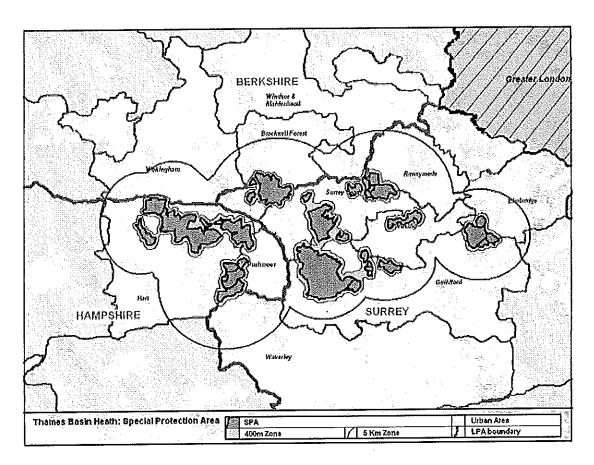
Natural Resource Management



- 9.32 Natural England has identified that net additional housing development (residential institutions and dwellings) up to 5km from the designated sites is likely to have a significant effect (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the integrity of the SPA. Initial advice from Natural England is that an exclusion zone of 400 metre linear distance from the SPA is appropriate. The district level housing allocations for the sub-region presuppose that an effective approach to dealing with the effects of development on the SPA can be found. Local authorities that are affected by the designation should deal, in their LDDs, with the issue of the effects of development on the SPA, and put forward a policy framework to protect the SPA whilst meeting development requirements. The focus of this policy is on avoidance and mitigation of the effects of residential development. This does not obviate the need for possible Habitats Regulation Assessment on other forms of development.
- 9.33 Nor do the provisions of this policy exclude the possibility that some residential schemes (and, in particular, relatively large schemes) either within or outside the 5k zone might require assessment under the Habitats Regulations due to a likely significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and subject to advice from Natural England.
- 9.34 Applications for all non-residential development will need to be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment where they are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
- 9.35 To assist local authorities in the preparation of LDDs 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. The evidence available indicates that effective mitigation measures should comprise a combination of providing suitable areas for recreational use by residents to buffer the SPA and actions on the SPA to manage access and encourage use of alternative sites. Such measures must be operational prior to the occupation of new residential developments to ensure that the interests of the SPA are not damaged. Local Authorities and Natural England will need to co-operate so that the effect of mitigation measures can be monitored across the SPA.