



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES  
2010

M54- M6 Toll Link Road

Planning Inspectorate Reference: TR010054:

**Summary of Natural England's written representations**

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3 November 2020

## Summary

1. Natural England's written representations update the examining authority on progress since our relevant representations dated 18 May 2020. In those representations Natural England expressed our satisfaction with the applicant's assessment of the following matters within our remit:
  - 1.1. European (or 'Habitats') sites
    - Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - 1.2. Nationally designated sites
    - Cannock Chase Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
    - Belvide Reservoir SSSI
    - Four Ashes Pit SSSI
  - 1.3. European protected species –Otter.
  - 1.4. Nationally protected species - Aquatic invertebrates and macrophytes, breeding and wintering birds, terrestrial invertebrates and water voles.
2. The following matters were also agreed as satisfactory subject to mitigation:
  - 2.1. European and nationally protected species
    - 2.1.1 European protected species - A 'letter of no impediment' has been issued for mitigation works involving bats and great crested newts.
    - 2.1.2 Nationally protected species – The need to close a badger sett was identified and the requirement in principle for a corresponding development licence was therefore agreed.
3. We identified the following areas as needing clarification or further information:
  - 3.1. European (or 'Habitats') sites
    - Cannock Extension Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
      - Confirmation that example sites have been screened out.
      - Indirect impacts require consideration. Cannock Extension Canal SAC is hydrologically linked to Chasewater and Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heath SSSI, which will be affected by nitrogen deposition.
  - 3.2. Nationally designated sites
    - Chasewater and the southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI
    - Stowe Pool and Walkmill Claypit SSSI
      - The scheme would result in increases in NOx and nitrogen deposition at these sites further discussions are required over the assessment and conclusions with regards to potential impacts of these increases (alone and cumulatively) and mitigation.
  - 3.3. Impacts on non-statutory sites and UK priority habitats
    - Ancient woodland, Veteran trees and Priority Habitat - Deciduous woodland
      - Ancient woodland is irreplaceable habitat.
      - We are satisfied that the information provided has identified all ancient woodlands except for a site we are aware that Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have flagged as potential ancient woodland.

- Where there is unavoidable loss of ancient woodland the Applicant and Natural England have agreed a ratio of replacement planting and improvement works to Oxden Leasow Wood (also known as Whitgreaves Wood). The detail of the compensation measures requires further discussion.
- Increases in nitrogen deposition on Oxden Leasow Wood and woodland at Brookfield Farm require further discussion on potential impacts on impacts alone and cumulatively.

#### 3.4. Soils (including “best and most versatile land”)

Dialogue with Highways England is ongoing. The main remaining issues are how cumulative loss of best and most versatile (BMV) is reported and minimising BMV loss.

#### 3.5. Biodiversity Net Gain

Discussions on net gain are ongoing and Natural England will continue to work with Highways England to flesh out mitigation and/ or compensation proposals.

### 4. DCO

- 4.1. Our comments at the relevant representations stage regarding the effective delivery of soils, biodiversity and landscape outcomes through the requirements still apply.

### **Natural England**