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31<sup>st</sup> October 2019

Dear Sirs

## **Forestry Commission advice re the A27 Arundel Bypass Consultation**

Thank you for seeking the Forestry Commission's advice about the impacts of the options put forward in the latest consultation for an Arundel bypass.

Our advice here builds on that provided in the joint letter from the Environment Agency, Natural England, the South Downs National Park and ourselves on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2019. In this we collectively stressed the implications of 'severance' within the wider landscape in respect of its' ecology, landscape and cultural heritage.

In that context we would highlight the following principles which we encourage you to consider:

1. **Protection of Ancient Woodland and veteran trees:** As noted in the consultation document government policy highlights the irreplaceable nature of these national assets and hence our standing advice is to avoid loss of ancient woodland and buffer it from the impacts of new development to prevent encroachment and degradation. Further information highlighting the implications of development on ancient woodland can be found in Appendix 1.
2. **Preservation of other woodland and existing trees:** Other existing woodland can provide a range of eco-system services and should be protected

and included in the design with appropriate measures to ensure their management in perpetuity.

3. **Inclusion of new trees and woodland in your design:**

- Seek to enhance ecological networks at a landscape scale by connecting and buffering existing woodland (and other priority habitats);
- Consider the species and provenance of new trees and woodland to maintain the ecological value of ancient woodland but also to establish a more resilient 'treescape' which can cope with the full implications of a changing climate;
- Ensure that in planting new trees and woodland biosecurity is robust to avoid the introduction of pests and diseases.

4. **Ensure the sustainable management of associated green infrastructure:**

Where trees and woodland are retained or planted to provide screening, mitigation or compensation consider how the identified function can be sustainably maintained. For instance woodland could be managed as coppice with standards or under a continuous cover system with the income from the wood products supporting the long term management.

5. **Consider how the proposals might help support sustainable management of existing woodland:** by using locally sourced wood/timber in associated infrastructure.

Specific observations on each option which we would draw your attention to:

**Option 3V1:** The scale of the loss of ancient woodland (> 20 hectares) and the implications of the severance this route would cause on the wider Binsted Wood Ancient Woodland complex is unprecedented in recent times.

**Option 4/5AV2:** Cuts through the centre of Barns Copse and Hundredhouse Copse resulting in the loss of 5.33 ha of ancient woodland which we understand has been noted as retaining very rare bat species.

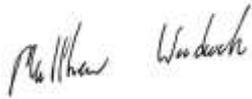
**Option 4/5 AV1:** Results in the loss of 2.5 ha of ancient woodland and may well impinge on the movement of the rare bat populations within the Barns Copse.

**Option 5/BV1:** While this route represents the lowest impact on ancient woodland (Loss of 1.5 ha of ancient woodland) we note the significant landscape severance the route would create.

**Option 1/V5 and Option 1 V9:** While these options would result in the loss of 8.37 ha and 7.44 ha of ancient woodland respectively we would encourage you to consider whether this level of loss could be further reduced by appropriate engineering. If one of these routes were chosen we would also ask whether the impact of the loss could be partly compensated for by re-establishing ecological links between the ancient woodland to the south (Binstead woods) and to the North (Rewell Wood), for instance with 'green' bridges.

We hope these comments are helpful to you. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Woodcock  
Partnership & Expertise Manager South East

## **Appendix 1:**

**Ancient Woodland.** The Forestry Commission is pleased to provide you with the below information that may be helpful for you to consider:

- 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, with many features remaining undisturbed. This applies equally to Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

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 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](#).

Please be aware of the information provided on the [Ancient Woodland Inventory](#) (maintained by Natural England), which can be viewed on the [MAGIC Map Browser](#).

If one of the routes is chosen, in principle, to take to detailed design we may be able to give further support in developing appropriate design, woodland management mitigation or compensation measures. Please note however that the Standing Advice states that

*“Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable.”*

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

We also assume that as part of any forthcoming Development Consent Order, a screening opinion as to whether or not an Environmental Impact Assessment is needed. If not, it is worth advising you approach the Forestry Commission to provide an opinion as to whether or not an Environmental Impact Assessment is needed under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, as amended.

## A summary of Government policy on ancient woodland

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#) (published October 2006).

