

Planning Policy Team
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North Tyneside
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12.11.17

Dear Planning Policy team,

Planning consultation: Murton Gap Masterplan engagement draft

Please accept Northumberland Wildlife Trust's comments below regarding the engagement draft document.

We welcome the recognition in the Masterplan vision that the site will “surround a Parkland...that provides valuable habitat for wildlife...within a green natural environment”. We also welcome Masterplan objective b: “...delivery of a healthy natural environment benefiting communities, wildlife and biodiversity”.

In the Masterplan ecology section, we are pleased to see four considerations highlighting the need to improve habitat value, maintain and create suitable wildlife corridors, provide mitigation (including for golden plover) and have consideration for existing trees.

The vision and objectives of the scheme are consistent with the strategic planning approach recommended by the Town and Country Planning Association and the Wildlife Trusts in their July 2012 guidance “[Planning for a healthy environment – good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity](#)”.

These guiding principles of the Masterplan must then be carried robustly through in to the physical design of the Masterplan. The Masterplan maps do highlight much open, green space will be retained in the development scheme, recognising to a degree the value of such green space for community health and wildlife. However, here we have four major concerns:

1. Murton Gap, as is recognised in the Masterplan, is currently a largely agricultural open aspect landscape. Many of the plants and animals using the site are species of such open agricultural landscapes. The Masterplan design will radically impact on the character of this landscape and must ensure that open landscape habitats are created and well managed to ensure both maintenance and enhancement of the landscape for people and nature. The detail of this design is currently not present in the Masterplan and must be more clearly defined. We would urge site planners to respect that Murton sits adjacent to one of the national “[B-Lines](#)” designed by Buglife to address enormous losses of flower-rich grasslands and associated wildlife. Using the Murton scheme to assure the creation and future management of a large and coherent ribbon of flower-rich grassland could make a substantial contribution to wildlife conservation in North Tyneside, including maintenance of habitat space for some of the sites existing plants, birds and mammals, while enabling some efficiencies in ongoing management (rather than managing a range of small-scale habitats).

Such flower-rich open grasslands can also accommodate SUDS provision and community access.

2. The new roads linking sections of the development have the potential to fragment and dislocate open spaces for nature. These roads should be recognised in the Masterplan as potential barriers to achieving the site vision and objectives for wildlife and must be designed to ensure permeability for wildlife.
3. Open green space currently appears unequally designed and zoned across the site. This is particularly obvious in the south-east of the site, where green corridors between the development allocations narrow and also potentially occlude nature connections between the main site green corridor and fields around Monkseaton High School. Relying on site landscaping buffer strips (often constructed from non-native shrubs) to maintain connections for open-landscape wildlife will not be effective and is not appropriate. We would recommend and expect a redesign of the south-eastern Masterplan layout to rebalance space for nature and people, giving the site a better chance to achieve the stated vision.
4. There is no recognition in the Masterplan that new housing and other build development can also provide space for nature as well as people by including build design features like [swift bricks](#), house sparrow boxes and [boundary fence gaps](#) (for species like hedgehog). Such an approach (as per the [Kingsbrook development in Aylesbury](#) highlighted by the media this weekend) would make a strong contribution to overall site distinctiveness and character, making the site richer for both residents and wildlife.

Tackling these challenges is essential to ensure that Masterplan respects North Tyneside's commitment to maintaining and enhancing wildlife-rich spaces. We would be happy to discuss these comments and concerns in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Mason
Director of Living Landscapes