

Hanwood Park: Northamptonshire Badger Group Comments – For public view

29 March 2024

Northamptonshire Badger Group have prepared this statement to be viewed by the public. We have made many representations in relation to the Hanwood Park development over the years, but these are normally redacted from the planning record as our comments may include sensitive information in respect of this vulnerable and legally protected wildlife species.

Northamptonshire Badger Group are a voluntary group who have been in operation for over 40 years. The active committee have multi-faceted badger knowledge and include members who have been badger advisors to Natural England, been involved in large infrastructure developments such as the A14 and Mawsley Village, a Badger Trust employee, badger expert witness for the police, and members who spend their free time dedicated to badgers.

A disproportionately high number of call outs have been received by our group relating to the welfare of badgers at Hanwood Park over the last few years, compared to other development sites.

This includes a 2000% increase in road deaths on the adjacent A14 and new spine road into the development. It also includes destruction or disturbance of badger setts by construction activities.

We have been regularly asked by the Local Planning Authority to give our time to provide planning advice to Hanwood Park, something we are more than happy to do. The group have made previous planning consultation representations, multiple times, over many years. These have included Zoom meetings, written comments, email communication, site visits to supplement their badger surveys, and site meetings. Our various communications as listed have involved the planning dept, developer, council ecologist, developer ecologist and Wildlife Trust. We have continually outlined our concerns and recommendations in relation to the development and badgers.

Our advice at Hanwood Park is not being listened to and we have had to repeat key messages multiple times on each occasion that new comments are sought.

We aim to assist developers by:

- Identifying opportunities for local wildlife to thrive, by retaining and enhancing existing natural features and wildlife corridors. Helping developers to realise the vision that they have published and are marketing to the public and Local Planning Authority.
- Reducing the likelihood of construction work being obstructed or delayed due to conflict with protected wildlife.
- Reducing the likelihood of criminal acts occurring on development sites, relating to protected species.
- Reducing incidents of nuisance and property damage to future occupants and residents on the site. This can also reduce the potential for criminal acts occurring relating to protected species.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BADGER GROUP

Actively involved in the welfare of badgers
in Northamptonshire



RESCUES. SETT RECORDING. EDUCATION. WELFARE. ADVOCACY

Our advice and recommendations are obviously centred around the welfare of the existing badger population in the area. What is good for badgers is generally good for all wildlife and in turn is good for the overall vision being presented for the development and future residents.

The advice we have repeatedly given is aimed at helping Hanwood Park achieve the vision they are presenting to local authorities, the public, existing and future residents, and businesses. This vision is the unique selling point for the Sustainable Urban Extension development and what it will be judged against in the future.

On the surface, the developer is seen to be doing the right thing, by engaging with us regarding the badgers on site at the direction of the LPA. But that is where it ends, they are not properly listening or willing to make adequate changes.

Badgers and other wildlife in the southern A14 end area of the site are suffering and dying as a result of the actions and activities of the development so far. The developer has been advised of specific issues multiple times over multiple years, but has still has not done anything meaningful to address this.

There has been a category of failures, from the initial planning:

- no oversight of the badger mitigation in this area
- no mammal tunnel under the spine road
- removal of important, established hedgerow corridor for connectivity and safe movement (despite approved plans showing this would be retained)
- removal of important habitat and top soil near main badger sett, causing loss of food, flooding and extensive waterlogged land.
- destruction of badger sett – without ecologist preset or doing a pre-check
- destruction of another badger sett– no ecologist pre-check, or ecologist/Clerk of Works on site.
- sale of land to other developers who then had no mitigation on their sites either (no badger mitigation in their planning)
- no green space or corridors suitable for wildlife.
- No native or meaningful planting that could benefit badgers or other wildlife generally at this end of site. Monoculture grass areas are severely waterlogged by the use of inorganic clay subsoils as a growing medium (this also affects recreation areas/school pitches).
- Wildlife is an afterthought in the planning and design process, rather than having these constraints being the initial criteria advising the design.

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- There has been no enforcement or penalty for the detrimental actions that have already taken place, and the developers are still not confirming categorically that anything will be rectified.

