

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
26 SEP 2014

THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA MINI PLAN EXPENDITURE

Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update the list of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 That the list of SANGs is updated to comprise:

- Ambarrow Court and Hill
- Edmunds Green Group (incorporating adjacent green spaces including Whitegrove Copse, Bluebell Hill, The Chestnuts and Harvest Hill)
- Englemere Pond
- Horseshoe Lake
- Great Hollands Recreation Ground (part of)
- Longhill Park Group (incorporating adjacent green spaces including Milman Close, Beswick Gardens Copse and Clintons Hill)
- Lily Hill Park
- Popes Meadow
- Shepherd Meadows
- The Cut Countryside Corridor (comprising Larks Hill, Garth Meadows, Jock's Copse, Tinker's Copse, Piggy Wood, the Cut Riverside Path and Anneforde Place)

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 The provision of alternative recreational land to attract new residents away from the SPA is a key part of avoiding the effects of new development on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Without appropriate SANGs in place, Bracknell Forest Council would not be able to facilitate new residential development.

3.2 Within Bracknell Forest there are two ways for developers to provide new SANGs:
a) Make a payment contribution towards strategic SANGs (subject to available SANGs capacity)
b) Make an in-kind, bespoke provision (based upon defined principles)

3.3 This relates specifically to adopted policy; particularly The Bracknell Forest Council Core Strategy DPD (February 2008). Policy CS14 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area identifies that *".....Development outside the 400-metre zone will be permitted where it can demonstrate that it can remove any adverse effect by contributing towards avoidance and mitigation measures..... The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development."*

- 3.4 Guidance is set out within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document (TBH SPD) which was adopted and published in accordance with the Executive Decision made on 20 March 2012.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The provision of SANGs is an essential part of adopted policy, with site selection criteria set out by Natural England (the Government's advisor on the natural environment).
- 4.2 The green spaces set out within 2.1 above have been identified in liaison with Natural England as being the most appropriate locations for inclusion as strategic SANGs.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

SANGs implementation

- 5.1 Arrangements for delivering SANG improvement works have been set up in accordance with a previous Decision made on 18 April 2008 (by the Executive Member for Leisure, Corporate Services and Public Protection). This has enabled relevant s106 receipts to be spent upon receipt, thus addressing a critical issue of completing SANG improvement works prior to occupation of the contributing dwelling.

- 5.2 As set out within the Record of Decision (work Programme Reference I010858):

Purpose of the Decision:

Release of funding to undertake capital works to enhance Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGs). This is through the use of funds specifically collected in relation to delivery of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.

The Decision:

1. That the appropriate funds be allocated on receipt to deliver site improvement works as set out within Mini-Plans approved by the Director for Environment Culture and Communities.

2. That authorisation be given to the expenditure of up to £250,000 per annum on site improvement works at the following sites:

- *Horseshoe Lake*
- *Longhill Park (and adjacent green spaces)*
- *Englemere Pond*
- *The Cut Countryside Corridor (comprising Larks Hill, Garth Meadows, Jock's Copse, Tinker's Copse, Piggy Wood and the Cut Riverside Path)*
- *Wicks Green / Silver Jubilee Field*
- *Ambarrow Court (and Hill)*
- *Shepherd Meadows*
- *South Hill Park*

- 5.3 Costed plans are now in place and associated works being implemented at:

- Horseshoe Lake
- Longhill Park Group
- Englemere Pond
- The Cut Countryside Corridor

Unrestricted

- Ambarrow Court and Hill
- Shepherd Meadows

- 5.4 South Hill Park has not been brought forward as a SANG due to a combination of Heritage Lottery Fund / Big Lottery Fund investment and further liaison with Natural England. Wicks Green / Silver Jubilee Field has also not been progressed as proposed site works and timing of funding were not compatible with the needs of the land manager (Binfield Parish Council).
- 5.5 The methodology for identifying strategic SANGs is summarised within Appendix 4 of the TBH SPD.
- 5.6 With regards to strategic SANGs; the TBH SPD identifies that £1,128,000 is required to fund improvement works to identified sites managed by Bracknell Forest Council (based on 2010/11 cost estimates).
- 5.7 The money for this is provided through securing developer contributions from different developments to facilitate and implement enhancements and make these sites available for SPA mitigation purposes. In addition to providing funding for improvement works, a contribution is also secured to support maintenance in perpetuity.
- 5.8 Delivery of SANGs is closely monitored, including identifying potentially suitable additional green spaces to help provide further mitigation to enable meeting housing allocation requirements. As a result of this monitoring, a plan has been produced for Popes Meadow (totalling a further £132,180). Plans are also currently being drafted for part of Great Hollands Recreation Ground, the Edmunds Green Group, and for Anneforde Place (to be integrated within The Cut Countryside Corridor).

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Nothing to add to this report.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The funding of these schemes is from contributions received from developers as part of the section 106 agreement in respect of the planning application.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An EIA was completed for The Parks and Open Space Strategy in September 2012 and the EIA for the Parks and Countryside service was updated in August 2013. Delivery of SANG improvements support key actions to promote equality of opportunity and implementation of site works resulting in positive impacts.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Identification of SANGs and delivery of associated improvement works is essential to enabling Bracknell Forest Council to approve new housing. Funding for works and associated maintenance is provided through S106 contributions which would need to be repaid should improvements not be implemented.

Head of Spatial Policy

- 6.5 The proposal is supported because the delivery of SANG mitigation in a timely manner also benefits the Council by helping to maintain the Council's five-year supply of deliverable housing land and increasing revenue from Council Tax and New Homes Bonus. Having an effective mechanism for spending the income received is important in implementing the Council's agreed SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy which in turn helps deliver the Borough's strategic growth requirements.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Representative users groups and parish and town councils (via Local Countryside Access Forum and Parish, Parks and Public Realm Forum)

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Arrangements for SANGs are set out within approved planning policy; particularly the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document. Consultation on site improvements includes the Local Countryside Access Forum and the Parish, Parks and Public Realm Forum.

Representations Received

- 7.3 None

Background Papers

The Bracknell Forest Council Core Strategy DPD (February 2008)
The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document (March 2012)
The Bracknell Forest Parks & Open Spaces Strategy (2012)

Contact for further information

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