Response to Chichester District Council **Policy S30: Strategic Wildlife Corridors** Thursday, 24 January 2019

General comments on Strategic Wildlife Corridors background paper

4.5 For more details on the methodology, please refer to appendices 1 – 3.

Section 4.5 refers to appendices 1 – 3, which do not appear to be available within the consultation version of this document.

4.8 The A259, the railway line and the A27 provide a barrier to some species of wildlife; anecdotally this can be seen from the roadkill whereby individual larger mammals, such as foxes, badgers and deer, have been unsuccessful in crossing. Others individuals will be more successful, particularly at night, and birds, insects and some species of bat will be less affected by these barriers. Evidence indicates that water voles and other mammals are crossing the A27 through culverts and under the bridges. In addition, where these barriers are particularly vegetated, they are providing a wildlife corridor, running east to west.

Wildlife corridors are designed to provide useable connectivity, encouraging and enabling wildlife to travel safely between otherwise isolated habitats and areas designated for protection or for endangered and/or protected species. Where significant barriers, such as main roads bisect these corridors, it is essential that adequate mitigation is put in place to enable wildlife to cross them easily and to avoid the creation of a "killing trap." It is unclear how this plan seeks to provide adequate facilities to support wildlife crossing the A27?

3.3 The presence of protected or rare species data observations within corridor areas indicates actual presence and use by the species named. However, not all areas of the Plan area are equally covered by surveys and many species are under-recorded. Similarly, other areas may have had a concentration of recording effort over time, resulting in an apparent cluster of records which, whilst it represents a true density of records, could be replicated in other areas if more surveying were to be undertaken.

5.66 In 2013 Chichester District Council, in partnership with Forest Research UK, undertook the Chichester District Green Infrastructure Mapping Project. This sought to identify and map the components of the local ecological networks in accordance with the NPPF. The results of this mapping work identified features such as hedgerows, treelines and woodland which are used as ecological corridors by species of bats and also ditches and rifes which are used by water voles. The ecological networks, in addition to high concentrations of species records and the location of priority habitats and designated sites, has enabled the Council to identify four strategic wildlife corridors which connect Chichester Harbour with the South Downs National Park (see Maps 5.1 and 5.2). These corridors do not stop at the plan area boundaries.

It is widely understood that the robustness of habitat network modelling, using a least-cost habitat network model, can vary significantly where they rely solely upon generic data. Data such as this is can be varied in age, accuracy, quality, distribution, quantity and other variable constraints. For example, data obtained from a recent review of UK species, for example found that only 28 out of 1245 species of conservation concern had published information on dispersal distances (Catchpole 2007 & 2006)[i,ii].

Therefore, current and site-specific baseline survey data, together with a regular sustainable programme of monitoring will be fundamental to establishing the efficacy and sustainability of the proposed wildlife corridors.

5.67 The Council will apply an additional layer of planning restraint to the countryside protection policies within these strategic wildlife corridors to ensure that connectivity between the South

Downs National Park and the Chichester Harbour AONB is maintained in the long term. Within the corridors it will be necessary to demonstrate that no land outside the corridor is available for development and the development will not have an adverse impact on the integrity of the corridor.

The converse effect of the introduction of wildlife corridors will see increasing pressure for development and the degradation of existing habitats adjacent to the proposed corridors. It is important to understand the effect that this will have upon wildlife corridors in the future. Where they exist, both edge and smaller island habitats are inextricably important areas to the future viability of the wildlife corridors. This is especially so, where corridors are linear and narrow or pass close to urban areas. The need for buffer strips to reduce the "edge effect" impact and planning constraints to control the management of adjacent land will be essential to avoid the impacts of habitat loss, increased disturbance through recreation, pollution, noise, artificial light-spill, invasion by non-native species and increased predation due to the concentration effect or from increases in rats, squirrels, cats and other predatory species.

Proposals should include plans for physical protection (where necessary), maintenance, restoration, the reintroduction of native populations (where appropriate) and enhancements, such as additional habitat creation.

Corridor specific comments on Strategic Wildlife Corridors background paper

Proposed Hermitage to Westbourne Strategic Wildlife Corridor

Concerns: Lack of crossing facility for A27, A259 and railway line.

Proposed Chidham/East of Nutbourne Strategic Wildlife Corridor

5.5 Alternatives considered: It is difficult to identify an alternative route which will maintain the connections between the various components of the local ecological network. The loss of the treelines, hedgerow and scattered trees connecting to the ancient woodland and LWS, could result in the degradation of their condition. East of the corridor are few ecological features, excluding the watercourse. [The corridor should extend eastward to include four areas of barn owl habitat and the chalk stream adjacent to Newells Lane. Extending south to cutmill Creek]. West of Nutbourne there are a number of ecological features but the close proximity of residential areas and proposed development, mean that the corridor may be too narrow to act as a suitable functional strategic corridor.

Concerns: Lack of crossing facility for A27, A259 and railway line.

Proposed Broadbridge to East Ashling Strategic Wildlife Corridor

5.6 The Chichester Harbour SPA connects to an area of wooded bat habitat, between the A259 and railway line, via watercourses and scattered trees. The proposed corridor follows the watercourses and water vole habitat between the railway line and A27, connecting to an area of woodland (bat habitat) north of the A27 and west of Ratham Lane. North of the A27, the network is extensive and the corridor could travel east or west but goes east to provide the shortest and most direct line to the SDNP boundary at Southbrook Road [Extend west along the south side of Southbrook road to link with the Hermitage to Westbourne Strategic Wildlife Corridor].

Concerns: Lack of crossing facility for A27, A259 and railway line.

Proposed West of Chichester to Fishbourne Strategic Wildlife Corridor

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Concerns: Lack of crossing facility for A27, A259 and railway line.

Proposed Westhampnett to Pagham Harbour Strategic Wildlife Corridor

The corridor should avoid passing the glasshouses at Lagness, which emit considerable light pollution. This will act as a barrier to many species of bat and other nocturnally active creatures. The corridor is also dangerously narrow at this point.

Concerns: Lack of crossing facility for A27, A259 and railway line.

Proposed Aldingbourne and Elbridge Rifes Strategic Wildlife Corridor

The corridor should avoid passing the glasshouses at East Hampnett, which emit considerable light pollution. This will act as a barrier to many species of bat and other nocturnally active creatures.

Concerns: Lack of crossing facility for A27, A259 and railway line.

Both Westhampnett to Pagham Harbour and the Aldingbourne and Elbridge Rifes are far too narrow!

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[i] Catchpole, R.D.J. (2007) England Habitat Network Information Note. Natural England Internal Briefing Note.
[ii] Catchpole, R.D.J. (2006) Planning for biodiversity - opportunity mapping and habitat networks in practice: a technical guide. English Nature Research Report 687, English Nature, Peterborough.