

**ITEM NO: 6**

Application No.  
**19/00841/FUL**  
Site Address:

Ward:  
Binfield With Warfield

Date Registered:  
17.09.2019

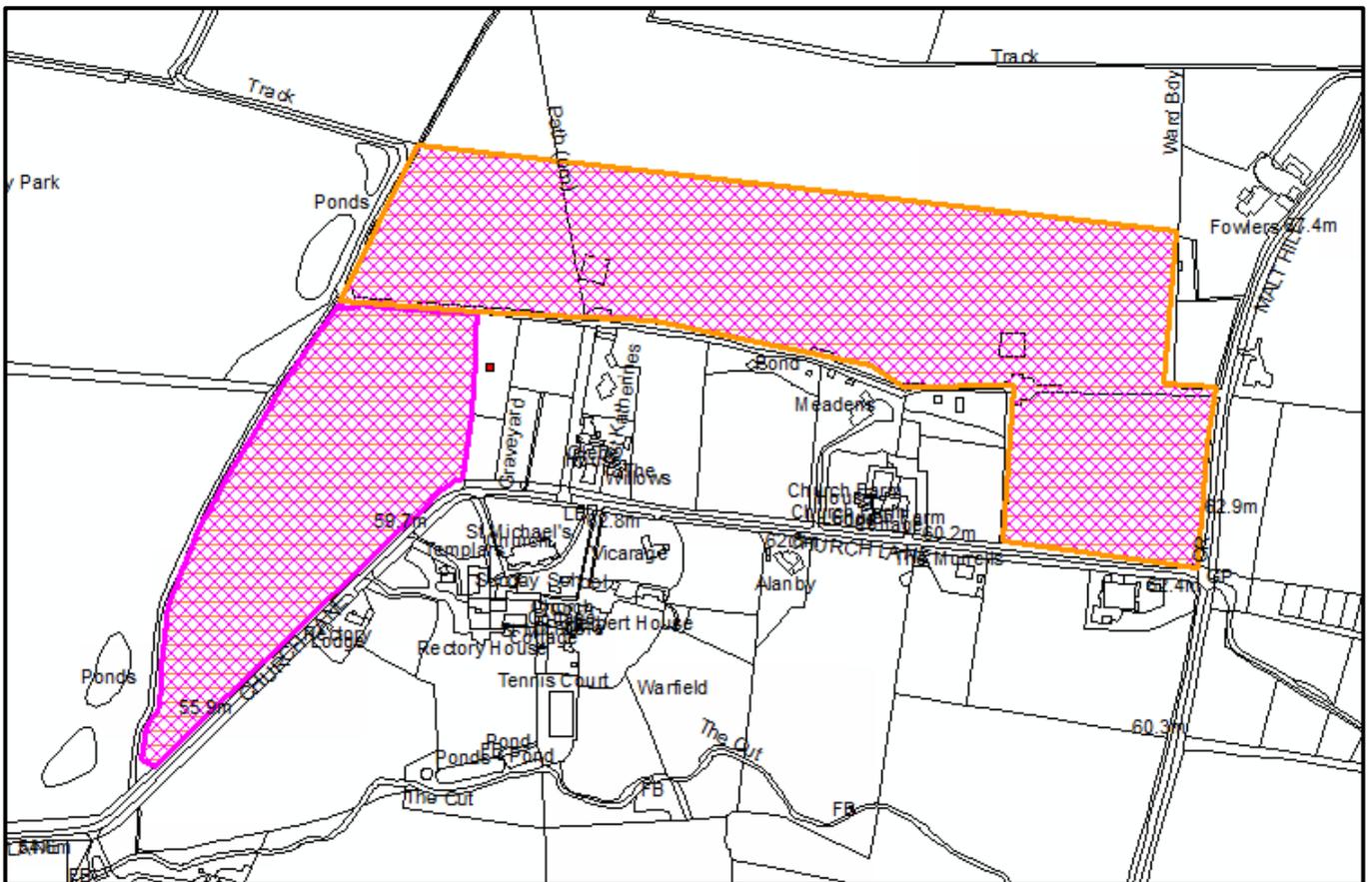
Target Decision Date:  
17.12.2019

**Land To The North of Church Lane and West of Malt Hill Warfield Bracknell Berkshire**

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural land to suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) with associated landscape works, the demolition of one agricultural structure and the construction of an ancillary car park.

Applicant: Ms Ashleigh Genco  
Agent: (There is no agent for this application)  
Case Officer: Hilary Coplestone, 01344 352000  
[development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

**Site Location Plan** (for identification purposes only, not to scale)



## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The proposal relates to the change of use of 12.6 hectares of agricultural land (Grade 3), within the Green Belt, to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The SANG would provide an area of recreational space to avoid any potential impact which could arise from new residential developments in the local area on the Thames Basin Health Special Protection Area (SPA). The proposal would result in changes to the existing landscape character through the provision of footpaths; fencing; the creation of paddocks and new planting. A car park with 16 car parking spaces (including one disabled space) would also be provided close to the vehicular access to the site on Malt Hill.
- 1.2 It is considered that the proposed change of use of land would be consistent with Policy GB2 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan which provides for changes of use of land relating to outdoor sport and recreation and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.3

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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The Assistant Director: Planning be recommended to approve the application subject to the conditions in Section 11 of this report and the completion of a Section 106 Agreement.
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## 2. REASON FOR REPORTING APPLICATION TO COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The application is to be considered by the Planning Committee at the request of Councillor Tony Virgo

## 3. PLANNING STATUS AND SITE DESCRIPTION

<b>PLANNING STATUS</b>
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The application site is located outside the settlement boundary in a countryside location, within the Green Belt.
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- 3.1 The site comprises an area of 12.6 ha of Grade 3 agricultural land located outside the settlement boundary and within the Green Belt. The area of agricultural land extends to the north of the site and to the east of Malt Hill. The landscape is gently undulating with views across the fields to low ridgelines and wooded horizons. Two redundant farm buildings are located to the west and east of the site.
- 3.2 The application site is a remaining plot of land in agricultural use between existing SANGs. To the west, an area of land (25.67 hectares), is occupied by the Frost Folly SANG (approved under applications 15/01162/FUL and 18/00453/FUL). Other land with consent for use as SANG includes Land at Windmill Farm to the south east of the site (approved under application 17/01002/FUL) and Land of Westhatch Lane, Warfield (referred to a Moss End SANG – approved under application 21/00051). The location of the application site in the context of existing SANGs is illustrated on Figure 1 below.
- 3.3 Residential properties are principally located to the south of the site within Church Lane however, the curtilage of Old Oak House, (previously known as Fowlers) abuts the eastern boundary of the site in Malt Hill. An existing concrete track runs in an east-west direction from a field gate at the access to the site from Malt Hill to the existing public right of way on the western boundary of the site. The existing track is used to provide access for farm vehicles used in connection with the management of the land but is also used informally by walkers. The track runs along the southern boundary of Old Oak House which is marked by

stock proof fencing. The eastern boundary with Old Oak House is marked by a combination of stock fencing and a mixed species hedgerow.

