

Waverley Borough Council

**AVOIDANCE STRATEGY FOR THAMES BASIN HEATHS
SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

1 The purpose of the Avoidance Strategy

- 1.1 In April 2007, the Council produced an Interim Miniplan for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This is now being reviewed and has been renamed “The Avoidance Strategy”. The purpose of the Avoidance Strategy is to provide guidance to developers when making planning applications on the approach of Waverley Borough Council (“the Council”) to the provision of avoidance measures to avoid the effect of a net increase in population within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (“SPA”) on that SPA’s conservation interests. It indicates how the Council proposes to approach the discharge of its legal obligations under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (“the Habitats Regulations”).
- 1.2 Under the Habitats Regulations, the Council is the “competent authority” to consider whether applications for development are “likely to have a significant effect” on a European site, of which the Thames Basin Heaths SPA is one. On completing an Appropriate Assessment of such a development proposal, the Council shall agree to a plan or project (such as an application for residential development) only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site. Whether a proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the SPA (with the consequence that an Appropriate Assessment is required), must be ascertained by considering the proposal both alone and in combination with other plans or projects. In practice, Natural England advise that *any* application for residential development resulting in an increase in the number of dwellings within 5km of it will, without avoidance measures, be likely to have a significant effect on the SPA within the meaning of the Habitats Regulations.
- 1.3 The Council aims to establish an approach so it may determine planning applications for residential development in the Farnham area on the basis that they do not have a significant effect on the Special Protection Area. The draft Avoidance Strategy is intended to provide guidance to developers in relation to the level of avoidance measures that the Council expects to see incorporated within planning applications in the light of Natural England’s advice. In this instance, “avoidance measures” means providing or contributing towards Suitable Alternative Natural Green space (SANG) or improvement of the Special Protection Area.

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- 1.4 This Avoidance Strategy relates only to proposals for residential development (Use Class 3 excluding householder development and Use Class C1 and C2 staff residential accommodation). There are likely to be cases where non-residential development would have a significant effect on the integrity of the SPA; but this Avoidance Strategy does not provide guidance in relation to such development. To address the requirement of the Habitats Regulations, proposals for such development may therefore require an Appropriate Assessment in consultation with Natural England.
- 1.5 The Avoidance Strategy, when finally approved by the Council, will supersede the Mini Plan and will be taken into account for development control purposes as a material planning consideration.

2 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

- 2.1 The SPA was designated on 9th March 2005 and, since then, the site has been protected by the Habitats Regulations. It has several conservation objectives, but in particular it is a European designation for wild birds, and on the Thames Basin Heaths protects woodlark, Dartford warbler and nightjar. These species are particularly subject to disturbance from walkers, dog walking and cat predation, because they nest on or near the ground.

3 The Thames Basin Heaths Draft Delivery Plan

- 3.1 On 26 May 2006, English Nature (now Natural England) produced a revised draft of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Plan. The aim of the Draft Delivery Plan is expressed as follows:

“The Delivery Plan aims to safeguard the Special Protection Area through developing and establishing a strategic, sub regional approach to avoidance and mitigation of the impact of housing development across the 15 local planning authority areas around the Thames Basin Heaths SPA consistent with the law and planning policies” (para 2.2.1.).
- 3.2 Rather than dealing with applications on a case-by-case basis, the Draft Delivery Plan was intended to provide clear strategic guidance on residential developments across the whole of the Thames Basin (including that area of Waverley that is subject to the Habitats Regulations). It was used by the Council to produce the Interim Mini Plan which was adopted in April 2007.

4 How the Delivery Plan affected Waverley

- 4.1 That part of the SPA within Waverley is about 80ha in area. It is situated to the north of Sandy Hill in Farnham, but the Zones of Impact extend across Farnham down as far as the Bourne (see Plan 1). These are the zones close to the SPA where English Nature's (Natural England) advice was that to allow additional residential development would lead to recreational demand and impacts on the SPA significantly affecting its conservation objectives. As a result, Natural England advised, supported by its Draft Delivery Plan, that no new residential development should be permitted within these zones in the absence of secured avoidance measures.

The Draft Delivery Plan referred to three zones:

- from the boundary of the SPA out to 400m (Zone A); and
 - 400m to 2 kilometres (Zone B);
 - 2 kilometres to 5 kilometres (Zone C).
- 4.2 The zones are summarised in the Draft Delivery Plan (Section 7), and relate to the different distances people walk and travel by car to visit the Heaths. Different avoidance standards for the provision of SANG attach to each of the zones, to try and attract people away from the Heaths.
- 4.3 Natural England has accepted the South East Plan Technical Assessor's proposal to eliminate the distinction between Zones B and C. Therefore in this Avoidance Strategy, these two zones have been amalgamated into one:
- 0m to 400m (Zone A)
 - 400m to 5km (Zone B)

(See Plan 1)

- 4.4 The Delivery Plan has now been substituted by the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework (see Section 5). However the Delivery Plan is still relevant as the evidence base for work on the Special Protection Area.

