

Issue 08 Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape (WEL29 – WEL35)**8.1 What is the evidential basis for the 108 ha of green infrastructure referred to in paragraph 8.6? Are the standards set out in policy WEL29 justified?**

The 108ha of GI referred to in para. 8.6 is the area shown as GI in the Strategic Framework Diagram. Paragraph 8.6 acknowledges that the 108ha is in excess of the c.90ha required by WEL29 (and the 80ha implied by para 8.7 once the potential allowance for the double counting of the secondary school pitches is taken into account). Paragraph 8.6 seeks to explain the larger amount in terms of buffer spaces to adjacent settlements and large areas of incidental open space, but some/much of this could fulfil the role of semi natural green space. Para 8.6 also states that the higher level of provision is consistent with the infrastructure planning for Welborne, but actually the discussion of this in paras 8.11 et seq seems only to relate to the areas required by WEL29 and doesn't provide a justification for the higher level of provision.

Therefore the Joint Promoters (JP) do not believe that the figure of 108ha of GI referred to in para 8.6 is justified by the evidence base. It is simply an illustration of a master plan approach that exceeds the level of provision required by WEL29 and it has the potential to become a source of confusion.

In terms of the standards in WEL29, the rates of provision set out in the Welborne Plan seem to be derived from the figures set out in the Approved Core Strategy (Policy CS21 - 1.5ha/1,000 parks and amenity open space, 1.2 ha/1,000 sports provision, plus play provision). CS21 does not make specific provision for accessible semi-natural green space but the text immediately before the policy talks about new housing being required to provide 2ha of SNGS, plus 1ha of LNR and this is reflected in WEL29 setting a standard of 3ha/1,000 for SNGS (to include LNRs). The figure for allotments is taken from the FBC Allotments Strategy. Given the evidence base (from PUSH documents, FBC's own studies and the CS evidence documents), it would be reasonable to accept that the standards for core GI provision are justified.

8.2 Is the Council's methodology and reasoning in relation to the SANGs provision sound?

JP consider the methodology to be sound because Natural England have cited it as a good basis on which to work. Residents surveys have been undertaken showing that a large proportion of existing North Fareham/Funtley/Knowle residents (who are a suitable proxy for Welborne residents) have confirmed that they would utilise SANG as at least a partial alternative to the coast. 73% of regular out-of-season Solent coast visitors resident in North Fareham/Funtley/Knowle said they would use the SANG. 8% of those said they would use the SANG as an alternative to the coast, while 70% said they would divide their time equally between the SANG and the coast (thus reducing the number of coast visits that would otherwise be made). JP suggest a revised Policy WEL30 which is set out below.

Suggested amendments to WEL30

WEL30 - Avoiding and Mitigating the Impact on Internationally Protected Sites and Off-site Green Infrastructure

Development proposals shall be accompanied by a full assessment of the potential impacts on habitats and biodiversity of all sites of international importance that may be adversely impacted through the development of Welborne. This assessment shall consider the impacts in combination with other nearby sites allocated for development as identified in the accompanying Habitats Regulations Assessment. The assessment shall set out the on-site and off-site measures proposed in order to avoid or mitigate potential impacts on these internationally protected sites.

In order to avoid or mitigate potential impacts on the internationally protected sites on the Solent, it is expected that a suitable package of mitigation measures be provided, comprising:

- *Either, 70% of the suitable alternative natural green space (SANGS) standard of 8 hectares of natural green space per 1,000 population (equating to 84 hectares based on 6,000 dwellings applied to the anticipated peak population at Welborne of around 15,000) either on or immediately adjoining the site, with the remaining 30% of the standard covered through financial contribution; or*
- *An alternative strategy, to be agreed by the Council and Natural England, comprising a suitable alternative mix of SANGS, on site green infrastructure and financial contribution that would be sufficient to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect.*

The financial contribution shall be used towards implementing the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Strategy. This shall provide for the mitigation of the potential impacts on the internationally protected sites along the Solent coastline that cannot be achieved solely through the delivery of on and off-site green infrastructure at Welborne.

