



## **Woodland Trust statement on Eastleigh Local Plan, 11/12/17**

The Woodland Trust would like to apologise for not being able to attend this meeting in person, however we have prepared a statement to be read on our behalf by one of the Trust's members, Rob Byrne.

Once again, the Woodland Trust finds itself having to reconfirm that the proposals at hand are of utmost concern to us. A number of ancient woodlands are threatened by large areas of housing development and a new bypass that could scythe between two of our own ancient woods.

We feel it is necessary to highlight the importance of ancient woodland and ensure that the councillors fully understand how valuable this area is in terms of the ancient woodland and associated wildlife, and how they provide a natural green refuge for local people.

Appendix 2, Maps of Allocated Sites, recently uploaded by the council indicates a new bypass hard up against the edge of Upper Barn Copse, one of the Trust's ancient woods. Not only could the road result in potential loss of ancient woodland via incursions at its edge but it would also have severe indirect impacts and fragment it from another of the Trust's ancient woods, Crowdhill Copse, and the Forestry Commission's ancient Stoke Park Wood. We have previously been clear, and remain of the opinion, that we don't believe that there is appropriate space for a new bypass in this location.

Further along the route the bypass appears to run along the edge of the section of Park Hills Wood designated by Natural England as ancient

woodland and also alongside the nearby Tippers Copse, which is currently believed to be an area of unmapped ancient woodland.

Clearly, and despite the masterplan update (appendix 16) noting that protecting the setting of the ancient woodland is a constraint, little has been done to address the concerns we have previously highlighted.

Ancient woodland is irreplaceable. It can't be moved. It can't be recreated. It has been there and evolved over centuries and this must remain the case.

The Trust's sites, Upper Barn Copse and Crowdhill Copse are home to an array of flora and fauna. Bluebells, butcher's broom and Solomon's seal can be seen flowering in the spring and long tailed tits and goldcrests are commonly seen and heard within the woods.

Considering the number of houses planned in the area, many of the ancient woods will be surrounded by development. It is vital that these woods are adequately buffered from the impact of any development and protected.

Natural England's Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees has recently been updated to include a recommendation for **at least** 50m buffers to specifically prevent impacts of pollution and trampling. The Trust is also clear that we believe buffers must be determined on a case by case basis. Where there is large-scale housing development proposed it is particularly important that buffers are substantial, in the region of 100m for example.

The Standing Advice is a material planning consideration and we urge the council to take due regard of this advice and ensure the ancient woods in the area are properly protected from the impacts of housing and a new bypass. For local people, these woods are their quiet, natural places away from the troubles of everyday life. Taking that away from the locals who enjoy them would be a tragedy.