3.4 The Warfield Conservation Area, and the Church of St Michael (Grade II\* Listed) are located to the south of the site within Church Lane.

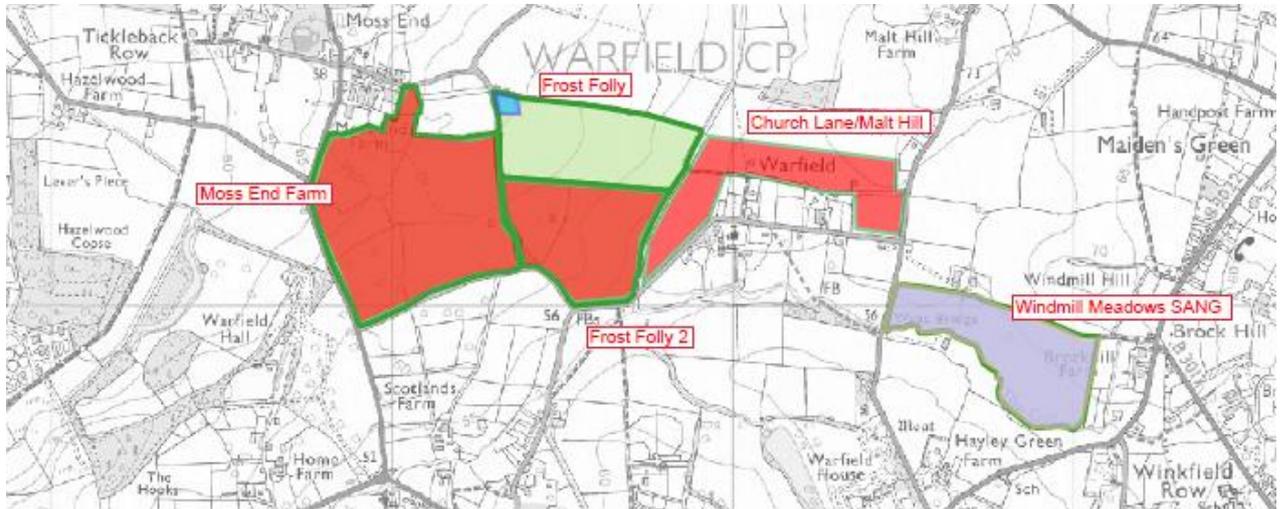


Figure 1 – Location of proposed Church Lane SANG in relation to existing SANGS



3.5 An existing public right of way (FP3) provides a link from Malt Hill, via Church Lane to the existing concrete track on the southern boundary of the application site which is aligned by an avenue of oak trees at its western end. This public right of way continues west, running along the eastern and northern boundary of the Frost Folly SANG. This footpath forms part of a wider circular recreational footpath, as shown on the map at Figure 2 below, which links the application site to other SANGS to the west and the east.

3.6 Malt Hill is located to the east of the site. It is a two-way carriageway, with no street lighting. This road has a rural character with a speed limit of 60mph. The A330 Ascot Road and Kingscroft Lane are located to the north of Malt Hill. The cross-road junction between B3022 and Hayley Green Lane is located to the south. Vehicular access to the application site is via Malt Hill where a gated access leads to a concrete service track running along the southern boundary. This access is also used informally by walkers as referred to in paragraph 3.3 above.

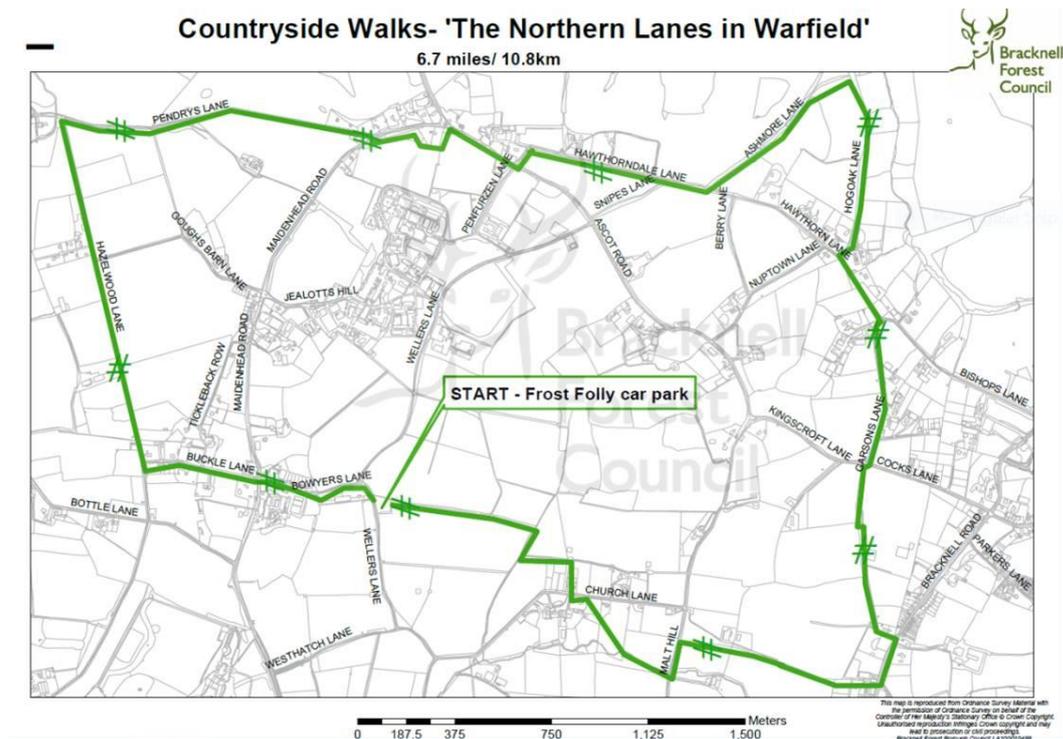


Figure 2

Plan extract – Countryside Walks – The Northern Lanes in Warfield (source [Countryside walks | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](http://Countryside%20walks%20|%20Bracknell%20Forest%20Council%20(bracknell-forest.gov.uk)))

