

Letter to Stephanie Kitto
Herefordshire Council

cc Ocle Pychard Group Parish Council
10 July 2018

Dear Stephanie,

Examination of the Ocle Pychard Group Neighbourhood Plan

The examination of the Ocle Pychard Neighbourhood Plan is due to commence in September 2018, but I am writing to draw your attention to a recent judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union now so that any delay to the examination process can be minimised.

In the case of *People Over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta*, the Court ruled that Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive must be interpreted as meaning that mitigation measures (referred to in the judgment as measures which are intended to avoid or reduce effects) should be assessed within the framework of appropriate assessment (AA) and that it is not permissible to take account of measures intended to reduce or avoid any harmful effects of a plan or project on a European site at the screening stage.

Earlier case law had established that reduction or avoidance measures could be taken into account when considering whether a plan or proposal would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site. However, the implications of the more recent judgment is that this is no longer the case.

I would therefore be grateful if the Council could consider the HRA Screening Report and advise me on whether it considers it to be legally compliant in the light of the judgment. If it is considered not to be legally compliant and to have fallen foul of the judgment, I would ask that the Council advises me of what further work would be required to rectify this, together with an indicative timescale for that work, including any further consultation.

I will clearly reach my own view on this matter as well. Once you have had an opportunity to consider what, if any, further work needs to be undertaken, I suggest that we agree a way forward for the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This letter is of course a matter of public record and should be placed on the relevant websites.

With many thanks,

Ann Skippers MRTPI
Independent Examiner