**Section 40** – “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) (published July 2018).

**Paragraph 175** – “*development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists*”.

[National Planning Practice Guidance](#) – Natural Environment Guidance. (published March 2014)

This Guidance supports the implementation and interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework. This section outlines the Forestry Commission’s role as a non statutory consultee on “*development proposals that contain or are likely to affect Ancient Semi-Natural woodlands or Plantations on Ancient Woodlands Sites (PAWS) (as defined and recorded in [Natural England’s Ancient Woodland Inventory](#)), including proposals where any part of the development site is within 500 metres of an ancient semi-natural woodland or ancient replanted woodland, and where the development would involve erecting new buildings, or extending the footprint of existing buildings*”

It also notes that ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat, and that, in planning decisions, **Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) should be treated equally in terms of the protection afforded to ancient woodland in the National Planning Policy Framework**. It highlights the Ancient Woodland Inventory as a way to find out if a woodland is ancient.

[The UK Forestry Standard](#) (4th edition published August 2017).

Page 23: “Areas of woodland are material considerations in the planning process and may be protected in local authority Area Plans. These plans pay particular attention to woods listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and areas identified as Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs)”.

[Keepers of Time](#) – A Statement of Policy for England’s Ancient and Native Woodland (published June 2005).

**Page 10** “The existing area of ancient woodland should be maintained and there should be a net increase in the area of native woodland”.

[Natural Environment White Paper “The Natural Choice”](#) (published June 2011)

**Paragraph 2.53** - This has a “renewed commitment to conserving and restoring ancient woodlands”.

**Paragraph 2.56** – “The Government is committed to providing appropriate protection to ancient woodlands and to more restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites”.

[Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees](#) (first published October 2014, revised November 2018)

This advice, issued jointly by Natural England and the Forestry Commission, is a material consideration for planning decisions across England. It explains the definition of ancient woodland, its importance, ways to identify it and the policies that are relevant to it.

The Standing Advice refers to an [Assessment Guide](#). This guide sets out a series of questions to help planners assess the impact of the proposed development on the ancient woodland.

[Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services](#) (published August 2011).

**Paragraph 2.16** - Further commitments to protect ancient woodland and to continue restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

## Importance and Designation of Ancient and Native Woodland

### **Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW)**

Woodland composed of mainly native trees and shrubs derived from natural seedfall or coppice rather than from planting, and known to be continuously present on the site since at least AD 1600. Ancient Woodland sites are shown on Natural England's Inventory of Ancient Woodland.

### **Plantations on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)**

Woodlands derived from past planting, but on sites known to be continuously wooded in one form or another since at least AD 1600. They can be replanted with conifer and broadleaved trees and can retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi. Very old PAWS composed of native species can have characteristics of ASNW. Ancient Woodland sites (including PAWS) are on Natural England's Inventory of Ancient Woodland.

### **Other Semi-Natural Woodland (OSNW)**

Woodland which has arisen since AD 1600, is derived from natural seedfall or planting and consists of at least 80% locally native trees and shrubs (i.e., species historically found in England that would arise naturally on the site). Sometimes known as 'recent semi-natural woodland'.

Other woodlands may have developed considerable ecological value, especially if they have been established on cultivated land or been present for many decades.

## Information Tools – The Ancient Woodland Inventory

This is described as provisional because new information may become available that shows that woods not on the inventory are likely to be ancient or, occasionally, vice versa. In addition ancient woods less than two hectares or open woodland such as ancient wood-pasture sites were generally not included on the inventories. For more technical detail see [Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory](#). Inspection may determine that other areas qualify.

As an example of further information becoming available, Wealden District Council, in partnership with the Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, the Woodland Trust and the High Weald AONB revised the inventory in their district, including areas under 2ha. Some other local authorities have taken this approach.

## Further Guidance

[Felling Licences](#) - Under the Forestry Act (1967) a Felling Licence is required for felling more than 5 cubic metres per calendar quarter. Failure to obtain a licence may lead to prosecution and the issue of a restocking notice.

[Environmental Impact Assessment](#) - Under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, as amended, deforestation which is likely to have a significant impact on the environment may also require formal consent from the Forestry Commission.