

Representation on the Sheffield Plan Publication (Pre-Submission) Draft

Respondent details

Comment ID number: PDSP.136.001

What is your Name: Sheffieldswiftnetwork

If you are making this representation as a member of an organisation, what is the name of your organisation:

Sheffield Swift Network

If you or your organisation are making a representation on behalf of another person, organisation or group, please tell us who it is and its role:

N/A

Document

Which document to you wish to make a representation on:

Part 2: Development Management Policies and Implementation

Which section of the document is your representation on:

Policy GS5: Development and Biodiversity

Which paragraph/site/map layer of the document is representation on:

N/A

Representation

Do you consider the Local Plan is legally compliant: Yes

Do you consider the Local Plan is sound: No

Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the duty to co-operate: Yes

Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate:

We support this clause but on its own it is not sound, because it is not effective. This is because it does not clearly recognise that the biodiversity value of buildings includes critical nest sites of birds such as Swifts which nest almost exclusively in the eaves of urban dwellings and return to the same nest site each summer (May-September) but are migratory, so are not continuously present. Other issues with the policy are outlined in Section 9 alongside suggested changes to wording.

Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified above:

Please include the following text as an additional item or paragraph under GS5 DEVELOPMENT AND BIODIVERSITY: The biodiversity value of buildings includes the regular nest sites of birds such as Swifts and House Martins which return to the same nest site each year between early May and September but as migratory birds, are not continuously present. An ecological survey will advise on the likely presence of such species.

In terms of clarity we note section e) to 'prevent the loss of locally and nationally vulnerable species, instead creating opportunities for them to recover and thrive; and' . No explanation is provided about which locally and nationally vulnerable species this applies to. Examples would at the very least highlight some of the key species of concern (e.g. Swifts). We would also suggest adjusting the wording to: 'prevent the loss of locally and nationally vulnerable species and their habitats'.

- The wording of the policy would be significantly improved by replacing "should" with either "must" or "developments will be required to".
- The absence of coverage of lighting is a serious omission and must be rectified to include the direction of lighting into the development site avoiding sensitive features such as watercourses, woodland edges, trees etc. The use of timers to turn off or dim artificial lighting is also of relevance. Lighting is also worthy of coverage within supplementary guidance to provide detail beyond that which can be included within the policy and supporting text.

Integrated bat and bird boxes

- Taking into account Sheffield Council's declaration of a Biodiversity Emergency, GS5 lacks clarity and ambition with regards to the text about biodiversity enhancements. The existing text in CS5 I) that 'wherever relevant development should 'incorporate design features to enhance biodiversity' does not bind any set level of commitment, particularly in relation to integrated bat and bird boxes.
- Within the Definitions section it states Design features to enhance biodiversity – could include for example green roofs, swift bricks, bird and bat boxes, hedgehog holes in walls and fences, water features, planting native or wildlife-attracting trees, shrubs wildflowers etc. Of these things Biodiversity Net Gain (covered in Policy CS6) already covers the creation of water features and planting of trees, shrubs and wildflowers so it would be better to focus on bat and bird boxes and hedgehog holes.
- Integrated bat and bird boxes can cost as little as £30/unit (roughly 0.0001% of the value of an average English home), whilst hedgehog holes are free. Including boxes at a high ratio in new developments will not impact on plan viability.
- The following respected organisations recommend a ratio of one swift nesting provision per dwelling:
 - o RIBA - 2nd edition Design for Biodiversity
 - o BS42021 Integral nest boxes - Selection and installation for new developments which was published on 29th March 2022
- There are also examples of councils requiring that all new dwellings include bird and/or bat boxes. For example: Greater Cambridge (see <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2474/gcsp-biodiversity-spd-feb-2022.pdf>) require integrated swift boxes in 100% of new dwellings with integrated bat boxes in 25% of new dwellings.

Leeds Council require that "50% of new dwelling buildings should have an integral bat roosting feature or swift brick i.e. one per two detached houses, one per semi-detached house, a terrace of ten houses should have a minimum of five features" and that a large building (school, industrial building, hospital etc.) should have 10 - 20 features

(<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Bat%20Roost%20and%20Swift%20Brick%20Features%20Guidance.pdf>).

- In order for it to be fit for purpose, Policy GS5 should be amended to specifically state that all new dwellings and other new buildings should include at least one integrated swift box.

- The possibility of supplementary guidance needs to be allowed for to provide additional detail to underpin the policy. Possibly combined with supplementary guidance associated with GS6.

Although examples (including 'swift bricks') are given in the 'Definitions' box, there is no clear expectation of the extent to which these will be required. For example several UK Red list bird species – swifts, house sparrow and startling can benefit from the inclusion of cheap swift bricks in all new builds. Integrated bat tiles or bricks are also very affordable and should be standard.

