

Chertsey Meads SANG Management Plan

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BOROUGH COUNCIL

Revision Schedule

Description	Date	No.
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Contents

Introduction	4
Chertsey Meads Site	5
SANG Proposals	6
Management, Maintenance and Funding	25
Monitoring	26
Conclusion	26
Appendix 1: Correspondence from Natural England	28
Appendix 2: Chertsey Meads' Catchment Area Map	32
Table 1: Chertsey Meads performance against SANG criteria	9
Table 2: SANG improvements and anticipated costings in perpetuity	17
Table 3: Funding summary	24
Figure 1: SANG improvements recommended by SWT	15
Figure 2: Proposed layout of Chertsey Meads SANG	16

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Introduction

1. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) forms part of a Natura 2000 network of sites of international importance to nature conservation, established under the Habitats directives. The SPA supports vulnerable ground nesting birds, the Dartford Warbler; Nightjar and Woodlark.
2. No residential development is permissible within 400m of the TBH SPA. Residential development within a 400m–5km zone and some larger residential development within 5-7km of the TBH SPA must demonstrate that there will be no net impacts on the integrity of the SPA. As approximately two-thirds of the borough is located within the 5km zone of influence, it is considered that the TBH SPA has a large influence on residential development in Runnymede. The current avoidance strategy was agreed amongst the 11 local Borough and District and 2 County Council authorities affected by the TBH SPA and endorsed by Natural England in 2009 as part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework. The agreed avoidance strategy takes the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM).
3. The purpose of SANG is to provide an alternative for those development sites that could otherwise have an impact on the SPA by disturbing the birds as a consequence of new housing, such as dogwalkers, thus attracting people away from the SPA and reducing pressure put on it. A SANG must be managed to ensure its continued attractiveness as an alternative to the SPA and must be maintained in perpetuity (a period of 80 years). Strategic Access, Management and Monitoring of the SPA was later introduced as part of the avoidance strategy. This involves monitoring the use of the SPA through providing an onsite presence, managing visitors and improving visitor understanding of the importance of the SPA.
4. In order for residential development to be able to occur within the zone of influence, it must be demonstrated that no adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA will take place. Therefore, a developer must agree to enter into a licencing agreement with the Council to use a portion of the residential capacity calculated for each strategic SANG, based on the site's size and a number of other factors, to be able to avoid harmful impacts. Otherwise, a development should make provision for its own SANG if it is large enough, as well as make a SAMM contribution to allow for the monitoring the SPA. The Council's existing SANG capacity reduces over time and so the Council has looked for further land that could be used for such a purpose. This has led to the identification of Chertsey Meads, a site within the Council's ownership as a possible site to be used for SANG.
5. The purpose of this SANG Management Plan is to show that the site is appropriate for use as SANG, whilst taking account of its existing use and whether it is capable of being managed for the use in perpetuity.

Chertsey Meads Site

6. The Chertsey Meads Management Plan¹, produced by the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT), distinct from the SANG Management Plan for the site, is a document produced on behalf of the Council with a medium-long-term schedule of how the site will be managed for its current purpose as a recreation area.
7. As set out in the Council's Chertsey Meads Management Plan, the site is owned and managed by the Council and extends to approximately 73 ha. The site is located to the south east of the borough. The Management Plan confirms that the River Thames forms much of the boundary to the north and east, with some residential development and gardens present between the Thames and the site and the River Bourne forms the southern boundary. A marina and further residential development are present to the west.
8. Surrey Wildlife Trust confirms the main access onto the site is via Mead Lane to the west. A tarmac road runs from Mead Lane to housing in the east and splits the site through the middle. There are also two additional tarmac roads, which run north of the central road to areas of housing. Two car parks are present; one on the western boundary adjacent to the marina and one further north (see Figure 1). A number of seats and tables are provided near to the River Thames north of the car parks. A play area is present just north of the western car park. Two small brick-built structures are present on the southern boundary close to the River Bourne. One of these was converted to bat hibernacula in 2010 following advice from the Surrey Bat Group. The other three walled structure was adapted to encourage its use for feeding and roosting by bats.
9. The Chertsey Meads Management Plan gives details of the site's physical, cultural and biological properties, which are important in understanding the site and its constraints. However, it is not deemed necessary to repeat the specific details here.
10. However, it is worth noting that in addition to being included within the Thames Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), Chertsey Meads has some important existing designations. The whole of the site is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). SNCIs are usually selected because of particular wildlife habitats, or because the site supports rare or scarce species outside their natural habitats. Part of Chertsey Meads is accorded the status of a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). LNR status is conferred by a local authority to indicate that a site has nature interest and/or educational value.
11. Forming part of a BOA, the site provides opportunities for landscape-scale improvement for nature. In the Thames Valley Area of Thorpe and Shepperton, within which Chertsey Meads is located, there are opportunities for restoration/creation of the River Thames Flood Alleviation Scheme (Datchet-Teddington); floodplain grazing marsh; and standing water/pond creation.