#### 4. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

4.1 There is no history relevant to the application site, however, the status of existing SANGs within the vicinity of the site is set out below (the extent of location of these SANGs is shown on the map at Figure 1 above):

- Frost Folly SANG Wellers Lane (application 15/011161/FUL). This was granted planning permission in November 2016. The planning permission has been implemented; the SANG has been signed off as being completed (in compliance with the SANG management plan). The SANG was transferred to the Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.
- Frost Folly SANG Wellers Lane (application 18/00453/FUL). This was an application for an extension to the existing SANG (15/011161/FUL) to include the field to the south. This was granted planning permission in March 2019. The planning permission has been implemented; the SANG has been signed off as being completed (in compliance with the SANG management plan). The SANG is currently closed to the public and, at the time of writing, a date for its opening has not been agreed.
- Land north of West Hatch Lane, Bracknell (application 17/00923/FUL). This relates to the land to the south of Moss End Farm. Planning permission was granted in November 2019. An application to vary the conditions attached to the decision is currently subject to consideration (application 21/00051).
- Land at Windmill Farm, Malt Hill Bracknell (application 17/01002/FUL). Planning Permission was granted on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The planning permission has been implemented and the SANG has been signed off as being completed (in compliance with

the SANG Management Plan). The SANG is open to the public and under the management of the developer.

## 5. THE PROPOSAL

5.1 This application relates to the change of use of agricultural land (Grade 3) (which is currently managed for arable purposes), to a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The change of use would cover an area of 12.6 hectares located between the Frost Folly SANG to the west and the Malt Hill SANG to the east.

5.2 The planning application comprises the following elements:

- The provision of a 16 space car park (including one disabled space) accessed from Malt Hill. The existing field gate will be removed and replaced by a height barrier set back at least 0.6m from the carriageway. A field gate will be provided beyond the car park access to restrict vehicles accessing the SANG. A culvert will be provided at the entrance to the car park from Malt Hill and vegetation within the visibility splay for the access will be removed. The existing telegraph pole within the sightlines will be retained. The construction of the car park (including surface treatment and drainage), the delineation of spaces and the edging treatment would be subject to condition in the event of approval of the application. A pedestrian access to connect with the SANG footpaths would be provided on the western edge of the parking area.
- The formation of a circular walk. This would be set within the perimeter of the site and separated from residential properties on the southern and north-western boundary by woodland and shrub planting. The paths would be a mix of mown footpath routes through meadow grass and hard surfaced, self-binding gravel routes. The mown routes on the northern section of the SANG would include links to the land to the north. (The land to the north is within the ownership of the applicant and the provision of mown routes in this location is without prejudice to any future decision in the event of an application for an extension to the current proposal).
- A connection (via an area of existing hard standing at the western end of the existing concrete access road) to the existing public footpath that runs along the western boundary of the site and then north to join the Frost Folly SANG.
- The retention of the existing concrete access track along the southern boundary with buffer planting (mixed shrubs and woodland planting) and gates to prohibit pedestrian access along the section of the track where it abuts residential boundaries. Gates, at either end of the section of the track to be retained, would enable access by foot or by vehicles for maintenance purposes. On the eastern boundary an existing maintenance strip would be retained. This would be separated from the SANG by stock proof fencing and have gates at either end to prevent public access.
- The retention of the vast majority of the existing boundary vegetation (including trees and hedgerows) with the exception of the removal of a section of hedgerow either side of the existing access to improve sightlines and access to the car park. The landscaping will include extensive areas of wildflower grassland, with occasional native hedgerows, standard trees and woodland planting. The existing avenue of oaks at the western end of the existing concrete access track would be retained.
- The provision of water bodies in the western part of the site with associated aquatic and wetland planting.

- The erection of a combination of post and rail fencing and stock proof fencing along the boundaries of the section of the SANG to the north of the access road. An existing maintenance strip along the eastern boundary of the site would be retained and at this point the stock proof fencing is set away from the boundary with Old Oak House by approximately 5m. The maintenance strip would have field gates at either end. The northern part of the site would be grazed and stock proof fencing would also be used to divide the SANG into two paddocks and to protect proposed areas of planting.
- The removal of the existing barn on the western half of the site and the retention of the one to the east.
- The provision of infrastructure including information boards; way markers (e.g. wooden posts or similar); gates (field and vehicular gates); benches; a litter bin along with the provision of a water source and water troughs

5.3 The conversion of the existing area of agricultural land to SANG along with the provision of the associated car parking spaces, will be undertaken in phases. The delivery of the SANG phasing would be split between the 'First SANG Enhancement Works' and the SANG Upgrade Works. The scope of work within each stage is summarised below:

- First SANG Enhancement Works – initial works will be undertaken throughout the entire site to convert the site from agricultural use. The works will comprise the provision of the car park and associated improvements; the removal of the western barn structure whilst retaining the existing barn structure; the provision of wildflower grassland and additional planting; the provision of waterbodies on the western boundary of the site; the provision of fencing and gates and the provision of the walking routes. The delivery of the walking routes would comprise the mowing or delineating of the primary and secondary routes; the footpath links to the northern part of the SANG and the surfacing of the south eastern area and footpath.
- SANG Upgrade Works – this will involve upgrades to individual areas of the site. This could be undertaken in full or on a phased basis. Each phase would be no less than 2 hectares in size. The work involved in the upgrade of each phase would include the delivery of all infrastructure proposed within that phase including information board; new waymarkers; a litter bin (opposite the car park); benches and water source and trough/tap.

5.4 In the event of approval, the development would be subject to the completion of a s106 agreement which would secure the phased provision of the SANG with a commuted sum, payable to the Council. This will cover its interim management and maintenance for a period of 20 years at which point the whole of the site would be required to be delivered to the standard required by Natural England. The phased provision of the SANG would enable the site to be laid out to a standard to provide public access but the ownership would be retained by the applicant who would be able to negotiate with other landowners/developers within 4km of the site for the use of the SANG capacity provided by the land.