It has been accepted that the initial phase of the Hanwood Park development has suffered from a lack of planning & mitigation, to the detriment of the surrounding rural and urban environments and the pre-existing wildlife. Development and engineering work has taken place on all of the available space without badger mitigation, and with no investment in retaining and enhancing existing natural features and wildlife corridors.

This goes against the consultation information the developer has presented to the public for the vision of Hanwood Park. It is not giving new and future residents, or members of the public, the true picture of what is going on and we have little faith around the current mitigation plans for the rest of the wider site.

In our opinion, the consultation documents and marketing materials being presented to the public are not representative of the planning, design and construction that is actually taking place. In effect, this appears to be 'Green Washing'. This ultimately results in poor quality development and the destruction of wildlife.

We continue to believe that subsequent development can respond and adapt in a flexible way, and start to align itself with the key messages in the Hanwood Park Design Code. But this needs more definitive action and commitment by the developer and the Local Planning Authority.

That may mean the redesign of some areas, but this is what should have been done at the very beginning by using the constraints as a starting point for design. It is time that the developer took this seriously.

Northamptonshire Badger Group are prepared to take any further action necessary to continue to protect the welfare of badgers in this area.

We would urge the public with any concerns to contact us to learn more about our group, our involvement in this development and how to help protect the welfare of badgers and other wildlife.

Kind regards

Sally Jones (Secretary)

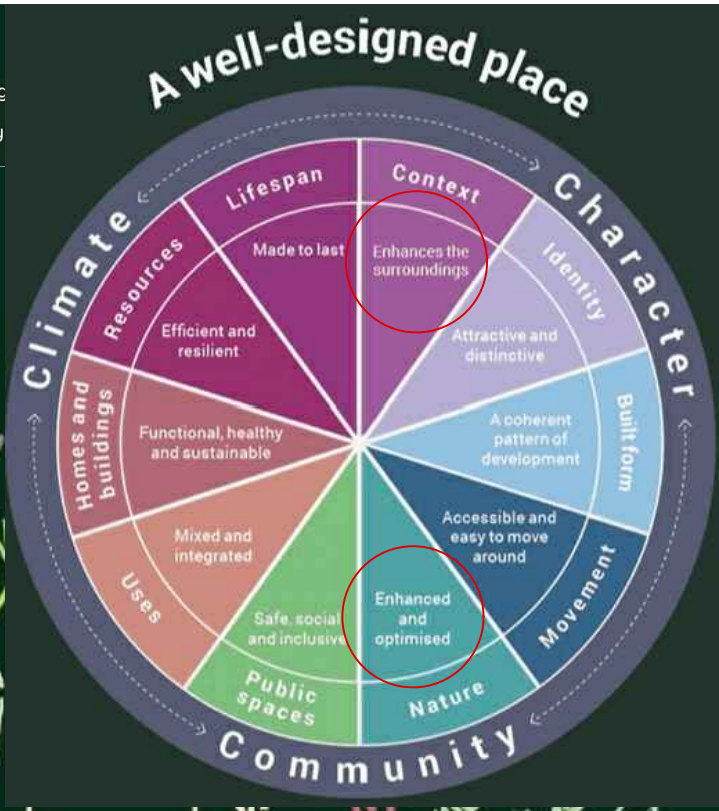
On behalf of Northamptonshire Badger Group Committee

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www.northamptonshirebadgers.co.uk



• New footpath and advanced planting connections to southern parcels to encourage badger movements away from the A14;



- A successful Design Code should be:
- Approachable
 - Understandable
 - Easy to implement
 - **Adaptable**
 - Easy to navigate
 - Easy to police
 - Based on a single drawing that conveys as much information as possible (Framework / Regulatory Plan)
 - Ensure character, distinctiveness and **environmental responsiveness**
 - **Able to adapt or revisit** to allow for future change
 - **Flexible** enough to allow proposals to come forward at RMA stage