The Council will continue to work with Winchester City Council to determine the appropriate uses of the natural greenspace within their area and the management that will be required. It is expected that a financial contribution will be required from the Welborne development to lay out and help fund ongoing management of these areas.

8.3 Is there any substantive evidence that the development should contribute to the protection of the New Forest SPA from increased recreational disturbance?

JP do consider the New Forest in the HRA and FBC have also discussed it in their HRA. Essentially, JP consider that the large amount of SANG provided at Welborne will be sufficient to address the New Forest also, given that very few existing residents of the area regularly visit the New Forest. See attached extract from our HRA. Natural England are not unduly concerned about impacts on the New Forest from Welborne.

8.4 Has the Council given consideration to the role that land north and south of Funtley Road, Funtley, could play in mitigating the impact of the proposed development in terms of biodiversity? If so, what conclusions were drawn?

North of Funtley Road is a recreation ground and to the south is a natural area surrounding a lake which may have been a former minerals/brick pit. Both areas are outside the Welborne boundary. The area to the north is contiguous with the proposed settlement buffer to Funtley. It is unclear what assessment has been undertaken by FBC as regards biodiversity. The recreation area is a managed recreational space while the land around the lake is much more natural and likely to support a high degree of biodiversity. In addition to these areas there is a parcel of land to the east of Mayles Lane that was transferred by the HCA to the Land Trust to provide a (accessible) recreational and ecological resource.

8.5 Does policy WEL31 provide sufficient protection for important habitats and species? The policy refers to both an ecological assessment and a biodiversity assessment – are they the same thing?

JP consider that it does provide sufficient protection: it covers the key bases – need to establish a baseline, assess impacts, provide mitigation and indeed provide a net enhancement for ecology. The ecological assessment and biodiversity assessment are the same thing.

In addition, there will be a significant ecological chapter, as part of the EIA, plus the HRA work specifically relating to the SPA. Both of these will identify the baseline position, specify potential impacts and suggest suitable mitigation responses, as well as opportunities to protect existing assets and, importantly, improve and create new habitat assets. Added to that will be the GI strategy setting out how the various elements of this mitigation will be delivered as part of a comprehensive open space provision, over time and in a phased and logical manner. Taking account of these three strands of work, all of which relate to WEL 31, it is reasonable to say that the Welborne Plan is seeking to afford sufficient protection to important habitats and species.

8.6 How will green connections to outside Fareham Borough be achieved? Is this element of policy WEL32 deliverable?

A number of the off-site connections are in Winchester, but some of these are established public rights of way. The ownership of Mayles Lane has been transferred from the HCA to the Land Trust with the objective of providing an accessible recreational route. There are a number of points where missing links are needed across 3rd party land such as to connect to the disused railway line to the north of the Meon (para. 8.38 bullet 3) and the deliverability of these elements is outwith the control of the site promoters. FBC in partnership with HCC and WCC should develop a strategy to make these connections.

8.7 Policy WEL33 includes reference to ‘a new garden community’.

The resurgence of interest in Garden Cities and Suburbs, including the specific reference to Garden City principles in Para.52 to the NPPF emerged during the preparation of the AAP. The relevance of Garden City principles to the Welborne Plan is set out in the Preferred Option Master Plan Report by LDA Design (April 2013). This recognised some key parallels in terms of aspirations for self containment and models of long term governance, but concluded that the Garden City approach to layout required too much land to be achievable today. Hence, the report identified the potential for a ‘compact Garden City’ model that maintains a recognisable Garden City character but with a greater emphasis on creating walkable neighbourhoods with higher residential densities.

JP share the vision for a 21st Century Garden City environment at Welborne and recognise the opportunity to draw together the enduring qualities of the original Garden Cities and Suburbs with more recent urban design and planning thinking. However, there is an important difference of view in terms of the extent to which densities can be increased without fundamentally undermining the character and quality of a Garden City environment and the key climate change mitigation and public health and well-being benefits that should be at the heart of a 21st Century Garden City approach. JP believe that the optimum approach should emerge through more detailed design development and that the delivery of a 21st Century Garden City/Community at Welborne should not be undermined by a rigid adherence to a 6,000 dwelling requirement.