5. The Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework

- 5.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework was published in February 2009 and has an important bearing on the way in which the Council deals with applications that may have a significant effect on the Special Protection Area.

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- 5.2 The Framework has been produced by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) on behalf of the member Local Authorities and other stakeholders. (It can be viewed on the SEERA website: www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/sustainability_tbh.html) The Board encourages local authorities to use the Framework to guide the production or revision of local avoidance and mitigation strategies without delay.
- 5.3 The Framework is important as it gives guidance to the local authorities on how to deal with SANG and ensures that each one adopts a similar and consistent approach.
- 5.4 The Delivery Framework has been prepared as a non-statutory document within the context of the South East Plan.
- 5.5 The aim, objectives and key principles of the Delivery Framework are set out as follows:

"Aim

The aim of this Delivery Framework is to set out the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board's recommendations to local authorities, within the vicinity of the Special Protection Area (SPA) of measures that can enable the delivery of dwellings in the vicinity of the Special Protection Area, without that development having a significant effect on the SPA as a whole. It focuses on avoiding the impact of recreation and urbanisation on the SPA habitat and interest features.

Local authorities should refer to this Delivery Framework in the preparation of local or joint mini-plans, development plan documents (DPDs) and/or supplementary planning documents (SPDs). They should ensure that appropriate references are made to the provision of SPA-related impact avoidance measures in their Local Development Framework (LDF) and supporting implementation documents, in line with policy within the South East Plan.

Adopting the Framework approach into SPD/DPD does not negate the need to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (which is also referred to as an Appropriate Assessment) on that document and in developing planning documents which relate to the SPA, local authorities should satisfy themselves as to whether the document requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment or should be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. This Delivery Framework should not be used directly for development control purposes.

A three-prong approach to avoiding likely significant effect on the Special Protection Area is appropriate. That is, focusing on:

- (i) provision of suitable alternative natural green space (SANG);*

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- (ii) *access management; and*
- (iii) *habitat management.*

Objectives

The objectives of the Delivery Framework are to recommend:

- *a consistent approach to the protection of the SPA from the significant effects of residential development.*
- *the type and extent of residential development that may have a significant effect alone or in combination on the SPA.*
- *criteria for the delivery of avoidance measures.*

Key principles

The following key principles summarise the overarching context for the recommendations within this Delivery Framework.

- *All net new residential development - when considered either alone or in combination with other plans and projects - is likely to have a significant effect on the SPA and should therefore provide or contribute to the provision of avoidance measures.*
- *Development can provide - or make a contribution to the provision of - measures to ensure that they have no likely significant effect on the SPA. In doing so, residential development will not have to undergo an appropriate assessment. The option remains for developers to undertake a habitats regulations screening assessment and where necessary a full appropriate assessment to demonstrate that a proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA*
- *A three prong approach to avoiding likely significant effect on the SPA is appropriate, however this framework focuses on the two prongs of SANG (suitable alternative natural green space) and Access Management, which the Board currently considers are the most appropriate avoidance measures.*
- *This framework sets out the Board's recommended approach to the provision of avoidance measures. Its key objective is to recommend consistent standards for the application and provision of avoidance measures. However, as a strategic document it cannot address every foreseeable circumstance. It is acknowledged that there may be some exceptional circumstances where local authorities consider that a more or less prescriptive approach needs to be taken, or greater local specificity is needed, in the light of local circumstances or evidence base, or the detail of the proposed new residential development. Such circumstances should be carefully justified.*

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- *It should be noted that the Joint Strategic Partnership Board has no formal control on the planning decisions which are to be made in respect of the Thames Basin nor does it set any formal planning policy. However, the Board will retain an overview of local authority mini-plans and avoidance strategies, SPDs and DPDs, and will seek to ensure that a consistent approach is being applied and sufficient avoidance measures are being provided."*

6. The South East Plan

- 6.1 The South East Plan was published by the Government on 6th May 2009. This forms part of the Development Plan and includes Policy NRM6 on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area which is included in Annexe 1.
- 6.2 Policy NRM6 will provide the basis for policy guidance on the Special Protection Area in the Waverley Local Development Framework. To assist local authorities in the preparation of Local Development Documents and to enable development to come forward in a timely and efficient manner, Policy NRM6 sets out the extent of mitigation measures required, based on current evidence. .