## 6. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

### Warfield Parish Council: commented that

The council would like plans to show how the proposal integrates with the neighbouring SANG sites, particularly the routes to be used. (*Comment – refer to Figures 1 and 2 above*)

The council would like mitigations taken to protect wildlife in the proposed ponds from dogs. (*Comment – refer to section 9.22 below*)

## 6.1 Other Representations:

Responses (6 in total) have been received from/on behalf of occupiers of two properties on the eastern and southern boundary of the application site who object to the proposal on the following grounds:

- The need for the SANG given the consented SANGS within the vicinity of the site which already provide extensive dog walking areas.
- The proposed SANG is not identified in the Thames Basins SPD as a private SANG.
- The impact on residential amenity due to the proximity to residential properties. Whilst the SPD identifies the location of SANGs within Warfield these are away from houses in the area.
- The impact on Old Oak House in terms of disturbance, loss of privacy and security given location of the path in relation to the boundary of Old Oak House.
- The impact of future SANGs, should they come forward to the north of the site on the amenity, privacy, and security of the occupiers of Old Oak House. If the proposal is part of a wider scheme, then this should be shown as part of the current proposal.
- Location of the car park and access off Malt Hill; the absence of a speed survey and impact on highway safety. The use of the SANG will coincide with rush hour traffic.
- Visibility splays are inadequate.
- Malt Hill is not a suitable location an access to a car park and the car park should be moved closer to Church Lane.
- The impact on views and light due to planting along the southern boundary.
- The impact on biodiversity and the robustness of the ecology survey.

## 7. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

7.1 Highways - report no objections subject to conditions relating to the details of the access works; the height barrier and signage being submitted for approval.

7.2 SPA Officer – reports no objection subject to the completion of a s106 agreement to secure the implementation of the SANG in accordance with the approved plans, the future transfer of the SANG, and the payment of commuted sums for ongoing management and maintenance.

7.3 Natural England – reports no objection

7.7 Heritage Consultant – reports no objection

## 8. MAIN POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

8.1 The primary strategic planning considerations applying to the site and associated policies are:

	<b>Development Plan</b>	<b>NPPF</b>
General policies	CS1- Core Strategy	Consistent with the NPPF
Design	EN20 – BFBLP; CS7 – Core Strategy	Consistent with the NPPF
Amenity	EN20 – BFBLP; CS7 – Core Strategy	Consistent with the NPPF
Highways	M4; M6 – BFBLP; CS24 – Core Strategy	Consistent with the NPPF

Green Belt	GB2 - BFBLP	Consistent with the NPPF
<b>Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designing for Accessibility SPD (June 2006)</li> <li>- Parking Standards SPD (July 2007)</li> <li>- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation SPD (March 2012)</li> <li>- Planning Obligations SPD (February 2015)</li> <li>- Bracknell Forest Borough Landscape Character Assessment (Sept 2015)</li> </ul>		
<b>Other publications</b>		
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)		

## 9. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 The key issues for consideration are:

- The principle of the development
- Impact on the Landscape Character
- Impact on Existing Tree Cover
- Impact on Ecology
- Impact on Drainage
- Highways and Access
- Impact on residential amenity
- Impact on the Church Road Conservation Area and associated Listed Buildings

Each issue is addressed below.

### i. Principle of Development

- 9.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is reinforced by the NPPF which explains that '*at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development*' (Paragraph 10 refers) which should be applied when making planning decisions. In terms of decision making, Paragraph 11 explains this means that developments which accord with the development plan '*should be approved without delay, and that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are the most important for determining the application are out-of-date*' that permission should be granted unless '*the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies of the NPPF indicate otherwise*'. The policy advice of the NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The presumption in favour of sustainable development is reflected in the Bracknell Forest Borough Council Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP), Policy CP1 refers. This states that planning applications which accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 9.2 The Thames Basins Heaths SPA Delivery Framework (2009), explains that SANG's of 12 – 20 ha have a catchment of 4km and SANGs over 20ha in area have a catchment of 5km. Whilst this individual SANG is 12.6 ha and would ordinarily have a catchment of 4km, the links to nearby SANGs at Frost Folly, Windmill Farm and Moss End means that the total area of SANG would be in excess of 20 ha. The proposed SANG would therefore have a catchment of 5km. The importance of the Thames Basin Heaths is recognised within the

retained Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area). Core Strategy - policies CS5 and CS14 are also relevant as are SALP - policy SA9, the Warfield SPD and the Bracknell Forest Thames Basin Heaths SPA Avoidance and Mitigation SPD April 2018 (TBH SPD). The location of the proposed SANG in relation to others within the vicinity is illustrated on the map at Fig 1 above.

9.3 The Council's SPA Officer reports that the proposed SANG would be used to mitigate the impacts of housing development on the TBHSPA. As an individual SANG it would have the capacity provide the mitigation for in the region of 682 dwellings and a catchment of 5km since it is effectively an extension to the adjacent SANGs at Frost Folly and Windmill Farm. The SPA Officer has no objections in principle to the development subject to the completion of the development in accordance with the approved plans; agreement to a SANG Management plan and the completion of s106 agreement to secure, amongst other matters:

- the phased implementation of the SANG to ensure that when complete it will meet the SANG Quality Standards set by Natural England;
- the transfer of the SANG to the Council with a sum of £824,970 to enable the land to be maintained in perpetuity. This includes a baseline maintenance sum applied over 20 years at £1,605 per hectare plus £994 SANGs maintenance costs applied over 125 years and allows for estimated interest rates and inflation to be applied over the period;
- a monitoring fee of £6,000

9.4 The site is located outside the settlement area boundary; within the Green Belt and Landscape Character Area C1 Binfield and Warfield Clay Farmland within the Bracknell Forest Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). Policy GB2 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (BFBLP) - Changes of Use of Land within the Green Belt states that:

*' There will be a general presumption against changes of use of land unless for the following purposes:*

- i) Outdoor sport and recreation; or*
- ii) Cemeteries; or*
- iii) Other uses which protect the open, rural and underdeveloped character of the Green Belt*

*Provided that the change of use would not cause material permanent or temporary harm to the living conditions of those people residing in or close to the Green Belt'*

9.5 This policy is reinforced by Policy CS1 – Sustainable Development of the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CSDPD) which explains that development will be permitted which protects and enhances *' the character and quality of local landscapes and the wider countryside'* (criterion 7 refers).

