinely diverting pressure from sensitive sites.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring requirements should be clearly set out where relevant. The Council should also assess impacts on local nature reserves and other non-designated sites that contribute to the ecological network.

Monitoring and review mechanisms should be included to ensure mitigation remains effective over time.

Key recommendations:

- Include nature recovery as a strategic priority within the Local Plan vision, objectives and spatial strategy.
- Commit to increasing the area of land protected and managed for nature, contributing to the national 30x30 target and the objective to halt nature's decline by 2030.
- Use the Hampshire LNRS, including APIB and ACB mapping, to inform the spatial strategy, site allocations and mitigation priorities.
- Run a Call for Nature Sites alongside any Call for Sites to identify local opportunities for restoration, protection and community-led nature recovery.
- Avoid allocating development in APIB areas and apply a strong nature-positive test to any proposals affecting ACB areas.
- Require high-quality design standards, such as Building with Nature or an equivalent Council standard, where development interacts with strategic nature recovery opportunities.
- Strengthen ecological connectivity across Hart and neighbouring authority areas to support a coherent Nature Recovery Network.
- Reflect the Council's biodiversity duty through strong policies on nature recovery, Biodiversity Net Gain, green and blue infrastructure, nutrient neutrality, water efficiency and recreational disturbance.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with Hart District Council as the Local Plan progresses. We can support the Council in identifying opportunities for nature-based solutions, including nutrient neutrality and Biodiversity Net Gain.

In addition, we can help engage our members, local communities and wider networks to identify sites and opportunities of community and environmental importance, including through a Call for Nature Sites and potentially other forms of community engagement.

We look forward to continuing constructive dialogue with Hart District Council and would be happy to meet to discuss how the Trust can support the development and delivery of a nature-positive, resilient and deliverable Local Plan.

Warm regards,

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