7. Options for a Developer to meet Avoidance Requirements

- 7.1 There are three options open to developers for meeting avoidance requirements:
- provide new green space (SANG) themselves;
 - buy into provision of new suitable alternative green space (SANG) assembled by the local authority; or
 - buy into the upgrading of an existing SANG site owned by the local authority or a third party.

8. Suitable alternative natural green space (SANG)

- 8.1 The significance of the role the Council can play in enabling avoidance measures is readily apparent. There are very few areas of informal open land within the built-up area of Farnham that are potential SANG and only one significant area that is within the Council's ownership, i.e. Farnham Park. The Draft Delivery Plan is still relevant and provides the evidence base for SANG.
- 8.2 A detailed site quality checklist providing criteria for assessing avoidance sites is included in the SEERA document on guidelines for the creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space" June 2008

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(See Appendix 2). At present, only Farnham Park provides an immediate opportunity to provide SANG within Waverley in accordance with the advice from Natural England. Other opportunities were identified in the Interim Miniplan and these now have been investigated (See Section 13).

9. Farnham Park

- 9.1 Farnham Park is owned by the Council. It is a mediaeval deer park associated with Farnham Castle covering an area of 130ha (See Plan 2). It contains around 85 hectares of semi-natural grassland, woodland and scrub which was confirmed by Natural England, as an area of SANG quality. The Park is situated to the north of the town centre (the nearest entrance is only 200m away) and extends northwards to Hale, with the northern boundary about 800m from the SPA boundary. The Park is located within Zone B. It is well placed to provide avoidance measures for Farnham.
- 9.2 In January 2004, the Council published the document “Farnham Park: Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan” prepared by Land Use Consultants, which the Council adopted in October 2004. The Restoration Plan includes details of appropriate infrastructure improvements for the long-term conservation and management of the Park, some of which would accommodate an increase in visitor numbers.
- 9.3 Farnham Park has the potential to meet the Draft Delivery Plan criteria because of its central location and semi-natural nature and can therefore provide green space avoidance measures for development in Zone B.
- 9.4 In 2007 Natural England confirmed that 85ha of Farnham Park is semi natural and qualifies as SANG. Its overall size would serve a development catchment of 5km from its boundaries covering all of Zone B in Waverley. However, Natural England advised that the actual amount of land that can be effectively enhanced and linked to development contributions in accordance with Natural England green space standards is less than this. This is a function of (a) existing visitor capacity; and (b) the range of potential enhancement measures that, if implemented, would serve to attract potential SPA users to the Farnham Park SANG. Farnham Park’s large size and the fact that the access points are located all around the perimeter results in users being well distributed around the Park. Staff managing the Park are aware that the central areas generally feel underused and could accept a greater visitor capacity without affecting the Park’s natural, open character or biodiversity.

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Visitor Capacity

- 9.5 It is estimated by the Council's Leisure Services that the SANG area of the Park is currently used at about 50% visitor capacity. This has been appraised based on long-term observation of the usage of the Park, and on visitor surveys carried out in May 2007. Natural England recommended a precautionary approach to the SANG area. An assumption of 75% user capacity at present has been made, yielding a current SANG capacity of 21.25ha.(85ha X 25%)

10. Enhancement Measures

- 10.1 Natural England regard car parking as a significant aspect when considering the appropriateness of a site as a SANG. It has been established that there are existing parking areas available to the north and west of the Park, which have access to the SANG and meet Natural England's accessibility criteria. These car parks have been enhanced by improving the surfaces and layout and by signing, and are being promoted through information boards and leaflets. Access to the Park is possible from a parking area outside the Park on the east side. It is on the old carriageway adjacent to Hale Road which is no longer part of the highway.
- 10.2 The scope to improve and enhance the Park means that it has been able to contribute as avoidance space. Whilst Farnham Park is both a Site of Nature Conservation Importance and an Historic Park & Garden, Natural England accepts that it has the capacity to provide avoidance space to divert use of the Special Protection Area during the bird nesting season and to cope with an increase in use without environmental damage. Since the Miniplan first came into operation a number of aspects have been developed.
- a) a full-time ranger based on-site;
 - b) improved visitor interpretation and education; and
 - c) enhanced public access points.
- 10.3 A full time ranger manages the impact of additional visitors and providing reassurance and security for users and delivering the Park's long-term management plan, including monitoring and responding to biodiversity and landscape changes.
- 10.4 Improved visitor interpretation and education - through a Park information office, leaflets, walks and talks improves visitors' understanding of the importance of the site and appropriate behaviour.
- 10.5 The proposed enhanced public access points with orientation maps and Park information will direct users to appropriate areas to meet their recreational needs and ensure appropriate behaviour.