¹ <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/14227/Chertsey-Meads>

12. Due to be adopted during 2020, superseding the current 2001 Local Plan, The Council's 2030 Local Plan states that the designation of Chertsey Meads as a SANG has been agreed in principle with Natural England, subject to satisfactory completion of this SANG Management Plan. Policy EE10 goes further in outlining the requirements which developments will need to meet in relation to the TBHSPA. Chertsey Meads is also selected as a QEII Field through the 'Fields in Trust'. This organisation protects the land through a legally binding document known as a Deeds of Dedication, which prevents the field from being developed.
13. In addition to the Chertsey Meads Management Plan, the Council commissioned the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) to undertake a Public Access Assessment and Constraints and Issues Analysis (2017)², to support the Management Plan, which is also of use to the Chertsey Meads SANG Management Plan. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

SANG Proposals

14. The fact that the site is of biodiversity value does not necessarily preclude it being used as SANG; however, it is important to understand the onsite ecology value. This in part prompted the commissioning of the 2017 SWT report referred to above, which sets out the biodiversity found on the site. SWT noted that the site is very rich in plant species, including a small number of scarce and rare species. According to SWT's findings, three plant species were also classified as near threatened and four were classified as vulnerable in a 2006 study³, some of which have now been deemed extinct on the site. The 2017 report identified a total of 116 different bird species recorded on the site. The document notes 22 of the species recorded are on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red list and 30 on the Amber list. In addition, very large numbers of invertebrate species have been recorded on the site, including 23 Nationally Notable species and eight Red Data Book invertebrate species, which assess the conservation status of invertebrates in the UK. SWT note that 'the continuing practice of cutting for hay, but without further agricultural improvements has gradually enabled some of the nature conservation interest to return'. A Higher Level Stewardship agreement in place at the time of preparing this document specifies the 'management of the woodland, grassland, reedbed and fen habitats on the site'.
15. In April 2013, after officers had undertaken work on assessing Chertsey Meads as a potential SANG including site surveys⁴ and using the methodology from Bracknell Forest District Council to calculate SANG capacity, recognised by Natural England as being the appropriate method of calculating capacity, it was agreed with Natural England that Chertsey Meads could be used as a SANG, following the production of a satisfactory SANG Management Plan and the Council's necessary Committee processes (see Appendix 1).

² <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/14227/Chertsey-Meads>

³ Cheffings, C. and Farrell, L. (Editors) (2006) The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain.