Justification NPPF para179 "Plans should" b) "...and the protection and recovery of priority species" www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#green-infrastructure Paragraph 023 Reference ID: 8-023-20190721) www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#biodiversity-geodiversity-and-ecosystems

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 8-012-20190721

9. Suggested minor amendments/clarifications

a) And j) Addition 'and South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy/Sheffield Nature Emergency Action Plan' e) "Prevent the loss of" Suggest changing to: must include enhancements for the protection and recovery of priority species. - development of all new dwellings must include swift bricks or other bird roosting opportunities and bat bricks/tiles and passage for hedgehogs. - riparian development should include enhancement for riparian species (including bats, otter, kingfisher) depending on how close the development is (due to buffers)

Suggest amendment to l) (and or the definition of Design features to enhance biodiversity): Design features to enhance biodiversity and create opportunities for species could include green and brown roofs, street trees, native shrubs, hedgerows and wildflowers, bird boxes or platforms, swift bricks, bat boxes, bat bricks or tiles, hedgehog holes...

4. 8. A Green City – responding to the Biodiversity Emergency Biodiversity Net Gain 8.24 -8.26 Good policy and supporting text to avoid risks of site clearance before baseline BNG which we know is a growing problem across the country (and developers are more likely to see the relevant wording in a Local Plan than in the Environment Act)

9. Suggested additions to supporting text The Environment Act 2021 requires that 'information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat' is included in the biodiversity gain plan. Sites should not be cleared or substantially altered before the baseline BNG is measured. Within Schedule 14 of the Environment Act, measures are included that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since 30th January 2020 and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of biodiversity net gain. The baseline value reflects the ecological value of the pre-development site, not its size, a small site may still

have value. If a site has a baseline biodiversity unit value of zero, then SCC may agree the appropriate number of units on a site by site basis (rather than a percentage). Further details on how BNG will be implemented will be provided in a Supplementary Planning Document once Secondary Legislation and Guidance has been published in 2023.

It is also important to note that generic bird boxes are not suitable to accommodate Swifts.

If your representation is seeking a modification to the plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s):

Yes, I wish to participate in hearing session(s)

If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

To enable a more detailed understanding of the biodiversity value of urban buildings and the particularly critical role they play in the survival or otherwise of critically endangered bird species that nest annually in the city.

Representation on the Sheffield Plan Publication (Pre-Submission) Draft

Respondent details

Comment ID number: PDSP.136.002

What is your Name: Sheffieldswiftnetwork

If you are making this representation as a member of an organisation, what is the name of your organisation:

Sheffield Swift Network

If you or your organisation are making a representation on behalf of another person, organisation or group, please tell us who it is and its role:

N/A

Document

Which document to you wish to make a representation on:

Part 2: Development Management Policies and Implementation

Which section of the document is your representation on:

Policy GS6: Biodiversity Net Gain

Which paragraph/site/map layer of the document is representation on:

N/A

Representation

Do you consider the Local Plan is legally compliant: Yes

Do you consider the Local Plan is sound: No

Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the duty to co-operate: Yes

Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate:

We support the statements in this policy but are concerned that it shows no awareness of the particular species which depend on buildings and are likely to be displaced through the redevelopment or modification of existing buildings. Swifts in particular are totally dependent on buildings for nesting sites and, because they are resident for only three months of each year and their nests are not visible externally, are often not picked up in surveys or misidentified. It is not clear which of the several bird surveys available are required by the council. A knowledge of where they nest and the

replacement of nests with swift bricks built into new development can provide homes both for swifts and many other hole-nesting birds such as sparrows which depend on buildings to breed.

Although examples (including 'swift bricks') are given in the 'Definitions' box beneath, there is no clear expectation of the extent to which these will be required. What types/percentage of properties will be required to incorporate such measures? For example, requiring swift bricks to be

incorporated in all new properties of two storeys or above using advice would not place an unreasonable demand

on developers. It is easy, cheap and inconspicuous to incorporate them into new brickwork. Swift survival depends on local action.

In 2021, Swifts were added to the 'UK Red List', joining House Sparrow and Starlings which have also declined due

to changes in building techniques and which can also make use of swift bricks as breeding/roosting spaces. As a supplementary planning document will include more detail on the Local Nature Recovery Network, we assume that this will include important recommendations on siting and reassurances for architects etc that these small delightful birds are not vermin, smelly or dirty, that swift bricks do not allow the birds access to the loft space and if we don't act urgently, they risk extinction.

We have provided a model clause for inclusion below.

More generally, we are also concerned that min. 10% BNG seems very unambitious and we would like to see a higher target.

We feel the following wording is unclear: 'After evidencing no overall biodiversity loss' what is meant by this? as there is a lot of evidence from a range of organisations that evidence the decline of a variety of species including swifts.

The applicability, or not, of the policy to householder applications should be made clear either in the policy itself or the supporting text. .

Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified above:

Model clause for Local Plan or other planning guidance document

This city's wildlife depends not only on green spaces, but also on the built environment of the city. Buildings can provide roosting sites for bats and nesting opportunities for birds such as swifts, house sparrows, house martins and starlings, all red listed species that have seen large population declines, and which are dependent on buildings for their survival. Developments involving demolition, refurbishment and/or extension of existing buildings are likely to impact species using the existing building, therefore measures to ensure retention and enhancement of such species will be required. Developments involving new and existing buildings should also utilise opportunities to attract new species to a site. All wildlife habitats must be designed in accordance with the council's Biodiversity Action Plan.

Swift bricks should be incorporated within developments (refurbishments, extensions and new build) to provide nesting and roosting opportunities for birds, including species under threat such as swifts, house sparrows, house martins and starlings, in addition to integral bat boxes.

Swift bricks are also used by house sparrows and other small bird species so are considered a 'universal brick'. Integrated nesting bricks are preferable to external

boxes for reasons of longevity, reduced maintenance, better temperature regulation during heatwaves, and aesthetic integration with the building design. Swift bricks should be installed in accordance with best-practice guidance, e.g. BS 42021:2022, which recommends a minimum of one swift brick per dwelling on average in each development, installed as high as possible.

Masonry-fronted swift bricks will regulate the internal temperature so can be placed on any elevation, but ideally should be installed under shade-casting eaves or avoiding southerly elevations. They should be installed in groups of at least three (when three or more are to be installed in the development), at a height above 5m, and preferably with a 5m clearance between the host building and other buildings or obstructions. Where possible avoid siting swift bricks above windows or doors. Where swift bricks are not practical due to the nature of construction, alternative designs of suitable swift nest boxes should be provided in their place. If it is not possible to provide swift bricks as set out in the report, the condition will be modified to require swift boxes.

Wildlife in the UK is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). Before you start any works to a property you need to make sure wildlife and protected species would not be affected. Before undertaking works, check the roof space for bird / bat roosts and other urban wildlife dependent on buildings for shelter. Any works that would affect breeding birds and their nests, such as works of demolition, vegetation removal or site clearance, should be done outside the nesting season from 1st March to 31st August inclusive. Also note that any scaffolding even for minor external works can prevent birds accessing their nest sites in buildings. Bats use existing holes and gaps in trees and buildings for nesting. They can fit in gaps as small as a human thumb, so be mindful of missing tiles or gaps within the roof soffits and building fabric before you start any works.

Where practicable, demolition and site clearance works should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). Potential wildlife habitats to be disturbed by construction work should be surveyed by a qualified ecologist at the appropriate time of year and immediately prior to commencement of works. Multiple surveys may be necessary and will include checking for presence of protected and priority species, surveying buildings for roosting and nesting by bats and birds, and consideration of the impact of noise, vibration and light spillage at night. The ecologist will be required to make recommendations on mitigation measures and restoration work to ensure that the site is of an equivalent or richer ecological status after work ceases.

If your representation is seeking a modification to the plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s):

Yes, I wish to participate in hearing session(s)

If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

To enable a more detailed understanding of the biodiversity value of urban buildings and the particularly critical role they play in the survival or otherwise of critically endangered bird species that nest annually in the city.

Representation on the Sheffield Plan Publication (Pre-Submission) Draft

Respondent details

Comment ID number: PDSP.136.003

What is your Name: Sheffieldswiftnetwork

If you are making this representation as a member of an organisation, what is the name of your organisation:

Sheffield Swift Network

If you or your organisation are making a representation on behalf of another person, organisation or group, please tell us who it is and its role:

N/A

Document

Which document to you wish to make a representation on:

Policies Map

Which section of the document is your representation on:

N/A

Which paragraph/site/map layer of the document is representation on:

Green Belt

Representation

Do you consider the Local Plan is legally compliant: Yes

Do you consider the Local Plan is sound: Yes

Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the duty to co-operate: Yes

Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate:

Not completed by respondent

Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified above:

We have not identified any objection against the site allocations within the plan. We support the decision not to allocate the Hepworth site in Loxley (subject of Appeal APP/J4423/W/20/3262600) for development, instead retaining it in the Green Belt and thus supporting multiple species, but specifically in relation to Swifts, this will preserve a vital feeding ground within easy reach of Swift colonies in the city.

For the same reasons, we support the decision to include assign 'Land Adjacent 137 Main Road Wharncliffe Side Sheffield' ' in Wharncliffe Side (see recent application: 22/00865/FUL) to the category Urban Green Space Zone, although we do question why this has not been assigned to the Green Belt and would view this as a more appropriate course of action.

If your representation is seeking a modification to the plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s):

Yes, I wish to participate in hearing session(s)

If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

To advocate for the needs of Swifts- a red listed species who are heavily reliant on the urban areas of Sheffield for breeding.