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- 10.6 All these improvements have enhanced the role of the Park as SANG, and the ongoing programme will continue the process. Appendix 3 sets out in detail the enhancements that have been completed and are still underway.

11. SANG Capacity

- 11.1 During the negotiation on the Interim Miniplan, English Nature (now Natural England) advised that, assuming no further improvements to parking facilities in connection with the SANG area, non-parking site enhancements were likely to attract visitors arriving without a car, i.e. on foot or by bicycle, within 400 metres of the overall SANG area. Accordingly, with reference to the Draft Delivery Plan standards (Table 1 above), Natural England advised (on a precautionary basis) that the effect of such improvements would equate to **4ha** of enhanced green space.

- 11.2 The provision of car parking for the SANG area, which Natural England considered to be the overriding factor limiting potential visitor use of this particular SANG, would enable more visitors arriving by car to utilise the SANG and enjoy the on-site enhancements referred to above. To this end, the remaining 17.25 ha of estimated visitor capacity of the SANG area (21.25ha less 4ha attributable to non-car parking enhancements) was assessed with reference to the proportion of car parking spaces that could be expected to be available at the Ranger's House and Hale Recreation Ground Car Parks and at an existing (but at that time not agreed), potential car park to the east side of Farnham Park. The Ranger's House and Hale Recreation Ground Car Parks are within the Council's control and were capable of improvement through implementation of this Avoidance Strategy. The estimates of available car parking spaces were provided by the Council's Park staff and revised downwards by Natural England on a precautionary basis which assumed some present use of these car parks in their unimproved and not promoted state. Based on the proportion of estimated spaces that would be available, it was agreed that approximately 40% of the car parking facilities were available at the Ranger's House and Hale Recreation Ground Car Parks and approximately 60% on the east side of Farnham Park, (a footpath link into the SANG area from this potential car park has now been agreed with Natural England.) When these percentages were applied to the stated remaining 17.25 ha of visitor capacity, **6.9ha** was attributable to improvements at the Ranger's House and Hale Recreation Ground car parks.

- 11.3 In the context of the 4ha of SANG attributable to non-car parking improvements and the 6.9ha of SANG attributable to car parking capacity at the Ranger's House and Hale Recreation Ground car parks Natural England advised that up to **10.9ha** of SANG was available at Farnham Park in the interim whilst a visitor survey was completed.

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- 11.4 The position at March 2009 is that the original 10.9 ha allocation has now been almost used up. A further allocation of SANG at Farnham Park is therefore an option. It represents an immediate solution in contrast to the other potential new SANG considered in the following Section 5.
- 11.5 When the mini plan was approved in 2007 SANG capacity was estimated at **21.25 ha**. This was reduced to 10.9 ha because of the capacity limitations set out in paragraph 12.2 above and the need for a visitor survey. A subsequent survey in 2007 has revealed that the Park is under used.
- 11.6 Additional capacity up to a total of 21.25 ha is dependant on bringing formally into use the parking area just off the Six Bells roundabout together with improved signage to the park and continued investment in the enhancement measures set out in Appendix 3.

12. Identification of new SANG

- 12.1 Appendix 4 of the Interim Miniplan lists a number of sites that it was thought might be feasible as SANG sites. They were:
1. Farnham Quarry
 2. The land to the east of Farnham Park
 3. Riverside and the south side of the A31 Bypass
 4. The water meadows to the north of the A31 bypass and south of West Street
 5. Bourne Woods.
- 12.2 A study to identify any further sites has been carried out looking at the land around the perimeter of Farnham, and it is evident that no additional sites are suitable and/or available in the short term. Working farmland is not suitable for SANG because of stock and crops and the west side of Farnham is mainly working farmland. The area to the south and east is also farmland and Bourne Woods (which has been identified as appropriate as SANG). To the north Farnham Quarry has been identified as potential SANG, and the Special Protection Area itself is situated to the north. Therefore the original shortlist is still appropriate.

Farnham Quarry

- 12.3 The Farnham Quarry site is situated to the north of the A31 and to the west of the A331 Blackwater Valley route. It is clearly visible from the A31 travelling east towards the Hog's Back.

It is anticipated by Hansons, the owners of Farnham Quarry, that extraction of sand and gravel from Farnham Quarry will cease in August 2010. The restoration plan is for the northern part of the site,

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about 25ha, to become public open space and the southern part will be a nature reserve with limited access. If Natural England considers the site to be suitable, then this area could well become SANG in the longer term, depending on how long the restoration takes to be established, and creates a suitable place for visitors. The site quality checklist for the creation of suitable alternative natural green space, produced by SEERA in June 2008, (Appendix 2), indicates that SANG does not have to be wooded, so restoration to grassland with immature woodland would be acceptable.