⁴ https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/media/5126/Suitable-Alternative-Natural-Green-Space-Survey-2012-pdf/SANGS_survey_Summer_2012.pdf

16. In summary, the site was discounted for its current use so that 50% of the site was available for the purposes of SANG. This was based on a capacity using 2.2 people per dwelling, departing from the recognised average of 2.4 people per dwelling but the evidence did not support this lower figure. In 2018 when the Council decided to recommence works to get Chertsey Meads adopted as a SANG, the same method was applied, only using 2.4 people per household. The capacity has been agreed as 1822 dwellings (see Appendix 1). This additional SANG capacity will be important in supporting the delivery of the Council's housing strategy, as set out in the emerging Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, which was submitted for independent examination in July 2018 and is anticipated to be adopted during July 2020.
17. Given the size of the site, based on guidance contained within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework⁵, the site would have a catchment of 5km and so development consisting of 10 or more dwellings located within 5km of the site can be allocated to it. A map of the site's catchment can be found at Appendix 2.
18. As part of the production of the Management Plan for Chertsey Meads, the commissioning of the Surrey Wildlife Trust report was also to assess the access and constraints of the site. The report also provided *'recommendations for site enhancement measures in order to improve the area for visitors. Suggestions regarding the routing of pathways, how to promote features of interest and the creation of new features will be included where appropriate. The report will refer to the SANGS Site Quality Checklist as provided by Natural England'* and *highlighted 'the potential impacts of the creation of a SANGS on the ecology of Chertsey Meads. It will also assess potential impacts on the implementation of the current management plan for the site (Gibbs, 2016) as well as potential mitigation to reduce any negative impacts'*. Natural England supported the outcomes of the report.
19. Both the SWT Management Plan and access assessment provide a description of the access on to and through the site, as well as features, which can be summarised as:
- wide open space popular with families and dog walkers and particularly valued by local people;
 - two good sized car parks with free parking allow easy access for those coming from further afield;
 - a number of Rights of Way through the site including an equestrian route, a cycle route and both mown and hard surfaced footpaths;
 - good disabled access;
 - two picnic areas near to the River Thames;

⁵ https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/media/5045/Thames-Basin-Heath-Special-Protection-Area-Delivery-Framework-February-2009-/pdf/TBH_SPA.pdf

- a play area which has further encouraged the use of the site by families with young children;
- three interpretation boards on the site, one in each of the car parks and one near the edge of the grassland near the entrance to the site. There is also a welcome board with a map by the Mead Lane entrance;
- features of interest/focal points including an expansive area of open grassland and views across the River Thames;
- a metal height restricting barrier is present at the entrance to the site to deter fly-tipping and traveller incursions. Metal and timber bollards are present along the edges of the access roads to prevent driving onto the grassland;
- the annual Chertsey Agricultural Show is held on the Meads.

20. The site has a number of facilities/features that make it attractive for recreation. However, these features may not necessarily make the site suitable for use as SANG. The following table utilises data contained both in the Council's 2012 SANG surveys work and the Surrey Wildlife Trust access assessment 2017, which set out the SANG criteria that are either essential or desirable and whether Chertsey Meads currently meets these criteria. The outcomes of the assessments will feed into the work to be funded by SANG monies collected through development in order to make the site suitable for use as SANG in perpetuity.

Table 1: Chertsey Meads performance against SANG criteria

Essential criteria for all SANGs				
Item	Criteria	Current criteria	Criteria met?	Potential future works
1	Parking on all sites larger than 4ha (unless the site is intended for use within 400m only)	Two car parks (providing 91 spaces, plus 5 disabled spaces).	Yes	
2	Circular walk of 2.3 to 2.5km	There are linking circular routes exceeding 2.5km, including over 6km of mown footpaths present. 2012 SANG surveys suggests that site would be able to accommodate an increase in visitor numbers based on site size.	Yes	
3	Car parks easily and safely accessible by car and clearly sign posted	The 2 car parks are considered to be easily accessible.	Yes	
4	Access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGs is intended to cater for	Many access points for dog walkers and walkers who are the main users of the site.	Yes	
5	Safe access route on foot from nearest car park and/or footpath	The two car parks are located within the proposed SANG itself with direct access to footpaths.	Yes	
6	Circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park	The existing mown footpaths offer a range of circular walk options starting and finishing at both car parks.	Yes	SWT suggest additional circular footpaths.