9.6 Policy GB 2 (i) of the BFBLP provides for the changes of use of land relating to outdoor sport and recreation. The following sections of the NPPF are key to the assessment of the proposal:

Paragraph 147. This explains that *'inappropriate development is, by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'*.

Paragraph 148. This sets out the planning balance and explains that *'When considering any planning application, local authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations'*.

Paragraph 150 sets out the forms of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt. This includes: *'material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds'*. Such a material change of use is not inappropriate in the Green Belt *'provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.'*

9.7 In the light of the guidance provided by the NPPF above, the principle of the use of land for SANG, which would be used for outdoor recreational purposes, would be acceptable in principle subject to preserving the openness of the Green Belt and not conflicting with the purposes of including land within it. The five purposes of the Green Belt as set out in Paragraph 138 of the NPPF are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Bullet points 1 – 3 are relevant in the assessment of this case.

9.8 The proposed change use of agricultural land to SANG would result in 12.6 hectares of land being laid out and landscaped to meet the design/layout standards for SANG. This would enable its use for recreational purposes and provide open space that would mitigate the impact of development within the Borough on the Thames Basins Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). If approved, the application would be subject to a s106 agreement to secure (amongst other matters) the transfer of the land to the Council to ensure that it would be maintained in perpetuity. The legal agreement to secure the management of the land would ensure that it would be safeguarded from development, kept permanently open and would fulfil the purpose of the Green Belt as set out in bullet points 1 – 3 above. The impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt, the living conditions of those residing close to the site and other material considerations are set out below.

## **ii) Impact on the Landscape Character**

9.9 Chapter 8 of the NPPF relates to promoting healthy and safe communities and Paragraph 98 relates to the importance of the delivery of high quality open spaces for health and well-being and the need for planning policies and decisions to take opportunities to enhance existing public rights of way and adding links to existing networks. This is reinforced by guidance on Green Belts, specifically paragraph 145 which states that local planning authorities should be *'looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity'*. Whilst opportunities for recreational use are encouraged this has to be balanced against ensuring that development proposals contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment (Chapter 15 of the NPPF refers).

9.10 The agricultural quality (in this case Grade 3) of the land contributes to the landscape character of the site. Paragraph 174 (a) of the NPPF relates to protecting and enhancing

valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils. Footnote 58 refers to plan making and the need to ensure that where *'significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poor quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality'*.

9.11 Policies EN1 and EN2 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (BFBLP) relate to protecting and supplementing existing tree and hedgerow cover. These policies refer to the importance of tree and hedgerow cover in providing green links between open spaces and wildlife sites, their value as habitats for wildlife and the importance of planting indigenous trees appropriate to the character of the area and a variety of other indigenous plants. At a strategic level, the Core Strategy, Policy CS1 refers to sustainable development. Criterion viii) includes the need to *'protect and enhance the quality of local landscapes and the wider countryside'*. These policies are consistent with the NPPF.

9.12 Bracknell Forest Borough Landscape Character Assessment (Sept 2015) updates the existing Bracknell Forest landscape evidence studies and forms part of the evidence base for the emerging comprehensive local plan. Within this study the application site falls within Landscape Character Area C1 Binfield and Warfield Clay Farmland of the Bracknell Forest Landscape Character Assessment LCA). The key characteristics of the area as extracted from the LCA are:

1. Underlying clay geology, cut by water courses including the Cut River creating a gently undulating landform with mid-distant views across grass and arable fields to low ridgelines and wooded horizons.
2. A farmed, working landscape of medium to large sized fields of mixed arable and pasture, and smaller fields around the edges of villages.
3. Small deciduous woodlands and well-managed hedgerows which provide rhythm and emphasis to views across the landscape.
4. Quiet and rural character with limited scattered settlement well integrated into the landscape.
5. Historic manor houses sited within remnant parkland landscapes, often hidden from view behind high fences or coniferous boundaries.
6. Rural lanes bordered by hedgerows, grass verges and ditches.

Characteristics 2, 3, 4 and 5 as detailed above are relevant to the proposal. The design of the SANG should reflect the existing character of the landscape and seek not only to replicate but also enhance the character of the land.

9.13 The SANG has been designed to meet the design quality standards set by Natural England. It will include a broadly circular route, marked by way markers. The route will comprise a mixture of a mown and surfaced footpath (approximately 50/50 split). The primary circular route within the SANG, combined with the primary route of the adjacent consented SANG at Frost Folly, will provide a circular route of 2.3 km with secondary routes available. The secondary routes will 'break up' the circular walk and provide alternative routes. This will increase the permeability of the site to visitors, providing a varied choice of access points with different route lengths, particularly when considered together with the consented SANG at Frost Folly and the wider public footpath network (Refer to Figure 2 above). The inclusion of mown and surfaced paths is consistent with the Natural England Guidelines for the Creation of Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) – August 2021. The combined approach ensures that the route is semi natural in appearance and will be assimilated into the wider landscape.

9.14 The appearance of the route within the landscape, along with the ecological impact (i.e. arising from the surfaced sections of the path) has also been balanced against the need to

ensure that the paths are accessible to a range of different users in line with adopted planning policies. The relevant policies are R7 – Countryside Recreation; EN20 – Design Considerations in new development and EN22 Designing Accessibility of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (February 2002) and policy CS1 of the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy DPD (February 2008). The Bracknell Forest Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2012) ([Parks and Open Spaces Strategy \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](http://bracknell-forest.gov.uk)) is also relevant. The strategy identifies the vision as the delivery of “A high quality, accessible network of clean, safe and attractive green spaces and facilities which allow people to improve their health and well-being through recreation and sport now and in the future.” Aside from small sections of the SANG path adjacent to the river within Windmill Farm SANG to the east of Malt Hill, none of the existing SANGs in the vicinity of the current site have surfaced paths. This means that they are less attractive for use when they become wet and muddy and can become unusable for those with mobility issues. The delivery of sections of surfaced paths within the proposed SANG, along with the existing access track will provide choice for users of the SANG and an opportunity to walk from the car park in the east to the western boundary of the site and to connect to the existing footpath network. The proposal balances the delivery of ‘hard infrastructure’ against the impact of the wider landscape whilst ensuring that it widens the opportunity for access for all to enjoy the quiet and enjoyment of the countryside and the semi-natural habitat of the SANG.