Land to the east of Farnham Park

- 12.4 Since this area of about 7.4 ha was included in the Interim Miniplan as a possibility, a proposal has been made by the private owner of the land for it to become a green burial area. It may be that an application for the green burial ground will not be approved and therefore this area of land might remain an option. However, if it is approved and implemented then it would not be appropriate as SANG.

Riverside and south of A31 Bypass

- 12.5 Since this area was included in the Interim Miniplan as a possibility, permission has been granted for use as a tennis club and car park, relocated from the East Street development. Therefore the Riverside area, to the north of the Bypass, is not an option. The area south of the Bypass is approximately 10.3 ha in area and partly owned by the County Council and partly by Waverley. It is now assessed that the land is likely to be too wet for all year round public open space and providing a car park, which is regarded as a requirement by Natural England, would be a problem as access is difficult. This land has the further drawback that it is beside the Bypass and would not be a quiet place although it does have a semi wild character.

The water meadows

- 12.6 This is privately owned land some 18.2 ha in extent. It has several footpaths crossing the site. Car parking could be provided from Wagon Yard if a footbridge was built onto the water meadows or access could be via existing footpaths. Depending on the response of the owners and the views of Natural England this could be an option. This is an attractive area of land close to the town centre which is already partly used by people living adjacent to the open space. If the owners would agree, it would make a good area of SANG, but again would be a longer term option.

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Bourne Woods and Alice Holt

- 12.7 The Bourne woods is approximately 140 ha and is an extensive area of woodland close to the south side of Farnham. The Forestry Commission has been approached to see if there could be agreement to the Bourne Woods and or Alice Holt Forest being used as SANG. The response was that the Commission could not agree because they considered that Bourne Woods was already at visitor capacity and itself supports a small population of Schedule 1 birds. Alice Holt also has a small population of rare birds. Furthermore, they do not think the long-term commitment required for SANG would be in the interests of the Commission in managing working woodlands.

Blackwater Valley

- 12.8 There has been preliminary discussion with the other local authorities in the Blackwater Valley, to see if it is possible to share the areas of open space of SANG quality, though no sites have been identified. No decision has been reached as yet but talks are ongoing. Again this would only be a longer-term solution.
- 12.9 It is evident from this assessment of other sites in the Farnham area that the number of alternatives to Farnham Park is very limited at present, and the Park still offers the best option in the short term.

13 Calculation of the Financial Tariffs

- 13.1 Appendix 4 shows the amount of financial contribution required from each additional residential unit (assuming no on-site provision) to provide the SANG required to avoid significant impact on the SPA. The cost per hectare of works is linked to the South East Plan's standards for improved open space of 8ha per 1000 additional residents to produce a tariff for developer contributions.
- 13.2 The tariff has been calculated on the basis that the SANG capacity of 21.25ha will be achieved through improvements to car parking capacity or confirmation of the estimated 50% visitor capacity through surveys. The figure of 21.25ha is compatible with the latest (March) position detailed at 12.4. Section 106 funding gained for avoidance measures would have to cover the capital costs of enhancement and on-going revenue costs (for staff and maintenance) in perpetuity.
- 13.3 The tariff allows the capital cost of enhancements and the capital sum needed to generate the annual costs in perpetuity. The tariff will be updated on an annual basis in line with an appropriate Index.

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14. An additional tariff for the Access Management and Monitoring Project

14.1 In February 2009 Natural England reported to the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board on the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Arrangements for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This was in response to the three-prong approach referred to in the Delivery Framework. The second prong is described in that document as access management but it also includes monitoring.

14.2 The purpose of this Natural England project is to provide measures to limit the damage caused by visitors to the Special Protection Area. This can include “soft measures” such as education and wardening, or “hard” measures such as limiting car parking, or pathways. The project will provide:

- a wardening service;
- monitoring of visitors, providing bird surveys, planning applications;
- education and communication with key organisations;
- working with landowners.

14.3 The Access Management and Monitoring Arrangements are funded by all the Local Authorities collecting Section 106 payments for SANG from developers. It is a joint project. The tariff is calculated per dwelling and has been agreed by the Thames Basin Heaths joint Strategic Partnership Board at £630 on the basis that all the local authorities will contribute.

14.4 All the Districts have been invited to sign a Memorandum of Agreement between Natural England and themselves to instigate the additional tariff, and pay the funding from the Section 106 Agreements to Natural England for the access management and monitoring. The Memorandum is being assessed by the District Councils.

15. Implementation

15.1 The Council has received £443,462 in Section 106 funding (with an added amount for the 5% monitoring fee,) up to 1st April 2009, relating to the implementation of this Avoidance Strategy. This is accounted for by a dedicated code within the Council’s Agresso accounts system.