7	Perceived as safe – no tree and scrub cover along part of walking routes	The current walking routes are open in character and unlikely to be perceived as threatening.	Yes	
8	Paths easily used and well maintained but mostly unsurfaced	Yes (but some upgrading required).	Yes	Yes (but some upgrading required). SWT set out that existing paths are mainly unsurfaced and maintained by mowing three times annually. Some upgrades may be necessary in areas prone to waterlogging.
9	Perceived as semi-natural with little intrusion of artificial structures	The site is open and semi-natural with no intrusion of artificial structures other than the picnic benches and play area.	Yes	Some improvement is possible. There is an opportunity to replace the existing picnic benches with a more aesthetically pleasing and natural design.
10	If larger than 12ha then a range of habitats should be present	The area supports grassland, riverside habitat, reedbed, ponds, hedgerows, scattered trees and woodland.	Yes	
11	Access unrestricted – plenty of space for dogs to exercise freely and safely off the lead	The site supports a large open area (over 70ha) for dogs to exercise freely.	Yes	

12	No unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment smells etc.)		Yes (see potential future works)	The view of the vehicle storage site just to the south of the River Bourne could be regarded as an unpleasant intrusion. This could be reduced by the strategic planting of scrub to shield the view.
13	Clearly sign posted or advertised in some way	The site is signposted via a small brown sign from the B387, Fordwater Road.	Yes	A sign from the other direction on Fordwater Road could also be installed.
14	Leaflets or website advertising, their location to potential users (distributed to homes and made available at entrance points and car parks)		Not yet	To be prepared.

Desirable features for SANGs

Item	Criteria	Current criteria	Criteria met?	Potential future works
15	Can dog owners take dogs from the car park to the SANGs safely off the lead	The car parks are located within the proposed SANGs.	Yes	
16	Gently undulating topography	The site is quite flat.	No	Desirable criteria but no future action identified at the current time.
17	Access points with signage outlining the layout of the SANGs and routes available to visitors		Not yet	To be prepared.

18	Naturalistic space with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside and areas of dense and scattered trees and shrubs. Provision of open water is desirable	The site supports abundant open countryside with small areas of woodland, scattered trees, reedbed, ponds and access to the river Thames.	Yes	
19	Focal point such as a viewpoint or monument within the SANGs	Current focal points include the picnic areas and views across the River Thames, views of the historic Chertsey Bridge, the pond and reedbed with viewing platform.	Yes	Some improvements possible. Consideration to be given to a natural stone or wooden sculpture, sympathetic to the environment, to act as a focal Point.

Sources: Runnymede Borough Council (2012) Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space Surveys, Surrey Wildlife Trust (2017) Public Access Assessment and Constraints and Issues Analysis

21. It is recognised that Chertsey Meads already meets most of the SANG criteria. In order to ensure that Chertsey Meads is fit for purpose as SANG and continue to encourage/increase visitors to site, SWT suggest the following improvements:

- to footpaths (suggested circular walks, upgrading footpaths in key locations);
- improving visitor information (further signage to site, signage/interpretation on site, promoting on the Council website/providing leaflets);
- to furniture (replace picnic benches and provide further benches elsewhere on site);
- improving views (tree screening; making more of focal points, including views to the River Bourne);
- boardwalk provision through the reedbed;
- creation of a new pond;
- installation of a sculpture;
- hedge planting;
- creation of a scrape; and
- opening up the eastern pond.

22. Essential works identified in Table 1 to make the site suitable as SANG should be put in place prior to development being allocated to the site. This primarily relates to the features not yet present and includes production and distribution of leaflets and labelling of access points and routes through the site.