- 9.15 It is acknowledged that the proposed car park on the eastern boundary of the site, would introduce an area of hard surfacing into the Green Belt, however, it would be separated from the existing access track by landscaping and any impact on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character of the area would be limited and of a short term nature in conjunction with visits to the SANG or access to the wider footpath network. The details of construction of the car park including surface treatment, drainage, delineation of car parking spaces and edging treatment would be subject to condition. The car park is also an important element in ensuring that the SANG can fulfil its purpose and enable ready access to the open space.
- 9.16 The impact of the paths and the car park is compensated for by the removal of an existing open barn structure (western structure) and the provision of wildflower grassland; woodland, hedgerow and shrub planting and waterbodies which would ensure the delivery of a range of semi-natural habitats. The introduction of gates and fencing, associated with the grazing of the northern half of the SANG would not be alien to this countryside location. In conclusion, the delivery of the SANG would be assimilated into the landscape and would be consistent with the essential characteristics of the openness of the Green Belt and would enhance and preserve the landscape in perpetuity.

### **iii) Impact on Existing Tree Cover**

- 9.17 Paragraph 180 (c) of the NPPF recognises the importance of ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees and paragraph 180 (d) encourages opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around development proposals.
- 9.19 Policy EN1 of the BFBLP (Protecting tree and hedgerow cover) relates to the importance of tree and hedgerow cover and explains the importance to the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape; the role in providing green links and habitats for wildlife and their importance in areas of historic significance. This policy is reinforced by Policy EN20 (Design considerations in new development) and Bracknell Forest Core Strategy policies CS1 – Sustainable Development Principles and CS7 (Design) refers.
- 9.20 The provision of improved sightlines at the access to the proposed SANG on Malt Hill, will result in the cutting back of the hedge line within the visibility splay. However, the impact would not be significant and any loss here is compensated for by the delivery of

woodland and hedgerow planting as part of the implementation of the SANG which will then be subject to on-going management and maintenance.

#### **iv) Impact on Ecology**

- 9.21 The importance of taking opportunities to improve habitats and biodiversity is recognised in paragraphs 179 – 182 of the NPPF. Policy EN3 of the BFBLP and Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Policy CS1 recognise the need for the Borough's biodiversity to be protected, conserved and enhanced.
- 9.22 The application has been supported by an ecological assessment which has informed the design, layout, landscaping and future management regime as set out in a SANG Management Plan. The implementation of the landscaping scheme including wildflowers; mixed nature hedgerow and tree planting will contribute to the biodiversity and it will be managed to ensure that the use of the SANG for recreation does not impact on the new habitats created. The waterbodies on the western part of the site, will be planted with a variety of native marginal species to enhance their biodiversity value. The northern pond will be designed and managed to further promote biodiversity. Measures to achieve this will include strategic placement of soft scrub planting between the path and the pond to discourage access into this area (without preventing it) by dogs and a more relaxed management regime to allow for rougher grassland habitats and an element of 're-wilding'. The proposals also include the creation of habitat piles (from tree management works) to provide new hibernation opportunities for reptiles and amphibians.

#### **v) Impact on Drainage**

- 9.23 Paragraph 167 of the NPPF explains that, when determining planning applications, local authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Core Strategy Policy CS1 - Sustainable Development Principles requires development to protect the quality of natural resources. The application has been supported by a Flood Risk and Drainage Report. The Lead Local Flood Authority commented that the site is shown to be at surface water flood risk associated with a tributary of The Cut. However, the scheme could provide benefits to the wider area by introducing more trees and longer grass/ meadow environments.
- 9.24 The two water features on the western boundary of the site will be fed by natural surface water runoff from the wider SANG. Given the underlying ground conditions (London Clay formation) it is envisaged that the 'ponds' will not be permanently wet, or groundwater fed, but rather provide seasonal aquatic conditions. Given that they will only be draining natural catchment (no specific attenuation requirement), there is not considered to be any need for any formal control structures or headwalls. The ponds will be generated entirely through excavation, and it is not intended that there would be any bunding required to form the basins.
- 9.25 The proposed car park, comprising self binding gravel should pose no flood risk subject to infiltration tests on the underlying strata, but it is recommended that the car park construction is subject to condition.

#### **vi) Highways and Access**

- 9.26 The NPPF (Paragraph 110 refers) explains that in assessing applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) *appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;*
- b) *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;*
- c) *the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model design Code, and*
- d) *any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.*

In balancing the impact of the development on the highway, Paragraph 111 states:

*‘Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be and unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impact on the road network would be severe’*

9.27 At a local level the BFBLP, Policy M4 states that ‘*Development which would result in a material increase in the use of the existing highway will not be permitted unless appropriate pedestrian, cycling and public transport routes and facilities are provided and/or improved and any reasonably required highway works undertaken*’. This is reinforced by Policy M6 – Cycling and Walking of the BFBLP which requires development to provide safe, direct and well signed pedestrian and cycle routes within the Borough. This is reflected in the objectives of the overarching design policy, Policy CS1 within the Core Strategy DPD.

9.28 Objections have been raised to the use of the existing site access on Malt Hill on the grounds that this is busy at the morning peak when the SANG is likely to be used and the proposed sightlines are not adequate. However, the application has been supported by a speed survey (as part of highway technical notes) to inform the appropriate visibility splay. The speed survey was undertaken in a neutral month and outside peak traffic flow periods in October 2020. The results of the speed survey are summarised below:

Direction	85 <sup>th</sup> percentile speeds (kph)	Visibility Requirement
Northbound	69.5	117m
Southbound	66.2	108m

*(source Stantec Technical Note date 6.1.2021)*

On the basis of this speed survey, the Highway Authority reports no objection to the 2.4m x 120m visibility splays as proposed, subject to the details of the vehicular access to be subject to condition. Previous concerns regarding the provision of a pedestrian link from the car park to the section of the surfaced footpath to the west of the car park have been addressed (shown on final SANG plan and car park layout). Although the Highway Authority has questioned the absence of a continuous surface path to the south of the car park on the grounds of access by disabled persons, alternative routes are provided to the west, the main body of the SANG and the balance between the provision of surfaced and non-surfaced routes is addressed in section ii) above.