15.2 £ 267,310 has been spent on the capital improvements to the Park, listed in Appendix 3.

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15.3 The Council has been committed to providing the SANG as soon as was reasonably practicable and occupation of dwellings has run at least in parallel with improvements to the Park, such that measures come on stream as or before residents move into the dwellings. The Council is keeping records of developments that are paying tariffs towards the improvement of Farnham Park and is reporting this to Natural England monthly.

16. Monitoring and Review

16.1 Monitoring of housing and site improvements has been carried out, but at this stage, it is in the nature of the monitoring process that it will take some time to assess the effectiveness of SANG. However, the Council is committed to the monitoring set out in Appendix 5

16.2 A visitor survey carried out in May 2007 provides a baseline survey against which changes in visitor use of the Farnham park SANG over time can be measured at five year intervals. Consultants have advised on a monitoring strategy for Farnham Park, and Appendix 5 details an assessment of their recommendations and a timetable of implementation. Implementation will also be influenced by the Access Management and Monitoring Project to ensure consistency. Monitoring will assist in identifying trends and changes in visitor use and its impacts, however it will take some years before trends can be seen.

16.3 A number of variables will determine how quickly the SANG will be consumed by residential permissions. The Council has been monitoring permissions granted in Zone B and the implementation of avoidance measures and reviewing these guidelines as appropriate in that light. Table 1 shows the position over the period from April 2007 to March 2009.

16.4 There has been consent for two large developments in Farnham in the last two and a half years: Farnham Hospital and East Street (resolution to approve). These accounted for over half the permissions for new housing during this period.

Table 1. SANG allocation used Farnham Park from April 2007 to March 2009

Zone	Net additional dwellings	Occupancy rate	Additional population	Ha per 1000 population standard	Ha used in the Park
B	562	2.4	1349	8	10.8

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The occupancy rate and the 1000 population standard

16.5 The occupancy rate (the number of people per dwelling) is derived from the Surrey Planning Collaboration Project work on Section 106 agreements and is based on the 2001 Census for Surrey. The 8 hectares per 1000 population standard is derived from the Natural England Delivery Plan.

16.6 It is not anticipated that there will be any further very large-scale developments in Farnham in the next three years. Any proposals in the Local Development Framework for new housing allocations in the Farnham area are unlikely to emerge until about 2012. Therefore it is expected that the new allocation of 10.35ha in the Park will be available for three to four years.

17. Options for Developers

17.1 Developers' attention is drawn to Regulation 48 of the Habitats Regulations, which sets out the Council's obligations as the "competent authority":

48(1) A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site in Great Britain (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives

48(5) In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, the authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

17.2 All applications for residential planning permission must be determined on a case-by-case basis and assessed against any concerns of adverse effect on the SPA identified by Natural England. When submitting an application for residential development, applicants need to consider how they can avoid or mitigate the impact of their proposal. If developers are not contributing their own land to avoid significant effect on the SPA in accordance with Natural England's standards (a minimum 2ha is required), they will be expected to make a financial contribution based upon the tariffs in this Avoidance Strategy. Natural England agrees that providing funds to enhance Farnham Park in line with this guidance will mean that development proposals will not be likely to have a significant effect on the SPA and there will therefore be no need to conduct an Appropriate Assessment. There is no proposal to discriminate between types of residential development (i.e. flats and houses) because advice from Natural England is that there is no discernible difference in recreational impacts created by the occupants.

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- 17.3 Developers making outline planning applications will need to provide complete information on the number of dwellings and bedrooms per dwelling, so that the required calculations for contributions may be made. Without being able to ascertain the exact number of dwellings and bedrooms, (and therefore likely occupants), the Council cannot satisfy itself that the level of any proposed SPA contribution is adequate, and so would be unable to grant planning permission. A bedroom is defined in the Supplementary Planning Guidance “Density and Size of Dwellings: Policy H4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002” (Waverley Borough Council 2003). On plans for new homes, “a room shown as a study nursery, bonus room or other name, but which could effectively be considered as a bedroom for the purposes of Policy H4” shall be regarded as a bedroom.
- 17.4 With a limited “land bank” for allocation, the Council needs to secure SPA monies at the time of granting outline permissions because it is only at this stage of the planning process that effects on the SPA fall to be ascertained under the Habitats Regulations.
- 17.5 If developers are unable, or unwilling, to make such contributions towards SANG provision, the expectation remains, on the basis of Natural England’s advice, that the proposed development will be likely to have a significant effect on the SPA and the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment will arise in accordance with Regulation 48 of the Habitats Regulations.

