

## Planning Policy

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 12 September 2018 10:36  
**To:** Planning Policy  
**Subject:** Issues and Options Consultation for the next Test Valley Local Plan

**Importance:** High

Please find below our comments on two questions posed in the Test Valley Issues and Options document

Hampshire Swifts is a Hampshire-based charity which, faced with the on-going and drastic decline of the Common Swift in the county, was established to conserve this iconic and popular species

Q23: Do you agree that we should have a specific policy on health and wellbeing? What sort of issues do you think it should cover?

**“We agree that a specific policy on health and well-being would represent a significant step forward in acknowledging the impact that design quality and provision of green infrastructure can have on mental health and community well-being. However, this understanding can be developed much further as new developments can easily be designed to enhance biodiversity by inclusion of Swift bricks in their construction. These provide safe, clean and maintenance-free nesting sites for Swifts and other threatened birds such as House Sparrows and it is well established that having nature integrated into house developments enhances and enriches quality of life, overall happiness, health and well-being.”**

Q42: Should alternative open space for mitigation be provided as part of new developments or should land be specifically allocated, or a combination?

**“One aspect missing here is the clear opportunity that developments themselves present for biodiversity enhancements. There is much written about mitigation for lost habitats and creation of green infrastructure to link up areas of nature interest but little mention of how nature and biodiversity can be helped simply by ensuring every new home includes integrated nest sites despite a key objective of the Biodiversity Action Plan being the enhancement of biodiversity. This is of particular relevance to two species of birds. Swifts are entirely dependent on man-made structures for nesting and in urban environments House Sparrows are also dependent on dwellings for nesting. Both species are undergoing national declines of > 50% in 20 years for Swifts and > 60% in 20 years for House Sparrows caused mainly by the loss of nesting sites on existing houses caused by re-roofing and replacement of soffits and fascias with UPVC. House Sparrows are a red-listed species of conservation concern and Swifts are expected to be notified as red-listed at the next review.**

**Current building regulation requirements for new homes are not conducive to allow either species to nest.**

**Both species readily use swift bricks when these are incorporated into new developments and recent research has shown that home owners are almost entirely supportive or ambivalent to having swift bricks in their homes so developers need have no fear that it will affect sales. Other councils have adopted such a policy and have had good results.**

**Integration of Swift bricks in particular is very easy to include into routine building practices and results in a permanent, maintenance-free biodiversity enhancer which will provide much-needed breeding spaces for these declining species.**

Given this situation it seems timely to consider the provision of a supplementary policy addressing how biodiversity can be designed into the developments, using, for example, Swift bricks and other enhancements such as bat boxes. Nesting / roosting boxes of this type represent a win-win for all those concerned (and see the comment above in response to question 23 as these can positively impact on the overall well-being of residents)."

Regards

**Hampshire Swifts**

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*"working with local Swift groups across the county"*

*Hampshire Swifts is a registered charity number.1177146*