9.29 There is no objection to the development on highway grounds, however, in the event of approval the following details would be subject to condition: details of vehicular access; the construction of the car park including surface treatment, drainage, delineation of car parking spaces and edging treatment; car park signage and details of the height barrier.

#### **v) Impact on Residential Amenity**

- 9.30 Policy EN20 of the BFBLP states that development should not affect the amenity of surrounding properties or area and Policy CS1 recognises the importance of sustainable development and the need to protect and enhance the health of the local population. Policy GB2 of the BFBLP provides for the changes of use of land relating to outdoor sport and recreation in the Green Belt but this is subject to the proviso that *'the change of use would not cause material permanent or temporary harm to the living conditions of those people residing in or close to the Green Belt.'*
- 9.31 Residential properties are located along the southern boundary of the site and along the eastern boundary. Measures have been undertaken to separate the SANG and the paths within it from these properties. The measures include:
- the separation of Old Oak House on the eastern boundary of the site from the SANG by a maintenance strip, delineated by stock proof fencing with gates at each end to prevent public access adjacent to the boundary of the property;
  - the inseting of paths from residential boundaries with planting (in the case of the southern boundary a section of the existing track would be retained with pedestrian gates to prevent public access)
  - the provision of a landscaping buffer between the car park edge and the existing track to screen the car park when viewed from the southern boundary of Old Oak House.
- 9.32 The SANG would provide the opportunity for people to enjoy quiet recreation in the countryside and objections on the grounds of noise/disturbance associated with its use (including access to/from the car park and the movement of cars and activity) could not be substantiated as a reason to oppose the proposal. Objections have been raised to the principle of a SANG close to residential properties however, this is not exceptional. The majority of SANGs in the borough have adjoining residential properties since they were either implemented at the same time as the houses or were converted from existing recreational open space.
- 9.33 Whilst the concerns of residents have been noted, measures have been undertaken in the design to address issues raised and thereby safeguard the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

#### **v) Impact on the Warfield Church Lane Conservation Area**

- 9.34 Paragraph 195 of the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to assess the significance of any heritage asset affected by a development proposal. This is reflected in policy CS1 of the Core Strategy DPD which requires development to protect and enhance historic and cultural features of acknowledged importance.
- 9.35 The proposed SANG is located to the north of the Warfield Church Lane Conservation Area, which is centred on the Grade II\* Church of St Michael the Archangel with associated Grade II Listed tombs. Other Grade II Listed Buildings are located within the vicinity of the church and within the Conservation Area i.e. the Rectory, Parish Room and St Michael's Cottage. The proposed SANG land would be separated from the Conservation Area by a distance of approximately 85m, at its closest point.
- 9.36 Given the distance from the Conservation Area and the nature of the changes to the land arising from the change of use as set out above, the proposed change of use of the existing agricultural land would not harm the setting of Warfield Conservation Area and associated listed buildings. The associated landscaping proposals and re-greening as part of the SANG would be an enhancement and, as SANG the land would be protected from development. The main potential for harm would be the car parking area but given the separation of this

area from the Warfield Conservation Area and associated Listed Buildings, the impact on built heritage is considered to be neutral.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 The site, as part of a group of SANGs nearby (Frost Folly, Windmill Farm and Moss End), would deliver SANG to mitigate the impact of development within 5km of the application site on the TBH SPA, including the strategic development at Warfield and would make a positive contribution in assisting the delivery of housing. The proposed use would not be an inappropriate use within the Green Belt having regard to the assessment set out within this report. The landscape and character of the application site would be changed through additional planting and measures (as set out in section ii) of this report) to enable it to function as SANG and there would be an increase in the number of cars parking on an existing area of hardstanding. Whilst the SANG would adjoin residential boundaries, landscaping and maintenance routes (closed from public access) provide separation from the properties and thereby safeguard the amenities and privacy of existing occupiers.
- 10.2 It is concluded that use of the land as SANG would not be inappropriate within the Green Belt where it would provide opportunities for public access; recreation and enhance the landscape, its visual amenity and biodiversity. The proposal would create a significant and long-lasting public asset in the form of additional publicly accessible open space for the benefit of the Borough's residents.

## 11 RECOMMENDATION

### 11.1 **Following the completion of a legal agreement to secure planning obligation(s) under Section 106** of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 relating to: -

- the phased implementation of the SANG to ensure that when complete it will meet the SANG Quality Standards set by Natural England;
- the transfer of the SANG to the Council with a sum of £824,970 to enable the land to be maintained in perpetuity. This includes a baseline maintenance sum applied over 20 years at £1,605 per hectare plus £994 SANGs maintenance costs applied over 125 years and allows for estimated interest rates and inflation to be applied over the period;
- a monitoring fee of £6,000

The Assistant Director: Planning be recommended to **APPROVE** the application subject to the following conditions amended, added to or deleted as the Assistant Director: Planning considers necessary: -

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following approved plans and other submitted details received by the Local Planning Authority on: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019; 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021; 26 January 2021 and 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

Site Location Plan – Drawing Ref: 6523

SANG Management Plan 6826.SANG.v.F3 January 2022

Ecological Assessment April 2018 – 6826. Ecological Assessment December 2021

Flood Risk & Drainage Non-Technical Summary BWB Consulting Ltd February 2021  
Warfield SANG 3 Proposed Site Access Junction Visibility and Vehicle Tracking Analysis –  
Stantec Drawing No. 49800/5501/001/ Rev I

Detailed Hard and Soft Landscape General Arrangement Plans prepared by Fabrik:  
Landscape Reference Plan D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0099 PL07  
Planting Schedule and Drawing Legend D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0100 PL07  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 1 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0101 PL07  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 2 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0102 PL06  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 3 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0103 PL06  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 4 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0104 PL06  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 5 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0105 PL07  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 6 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0106 PL06  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 7 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0107 PL05  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 8 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0108 PL06  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 9 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0109 PL06  
General Arrangement Plan Sheet 10 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0110 PL05  
Plan Enhancement Works Plan Sheet 11 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0111 PL08  
Final SANG Plan Sheet 12 of 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0112 PL08  
Upgrade Works Plan D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0113 PL08  
Staked Tree Pit Detail in Soft Landscape D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0401  
Soil Profile D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0402  
Furniture Details (Sheet 1 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0403 Rev PL01  
Furniture Details (Sheet 2 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0404 Rev PL01  
Boundary Details (Sheet 1 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0405 Rev PL01  
Boundary Details (Sheet 2 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0406 Rev PL01

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.

