

12 October 2012



Brian McCutcheon
Planning Policy & Design Manager
Medway Council

3rd Touthill Close
City Road
Peterborough
PE1 1UA

T 0300 060 0503
F 0300 060 3888

Dear Brian

On 10th October our Executive Board formally considered a proposal to extend Chattenden Woods SSSI to include the Lodge Hill land. After full consideration it concluded that the evidence presented good but incomplete evidence that the site was of special interest. It could therefore not notify the site as an SSSI at this stage.

On nightingales the Executive Board agreed that the evidence presented shows that the existing SSSI together with Lodge Hill is clearly very important for nightingale in Kent, and likely to be of national importance. However uncertainties around the robustness of the 1999 national population census resulted in the decision not to notify the site at this stage, but to reconsider this as soon as it could be confident that the comparison between the national survey data and the site data was sufficiently robust to determine that the site carried over 1% of the national population.

On the breeding bird assemblage of scrub vegetation, the Executive Board considered that it would be better to complete work currently underway to review the assessment of such assemblages, and was therefore unable to reach an opinion on this matter. The minutes of the Executive Board's deliberations are attached.

On this basis Natural England's advice is that it remains appropriate, in considering the development issues on the site, for the planning system to continue to attribute the same weight to this site as would normally be given to an SSSI.

It is understood that the consideration of compensatory habitat creation will continue during this interim period. Natural England will engage fully in this, bearing in mind the importance of the site for nightingale and other wildlife, and with a view to seeking the best overall solution for development and the natural environment.

Natural England is grateful for the assurance that it has received from The Ministry of Defence and Land Securities that the nature conservation interest of the site will be safeguarded from damage.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maddy Jago".

Maddy Jago
Director Landscape & Biodiversity

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Cooke".

Rob Cooke
Director Land Use