Natural Basingstoke

Registered Charity No. 1211649

Local Plan 2026–2040 Scoping Consultation — Summary of Natural Basingstoke response

1. Overview

The borough of Basingstoke and Deane currently benefits from a diverse range of ecologically valuable natural habitats, including ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, species-rich downland, and rare chalk-streams.

In the coming years, thousands of new homes are due to be built across the borough, to meet a Government target. Natural Basingstoke is asking our local authority to ensure that this development is undertaken in harmony with our natural environment. Our most valuable habitats must be protected from development, wildlife habitats must be connected, individual developments must respect nature, and development must be accompanied by measures to protect our rivers and assure our water supply.

The Local Plan Scoping Consultation is important as it sets the ambition for the new plan, including the evidence that will be used to make decisions, how these decisions will be made and how the views of the public will be taken into consideration.

The sections below summarise Natural Basingstoke's detailed response to the Local Plan 2026–2040 Scoping Consultation.

2. Strategic planning and nature recovery requests:

NB-01 — Use ecological evidence before making spatial choices. Bring together the Hampshire LNRS, existing habitat evidence, BDBC ecological-network mapping and important local ecological records. Distinguish protected or important existing assets and demonstrated wildlife links from inferred links and restoration opportunities. Publish a proportionate method showing how this evidence will shape options, with targeted checks where uncertainty could change a decision.

NB-02 — Show how nature influences the alternatives. Explain how environmental evidence affected the development, comparison, revision, and eventual selection of reasonable growth patterns, including suitable urban and previously developed land. Where material ecological evidence changes a candidate site score or decision, retain an understandable explanation. Consideration of habitat damage should not be deferred until after preferred locations are chosen.

NB-03 — Require wildlife-friendly development that actually functions. Protect important existing habitats and wildlife connections through appropriate safeguards and the avoid–mitigate–compensate hierarchy. Set locally justified ecological green infrastructure standards independently of recreational open-space quantities where functions conflict. Address disturbance, suitable wildlife features, evidence-led buffers, and management over time.

NB-04 — Measure real recovery, not announcements. Improve outcomes 8 and 9 with practical measures of habitat condition, important ecological connections, and established restoration. Distinguish proposals, secured commitments, completed work and ecological results. Name the data owner and monitoring interval, with feasible milestones or 2040 targets where evidence supports them.

NB-05 — Open a practical route for nature recovery beyond BNG. Confirm whether current council and partnership arrangements already encourage and promote voluntary LNRS restoration proposals that are not connected to BNG or nutrient mitigation. If they do not, explore a low-burden, partner-led Call for Nature Sites, or equivalent pilot, with screening, willing landowners, possible funding, long-term management and collaboration across catchments and council boundaries.

NB-06 — Demonstrate that growth is compatible with healthy rivers. Distinguish sustainable abstraction and river flows from the capacity of water pipes, sewers, and treatment works. Show how wastewater and infrastructure uncertainty affect where and when growth occurs. Give the Loddon and Enborne catchments evidence-based attention alongside the Test and Itchen without confusing their different nutrient requirements.

NB-07 — Bring specialist evidence into the process early. Invite appropriate ecological, Hampshire LNRS, catchment, and community expertise to comment on the datasets and methods used before spatial choices become fixed; publish suitable non-sensitive maps and assumptions so they can be understood and scrutinised.

3. Consultation-analysis safeguard:

NB-08 — Keep material technical requests traceable. Explain how any AI-assisted analysis handles annexes and identifies issues requiring expert officer or consultant consideration. Related representations can be grouped into themes, but distinct actions—NB-01 to NB-08 and IIA-01 to IIA-07—should remain discoverable. As any Model Local Plan template is adopted, material ecological consultation issues should remain linked to the evidence, policies, or reasons for decisions. No individual published response to each recommendation is sought.

4. Focused requests for the Integrated Impact Assessment

IIA-01 — Evidence quality. Separate well-evidenced ecological links from modelled connections and potential LNRS recovery areas; explain when more verification is needed.

IIA-02 — Harm versus gains. Assess significant adverse habitat loss, fragmentation, severance, irreversibility, and recovery time separately from potential ecological improvements; possible benefits must not conceal significant damage.

IIA-03 — Alternatives and ecological reasons. Explain how evidence shaped reasonable spatial alternatives and record proportionate reasons for materially changed or retained ecological site scores, boundaries, and selection decisions.

IIA-04 — Combined and cross-boundary effects. Examine cumulative effects and relevant connected ecological systems, including catchments and networks beyond the borough.

IIA-05 — Water dependencies. Assess sustainable water supply, distribution, wastewater treatment and receiving-water ecology as separate constraints, link materially uncertain infrastructure to options and phasing.

IIA-06 — Mitigation realism. Distinguish credibly deliverable mitigation from conditional or speculative measures, noting dependencies such as land control, funding and infrastructure establishment delays and significant harm remaining afterwards.

IIA-07 — Assessment roles. Keep Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/ Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), any required Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and any relevant Environmental Delivery Plan framework legally distinct, while carrying relevant findings into the planning assessment.