APPENDIX 2

SITE QUALITY CHECKLIST FOR AN INDIVIDUAL SANG- For the creation of suitable SANG, produced by SEERA June 2008

The wording in the list below is precise and has the following meaning:

- Requirements referred to as “must” or “should have” are essential
- The SANGS should have at least one of the “desirable” features.

Must/ Should have

- For all sites larger than 4ha there must be adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local use, i.e. within easy walking distance (400m) of the developments linked to it. The amount of car parking space should be determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflect the visitor catchment of both the SANGS and the SPA.
- It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3-2.5km around the SANGS.
- Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
- The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGS is intended to cater for.
- The SANGS must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath/s.
- All SANGS with car parks must have a circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park.
- SANGS must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users; they must not have tree and scrub covering parts of the walking routes.
- Paths must be easily used and well maintained but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.
- SANGS must be perceived as semi-natural spaces with little intrusion of artificial structures, except in the immediate vicinity of car parks. Visually-sensitive way-markers and some benches are acceptable.
- All SANGS larger than 12 ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience.
- Access within the SANGS must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.
- SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works smells etc).
- SANGS should be clearly sign-posted or advertised in some way.
- SANGS should have leaflets and/or websites advertising their location to potential users. It would be desirable for leaflets to be distributed to new homes in the area and be made available at entrance points and car parks.

Desirable

- It would be desirable for an owner to be able to take dogs from the car park to the SANGS safely off the lead.
- Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS
- It is desirable for access points to have signage outlining the layout of the SANGS and the routes available to visitors.
- It is desirable that SANGS provide a naturalistic space with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside and areas of dense and scattered trees and shrubs. The provision of open water on part, but not the majority of sites is desirable.
- Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a view point, monument etc within the SANGS.

APPENDIX 3**IMPLEMENTATION OF SANG ENHANCEMENTS IN FARNHAM PARK**

Item	Date
<u>Completed</u>	
Visitor Survey & analysis	May – Aug 2007
Full time ranger	From Oct 2007 (vacancy Aug 08 – Jan 09)
Car park improvements at Ranger's & Upper Hale Recreation Ground car parks & signing	Aug – Nov 2007
Watch out for Wildlife leaflet	April 2008
Conversion of Park Lodge to ranger office & interpretation centre	Oct 2008 – Jan 2009
<u>Currently Underway</u>	
Interpretation centre panels	To be installed May 2009
Main access points information panels	To be installed July 2009
<u>Outstanding</u>	
Revised park leaflets	Sept 2009
Main car park enhancements	2009/2010
Entrance improvements & signage	2009/2010

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**SPA AVOIDANCE COSTS FOR FARNHAM
PARK**

Appendix 4

	WBC budget	WBC input	Balance needed	Replace ment No Years	Annual Replace ment / Depreciat ion £
Capital costs of improvements [1]					
<i>Improvements to access points</i>					
	£	£	£		£
Main entrance	20,000	10,000	10,000	20	1,000
Pedestrian entrances	45,000	10,000	35,000	20	2,250
Car parking (Main, Ranger, Upper Hale)	65,000	0	65,000	20	3,200
Path surface improvements	18,500	0	18,500	10	1,850
Signage	5,000	0	5,000	10	500
Access from eastern car parking (purchase 0.4 ha (& fencing/hedging)	20,000 3,500	0 0	20,000 3,500	10	350
<i>Management improvements</i>					
Fencing & gates	7,500	0	7,500	10	750
Conversion of park lodge to ranger office/interpretation area	150,000	50,000	100,000	30	5,000
Interpretation panels at key park entrances (10)	20,000	0	20,000	5	4,000
park leaflets	8,000	0	8,000	5	1,600
Ranger van & mini tractor	17,500	0	17,500	7	2,500
Office equipment & tools	5,000	0	5,000	5	1,000
Professional fees (on 6,7,8,11,15)	58,000	0	58,000		
Capital costs	443,000	70,000	373,000		24,000
Annual costs [1]					
Park ranger (current cost incl on costs)	35,000	10,500	24,500		
Park management	55,000	27,500	27,500		

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Visitor surveys & monitoring (annual average)	4,500	0	4,500
Total annual costs	94,500	38,000	56,500
Annual Depreciation/Replacement Allowance			24,000
Increased Annual Requirement			80,500
Capital Sum required to provide above (£80,500) at 5%			£1,610,000
Capital Costs (Net)			£373,000
Total Required though Section 106 Agreements			£1,983,000
Cost/ha (based on avoidance capacity of 21.25has) [2]			£93,317.65

Predicted utilisation of avoidance capacity - 11 yrs [3]	No of people	Standard [4]	Avoidance space needed in has	Tariff/person
Zone B at 1090 dwellings at 2.4 people per household	2616	8 per 1000	20.93	£747