03. Prior to the commencement of the development, details of the construction, materials, surface treatment and the delineation of car parking spaces (including car park edging) for the whole of the car parking area (existing and proposed) as shown on drawing numbers Drawing No 49800/5501/001/ Rev I and 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0109 PL06 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The car parking area shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme prior to the completion of the First SANG enhancement works and shall be retained for the purposes to serve the approved development.

REASON: To ensure that the development is provided with adequate car parking to prevent the likelihood of on-street car parking which would be a danger to other road users. [Relevant Policies: BFBLP M9, CSDPD CS23]

04. Prior to the completion of the First SANG enhancement works the car parking spaces as illustrated on drawings refs. Drawing No 49800/5501/001/ Rev I and 12 D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0109 PL06 shall be in accordance with the details as specified in the approved scheme and thereafter shall be retained for the purpose of parking to serve the development.

REASON: To ensure that the development is provided with adequate car parking to prevent the likelihood of on-street car parking which would be a danger to other road users. [Relevant Policies: BFBLP M9, CDPD CS23]

05. Prior to the commencement of development details of the height barrier to be located at the entrance to the car park as shown on drawing D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR-0112 PL08 and Drawing No. 49800/5501/001/ Rev I shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The height barrier shall be installed as part of the First SANG Enhancement Works and thereafter retained as part of the car park to serve the approved development.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.  
Relevant Policy: BFBLP M9, CSDPD CS23]

06. The development shall not be publicly accessible until directional signs have been installed in accordance with details which have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the convenience and safety of all highway users.  
[Relevant Policy: BFBLP EN20, M4, CSDPD CS7, CS24]

07. The first SANG enhancement works and the relevant phases of the SANG upgrade works shall not be begun until a scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, to accommodate:-

- (a) Parking of vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors
- (b) Loading and unloading of plant and vehicles
- (c) Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
- (d) Wheel cleaning facilities
- (e) Temporary portacabins and welfare for site operatives (if required) and each facility shall be retained throughout the course of construction of the development, free from any impediment to its designated use. No other areas on the site, other than those in the approved scheme shall be used for the purposes listed (a) to (e) above without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of amenity and road safety.

08. No retained tree or hedgerow (as specified as being retained on the approved details as part of this permission) shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests safeguarding visual amenity.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN1 and EN20, CSDPD CS7]

09. i) Prior to the commencement of the development, details of the final landscaping scheme (to include construction detail of the ponds) fencing, gates, waymarkers and refuse bins) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All planting comprised in the soft landscaping works as part of the first SANG enhancement works shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The planting shall be undertaken in the nearest planting season (1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March inclusive) following the implementation of the first SANG enhancement works.

ii) Prior to the commencement of the development of each phase of the SANG upgrade works, details of the final hard and soft landscaping schemes to be implemented as part of each SANG upgrade phase shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All planting comprised in the soft landscaping works as part of the SANG upgrade works shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The planting

shall be undertaken in the nearest planting season (1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March inclusive) following the implementation of each phase of SANG upgrade works prior to the transfer of any part of the approved SANG, or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

As a minimum, the quality of all hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 4428:1989 'Code Of practice For General Landscape Operations' or any subsequent revision. All trees and other plants included within the approved details shall be healthy, well-formed specimens of a minimum quality that is compatible with British Standard 3936:1992 (Part 1) 'Specifications For Trees & Shrubs' and British Standard 4043 (where applicable) or any subsequent revision. Any trees or other plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, die, are removed, uprooted, are significantly damaged, become diseased or deformed, shall be replaced during the nearest planting season (1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March inclusive) with others of the same size, species and quality as approved.

REASON: In the interests of good landscape design and the visual amenity of the area.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN2 and EN20, CSDPD CS7]

011. The details of the fencing, gates, waymarkers and refuse bins shall be in accordance with details as shown on the following drawings hereby approved

Furniture Details (Sheet 1 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0403 Rev PL01  
Furniture Details (Sheet 2 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0404 Rev PL01  
Boundary Details (Sheet 1 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0405 Rev PL01  
Boundary Details (Sheet 2 of 2) D2753-FAB-00-GL-DR- L- 0406 Rev PL01

The fencing, gates, waymakers and refuse bins shall be installed as part of the First SANG Enhancement Works and SANG Upgrade Works as set out in the SANG Management Plan 6826.SANG.v.F3 January 2022 and shall thereafter be retained.

REASON: In the interests of good landscape design and the visual amenity of the area.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN2 and EN20, CSDPD CS7]

012. No site clearance shall take place during the main bird-nesting period of 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> August inclusive unless a scheme to minimise the impact on nesting birds during the construction of the development has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Any site clearance during this period shall be undertaken in compliance with the approved scheme.

REASON: In the interests of nature conservation  
Relevant Plans and Policies: BFBLP EN3, CSDPD CS1, CS7]

a) Informative(s)

01. The developer is advised that a section 278 Highways Agreement will be required for works within the highway.

02. Land Drainage Act Consent from Bracknell Forest Borough Council will be required for works to the existing ditches, including structures and outfalls.

03. The attention of the applicant is drawn to the Berkshire Act 1986, Part II, Clause 9, which enables the Highway Authority to recover the costs of repairing damage to the footway or grass verge arising during building operations.

04. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

05. The First SANG Enhancement Works as specified in conditions 4,5 and 7 are those works specified in in paragraph 5.3 above unless otherwise agreed in the s106 agreement

In the event of the s106 planning obligation not being completed by 24th May 2022 the Assistant Director: Planning be authorised to extend the period further or REFUSE the application for the following reasons:-

1. The absence of an agreement to secure the in perpetuity management and maintenance of the site would result in the land not satisfying the minimum requirements to qualify as SANG as required in Bracknell Forest Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation SPD (March 2012) and as such would impact on the character of the use of land within this Green location. As such the development would be contrary to policies C1 of the Core Strategy DPD and GB2 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan DPD