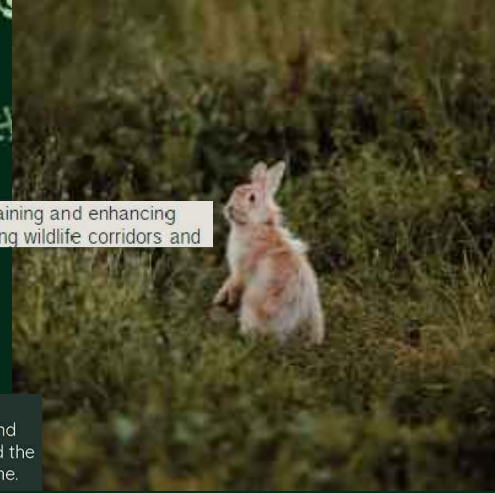
THRIVING GREEN SPACES & BIODIVERSITY

Hanwood Park has been carefully planned from the outset, to blend with the surrounding rural and urban environments. Engagement with local residents, businesses, and stakeholders forms part of this planning process, to help improve the quality of the development.

We would like to see more greenery and protect existing trees and hedgerows?

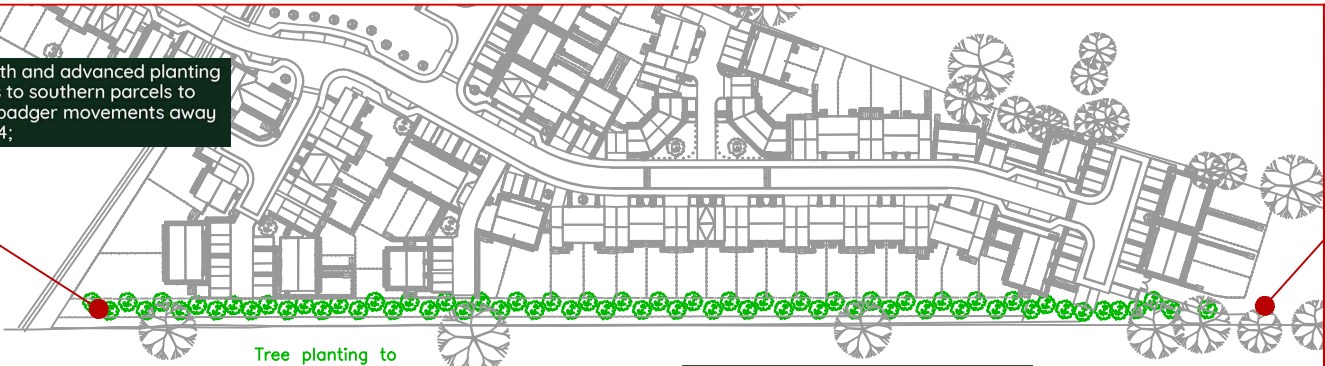
We agree and would also like to see more greenery around homes. Some hedgerow removal may be required but we will commit to advance planting and investigate options to transplant hedgerows if necessary. We recognise the importance that people are placing on the natural environment and the benefit that good quality greenery brings. This will be a key part of the design codes as they are developed following grant of outline planning permission.

We're giving the local wildlife every opportunity to thrive, by retaining and enhancing existing natural features, adding new trees and planting, creating wildlife corridors and connecting previously isolated habitats.



Subsequent phases can not only learn from previous codes, adopt new standards and technologies, respond to changes in the marketplace but also take on board the views of the new community as well as the existing one.

• New footpath and advanced planting connections to southern parcels to encourage badger movements away from the A14;



Tree planting to wildlife corridor



EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES DESTROYED



WILDLIFE CORRIDOR DESTROYED. NO TREE PLANTING

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HEDGROW & WILDLIFE CORRIDOR DESTROYED



Hedgerow cut back to retain 1-2m depth within the site, with an overall hedgerow depth in excess of 4m

Context
Enhances the surroundings



WILDLIFE CORRIDOR DESTROYED



WILDLIFE CORRIDOR DESTROYED



EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES DESTROYED



EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES DESTROYED



INORGANIC CLAY SUBSOIL TO LANDSCAPED AREAS

Enhanced and optimised
Nature



WILDLIFE KILLED

SITE RECORDS 2024 - 'THE REALITY'