Tariff/bedroom [5]	Occupancy rate	Tariff £	[subject to annual inflationary increase]	Delivery Framework tariff	Total Tariff
1 bedroom	1.31	£978		£630	£1,608
2 bedroom	1.76	£1,314		£630	£1,944
3 bedroom	2.51	£1,874		£630	£2,504
4 bedroom	2.86	£2,135		£630	£2,765
5 bedroom +	3.73	£2,785		£630	£3,415

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Notes

[1] based on costs from Farnham Park Historic Landscape Survey & Restoration Management Plan 2004

[2] capacity of 21.25has assumed through achievement of eastern access enhancements or increased capacity demonstrated by survey

[3] based on permissions granted from 17Jan 2002 to 9March 2005 = Zone B 314 dwellings (99.1/yr)

[4] Standard from Natural England's SPA Delivery Plan of 8 hectares per 1,000 people

[5] based on Surrey wide census data

MONITORING THE IMPACT OF FARNHAM PARK AS A SANG

Footprint Ecology were asked by Waverley Countryside to advise on the sort of monitoring that could be carried out in order:-

- 1) To confirm that the SANG is effective, and
- 2) That existing wildlife interest is being maintained if visitor numbers increase.

Monitoring will assist in identifying trends and changes in visitor use and its impacts. Initial surveys will establish a baseline, however it will take some years before trends can be identified.

Monitoring in Farnham Park will be complemented by the wider SPA/SANG monitoring that will be carried out by the Natural England's, Access Management and Monitoring Project to be set up in 2009.

Monitoring Recommendations	Assessment	Action to be implemented	Timescale
<p>Monitoring visitor numbers and trends</p> <p>Continuous counting at 4/5 points to measure trends in visitor numbers using remote sensors.</p>	<p>Sensors must be located at access points where path narrows to ensure visitors pass over the remote sensor.</p> <p>Counts will identify changes in visitor use & trends, they do not provide total numbers of visitors – They will be used in conjunction with user profile data from the visitor surveys.</p>	<p>Companies which install people counters, dataloggers & software to carry out site survey & recommend counter locations.</p> <p>Install counters & monitor use.</p>	<p>April/May 09</p> <p>Summer/Autumn 09</p>

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<p>Car park counts</p> <p>Monitor (4/6 times a year) the trend in the use of cars, car park capacity. Also opportunity to observe ratio of dogs to users.</p>	<p>Counts will give an indication of car park use & capacity. Only one car park gives direct access to the SANG, others serve more than one use. Target at periods of high use & sensitivity (bird nesting season on SPA). Observations of dogs per person will only relate to those coming by car (31%).</p>	<p>Ad-hoc counts in the car parks are already taking place. Supplement with some targeted counts & observations. Use volunteers and staff.</p>	<p>Ongoing ad hoc counts & targeted counts in Spring/Summer annually.</p>
<p>Visitor Surveys</p> <p>To identify where visitors come from, how they arrive, why do they come & how often, how long do they stay, how often they visit & where they go.</p>	<p>Provides a baseline to measure trends & visitor profile. Cannot accurately provide figures for total number of users. Raw data can be further analysed if required & survey can be extended to answer specific management issues.</p>	<p>Visitor survey carried out in May 2007 using Natural England methodology.</p>	<p>Repeat survey in 2012 & at 5 yearly intervals.</p>
<p>Household surveys</p> <p>To identify where people go within the Thames Basin Heaths area & what proportion visit SPA, SANG &</p>	<p>Postal survey across the Thames basin Heaths to be carried out by the Natural England's Access</p>	<p>It is not recommended that Waverley carry out a separate survey. Liaise with Access Management &</p>	<p>When project set up in 09/10</p>

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other open spaces.	Management & Monitoring Project.	Monitoring Project staff.	
<p>Monitoring incidents & management changes</p> <p>Record incidents & management that may affect visiting Farnham Park.</p>	<p>This will assist in explaining trends & changes in visitor use & the effectiveness of on-site measures.</p>	<p>Incident/event recording already taking place. Include significant management changes.</p>	<p>On going</p>
<p>Wildlife monitoring</p> <p>Identify if the wildlife of Farnham Park is being affected by increasing visitor numbers.</p>	<p>The biodiversity importance of Farnham Park is its veteran trees & great crested newts, which are unlikely to be affected by increased visitor use. Monitoring of scrub breeding birds is suggested. Damage to chalk grassland is not considered significant. Mown paths are used as a management tool to reduce damage to grassland biodiversity & path trampling is not significant.</p>	<p>Regular monitoring of great crested newts is already carried out & key ponds are fenced to stop access.</p> <p>Seek volunteers to carry out scrub breeding birds' surveys.</p>	<p>On going annually</p> <p>09/10</p>