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Braintree District Council
Brentwood Borough Council
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Chelmsford Borough Council
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Maldon District Council
Rochford District Council
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Tendring District Council
Thurrock Borough Council
Uttlesford District Council
Essex Place Services

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear All,

Strategic approach for the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) – Updated advice relating to the adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document and subsequent ‘delivery’ phase of the strategic solution.

This letter provides Natural England’s updated position, further to the strategic correspondence on the interim period of the Essex Coast RAMS, dated 16th November 2017 and 16th August 2018. Natural England’s advice during the development of the strategic solution has been to ensure that any residential planning applications coming forward ahead of the Essex Coast RAMS which have the potential to impact on coastal European designated sites are compliant with the Habitats Regulations.

In light of the recent preparation of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), to facilitate the planning mechanisms of the strategic solution and collection of financial contributions, Natural England understands that the next phase of the strategic solution is the ‘delivery phase’, whereby the work to establish the solution has been completed and adopted by all participating authorities. We want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your work on the project so far, and we look forward to working with you to make the project as successful as possible.

Natural England is pleased with the approach and cooperation between the planning authorities within Essex to establish the strategic solution and welcome the delivery of this work, which seeks to establish a consistent approach towards mitigation of the ‘in-combination’ recreational impacts on the Essex Coast designated sites. It is nevertheless still important for certain projects closest to the designated sites to carefully consider whether their effect may be significant ‘alone’, for which additional measures may be required.

Natural England continues to endorse this strategic approach and it is our intention to continue supporting the Essex Coast RAMS and the work of the planning authorities, moving forwards, through the Essex Coast RAMS steering group or other such meetings and we welcome the

continued discussion of these issues and the establishment of on-the-ground mitigation as a result of the scheme.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of embedded ongoing monitoring for the Essex Coast RAMS, to ensure the evidence at hand remains the most up to date and best available, but also as a mechanism to ground truth and measure success of the mitigation in place. We would be happy to support the Planning Authorities as necessary.

Finally, as per our previous advice to your Authorities, Natural England would remind all participating Local Planning Authorities of the need to consider suitable avoidance mitigation measures as part of individual planning applications, alongside the RAMS tariff contribution. Annex I of our previous advice letter (dated 16th August 2018, NE reference 244199), set out our advice on the incorporation of well-designed open space/green infrastructure for larger scale developments. This is because such provisions can help minimise any predicted increase in recreational pressure through containing recreational uses away from the European sites and within or around the development site boundaries.

We have also become aware throughout the interim period that developments within built up or more densely populated areas may not always be able to provide the recommended open space measures on site, often due to site constraints. We would therefore suggest where this is the case, that planning authorities integrate the need for such avoidance measures through strategic plans where possible, such as relevant Green Infrastructure Strategies, to allow for strategic provision of GI as an avoidance mitigation measure.

In summary, Natural England is pleased to offer our endorsement to the Essex Coast RAMS SPD and we anticipate that the Councils will be happy to support the project formally through the necessary processes.

For any queries relating to the specific context in this letter only, please contact Heather Read at heather.read@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,
Heather Read

Essex Area Delivery Team