

LAND NORTH WEST OF SOUTHWATER

HDA Ref: 2090.78

Client: Berkeley Strategic Land Ltd

Date: 15th September 2026

CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND NORTH WEST OF SOUTHWATER IN RELATION TO THE JULY 2026 WEST SUSSEX LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY (LNRS)

1. This note considers the proposed habitat retention, creation and enhancement works associated with the outline planning application for the proposed development of 116ha Land North West of Southwater, West Sussex (planning reference: DC/26/0366) in the context of the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) published in July 2026.
2. Although the planning application was registered in February 2026, prior to the LNRS being published, the proposed habitat retention, creation and enhancement proposals for the development scheme are very much in keeping with aspirations of the LNRS, and in many instances go beyond the measures set out in the LNRS.
3. Key areas for consideration are discussed below. Further information on measures to retain, protect and enhance the habitat resource of the site are provided in the ES Ecology Chapter:

Woodland:

- The areas of ancient woodland located within the site, comprising Courtland Wood and the contiguous Marlpost Gill in the west and Smiths Copse in the east, are identified on the LNRS map as '*Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity*'. In keeping with the aspirations of the LNRS these will be retained and afforded appropriate buffers and protective measures by the scheme.
- Somewhat surprisingly, given their current condition and lack of management these areas of woodland are not listed in the LNRS as providing opportunity to '*Enhance Ancient Woodland*'. It is considered this is an oversight. The proposed development will therefore secure the long-term management of the two woodland areas, in addition to other areas of woodland habitat within the site.
- In addition, connectivity between the woodlands will be secured through inclusion of a new wooded corridor linking the two areas.

Ancient and Veteran Trees:

- The LNRS identifies ancient and/ or veteran trees in association with Courtland Wood located in the west of the site, and for these it identifies the opportunity to '*Manage existing and future veteran trees*'.

- In addition to trees associated with Courtland Wood, the studies undertaken to inform the planning application identified several other veteran trees across the site. These are generally associated with hedgerows on field boundaries.
- All ancient and/ or veteran trees will consequently be retained within the development scheme and protected in accordance with Natural England Standing Advice. In addition, a management plan will be implemented to secure appropriate management of the veteran trees and new trees will be planted to encourage establishment of a new generation.

Areas that Could become of Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB):

- In addition to existing habitats described above that are identified in the LNRS, the LNRS also identifies areas where habitat creation works could be prioritised to deliver better gains for wildlife, for example by connecting existing areas of habitat or providing complementary habitats to adjacent features such as woodland. In general, these areas currently comprise low quality habitat such as arable farmland or species-poor grassland.
- These are identified in the LNRS as '*Areas that Could become of Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB)*'. Several ACIBs are located within and adjacent to the land northwest of Southwater site and are described below in the context of the proposed development.
 - **Courtland Wood/ Marlpost Gill buffer:** An area of ACIB is identified around the margins of Courtland Wood and the contiguous Marlpost Gill in the west of the site. This area currently comprises arable farmland of limited ecological interest. The landscape scheme for the proposed development identifies that this area will be enhanced to provide a mosaic of species-rich grassland, rough grassland, native scrub and tree planting. These habitats are of high wildlife value and will complement Courtland Wood and Marlpost Gill in addition to providing a meaningful area of habitat in its own right, thereby delivering the aspirations of the LNRS.
 - **Northern plantation woodland:** In keeping with the aspirations of the LNRS, this will be retained and subject to management to improve age structure and species diversity. The woodland will also be complemented by creation and management of adjacent habitats outside of the ACIB, such as native shrub and tree planting, species rich grassland and creation of wetland habitats through the site surface water drainage scheme.
 - **Northwestern site boundary:** A section of the northwestern site boundary is also identified as an ACIB. Although much of the ACIB falls outside the site boundary and is associated with an offsite ditch, it should be noted that the associated hedgerow with trees on the site boundary will be retained and subject to sympathetic management. In addition, a buffer of semi-natural habitat will be provided alongside the hedgerow within the site. This is in keeping with the aspirations of the LNRS.

- **Northern stream corridor:** The stream flowing east to west through the northern part of the site is currently dominated by species-poor grassland. The stream will be retained within the proposed development and subject to management (e.g. control of excessive shade by overhanging vegetation) in addition to creation of a buffer comprising complimentary semi-natural habitats such as species-rich grassland and native shrub planting.

Other:

- In addition to the habitat creation and management measures described above in relation to the LNRS, as described in the ES Ecology Chapter the green infrastructure proposals for the site include provision of a network of semi-natural habitats beyond the opportunities identified in the LNRS. These include creation of species-rich grassland, wetland, scrub and woodland habitats, and will also contribute towards the aspirations of the LNRS.
4. It can therefore be confirmed that the green infrastructure proposals for the Land North West of Southwater site will deliver the aspirations set in the West Sussex LNRS. In addition to securing these measures, for which a mechanism for delivery is not otherwise in place, in many instances the landscape proposals exceed the measures set out in the LNRS through wider habitat creation and enhancement works including additional creation and enhancement of habitats together with additional measures to maintain opportunities for the movement of wildlife within the site and the surrounding area.