Date: 09 October 2025
Our ref: 527660
Your ref: DC/25/0481

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Kate Turner
Horsham District Council
Chart Way
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Ms. Turner,

Planning consultation: Variation of conditions 1, 6, 8 & 11 on approved DC/19/0438 (Mixed use of existing horticultural nursery/education centre to allow for weddings & other events) To increase the number of weddings & other events permitted.
Location: Architectural Plants Ltd, Stane Street, North Heath RH20 1DJ.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 23 September 2025 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

Water Neutrality

NO OBJECTION - SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE MITIGATION BEING SECURED

Natural England considers that without appropriate mitigation the application would:

- have an adverse effect on the integrity of Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection (SPA) and Ramsar site.
- damage or destroy the interest features for which Amberley Wild Brooks Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Pulborough Brooks SSSI have been notified.

In order to mitigate these adverse effects and make the development acceptable, the following mitigation measures are required / or the following mitigation options should be secured:

- The delivery, management and maintenance of any measures identified in the applicant's water neutrality statement that are required to ensure that the proposed development will not result in increased levels of abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

We advise that an appropriate planning condition or obligation is attached to any planning permission to secure these measures.

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other natural environment issues is set out below.

Further Advice on Mitigation

Water Neutrality – Arun Valley designated sites

The proposed development falls within the Sussex North water supply zone. As set out in Natural England's Advice Note regarding planning applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, the existing water supply in the Sussex North water supply zone cannot be ruled out as contributing to the declines in wildlife within internationally protected sites in the Arun Valley SPA, SAC and Ramsar site. Ensuring that there is no net increase in water consumption is recognised as a suitable method to rule out potential adverse effects on the integrity of these sites arising from development.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment of the proposal in accordance with regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Natural England is a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.

Your appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the proposal will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any of the sites in question. Having considered the assessment, and the measures proposed to mitigate for all identified adverse effects that could potentially occur as a result of the proposal, Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions, providing that all mitigation measures are appropriately secured in any planning permission given.

Other Advice

In addition, Natural England would advise on the following issues.

Sussex Bats – The Mens Special Area of Conservation

The proposed development falls within the 6.5km conservation zone for The Mens SAC.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Despite the proximity of the application to European Sites, the consultation documents provided do not include information to demonstrate that the requirements of regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have been considered by your authority, i.e. the consultation does not include a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

It is Natural England’s advice that the proposal is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site. Your authority should therefore determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on any European site, proceeding to the Appropriate Assessment stage where significant effects cannot be ruled out. Natural England must be consulted on any appropriate assessment your authority may decide to make.

We recommend you obtain the following information to help you undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment: lighting assessment and bat scoping survey.

Final Comments

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 28I (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England’s advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

Further general advice on consideration of protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on Hannah.Lee@naturalengland.org.uk.

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Lee
Sustainable Development
Sussex and Kent Area Team