

From: Planning Consultation SEL <planningconsultationSEL@forestrycommission.gov.uk>
Sent: 10 July 2020 16:15
To: Planning Comments
Subject: SE/19/05000/HYB
Attachments: A summary of Government policy on ancient woodland.pdf

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Area Director
Craig Harrison

RE: SE/19/05000/HYB, DSTL Fort Halstead, Crow Drive, Halstead

Thank you for seeking the Forestry Commission's advice about the impacts that this application may have on Ancient Woodland. As a non-statutory consultee, the Forestry Commission is pleased to provide you with the attached information that may be helpful when you consider the application:

- Details of Government Policy relating to ancient woodland
- Information on the importance and designation of ancient woodland

Ancient woodlands are irreplaceable. They have great value because they have a long history of woodland cover. It is Government policy to refuse development that will result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland, unless "*there are wholly exceptional reasons^[1] and a suitable compensation strategy exists*" (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 175).

We also particularly refer you to further technical information set out in Natural England and Forestry Commission's [Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland](#) – plus supporting [Assessment Guide and Case Decisions](#).

As a Non Ministerial Government Department, we provide no opinion supporting or objecting to an application. Rather we are including information on the potential impact that the proposed development would have on the ancient woodland.

One of the most important features of Ancient woodlands is the quality and inherent biodiversity of the soil; they being relatively undisturbed physically or chemically. This applies both to Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Direct impacts of development that could result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland or ancient and veteran trees include:

- damaging or destroying all or part of them (including their soils, ground flora or fungi)
- damaging roots and understory (all the vegetation under the taller trees)
- damaging or compacting soil around the tree roots

- polluting the ground around them
- changing the water table or drainage of woodland or individual trees
- damaging archaeological features or heritage assets

It is therefore essential that the ancient woodland identified is considered appropriately to avoid the above impacts.

[Planning Practice Guidance](#) emphasises: *'Their existing condition is not something that ought to affect the local planning authority's consideration of such proposals (and it should be borne in mind that woodland condition can usually be improved with good management).'*

If this application is on, adjacent to or impacting the Public Forest Estate (PFE):

Please note that the application has been made in relation to land on the Public Forest Estate and [Forestry England](#), who manage the PFE, is a party to the application. They therefore should also be consulted separately to the Forestry Commission.

If the planning authority takes the decision to approve this application, we may be able to give further support in developing appropriate conditions and legal agreements in relation to woodland management mitigation or compensation measures. Please note however that the Standing Advice states that *"Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable. Consequently you should not consider proposed compensation measures as part of your assessment of the merits of the development proposal"*.

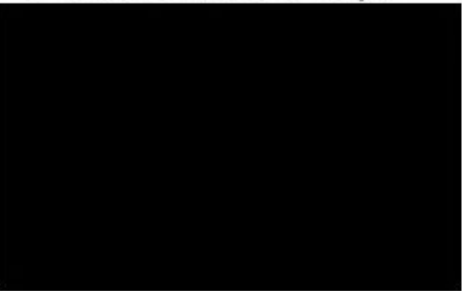
We suggest that you take regard of any points provided by Natural England about the biodiversity of the woodland.

This response assumes that as part of the planning process, the local authority has given due regard as to whether or not an Environmental Impact Assessment is needed under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 or the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, as amended. If there is any doubt regarding the need for an Environmental Impact assessment (Forestry).

We would also like to highlight the need to remind applicants that tree felling not determined by any planning permission may require a [felling licence](#) from the Forestry Commission.

We hope these comments are helpful to you. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the email address provided above.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Gooch
Local Partnerships Advisor, South East and London
Forestry Commission

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[1] For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat.)