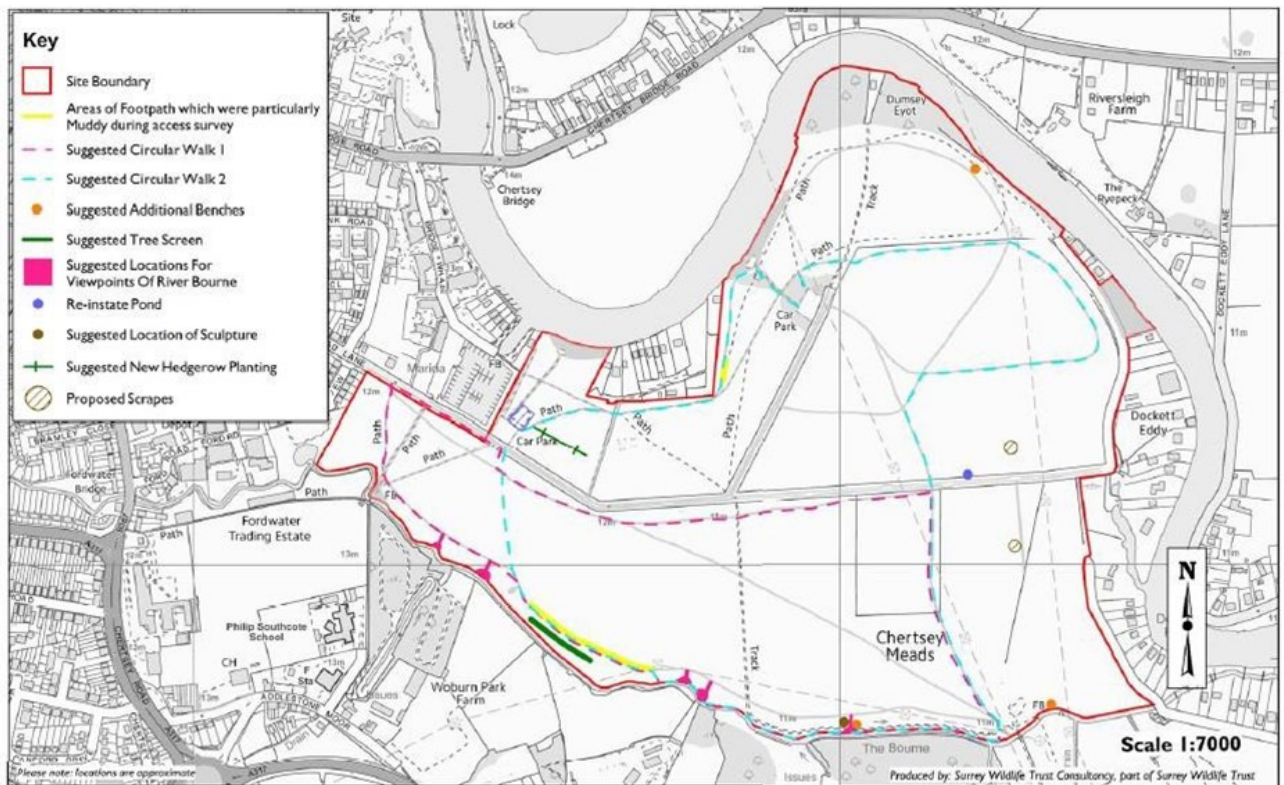
23. SWT provides further assessment of the site in the public access document, identifying the potential negative impacts on the ecology of the site from an increase in visitor numbers. The document also sets out the potential extent of the impact and suggested mitigation. The potential impacts related to increased trampling of grassland habitat; increased dog faeces and/or litter leading to nutrient enrichment of grassland; erosion to ponds and riverbanks by dogs; disturbance of birds. Potential positive impacts were also identified: added protection of the site through its status as a SANG; increased funding for positive management of the site; and increased local support for the site. The document stated that if the recommendations were implemented, *'it is felt that the increase in visitor numbers likely to be seen from the creation of a SANG on the site should not have a significant negative impact on the ecology of the site'*.

24. As part of these recommendations there are steps that can be taken that would help reduce negative impacts on the ecology of the site. Therefore, although the maintenance and improvement of the site's ecology is not required for the set-up of the site as SANG as set out in Table 1, it could be argued that the increase in visitor numbers could have an impact and so SANG funds could be used towards

ecology improvements, subject to other funding streams not already providing for these improvements.

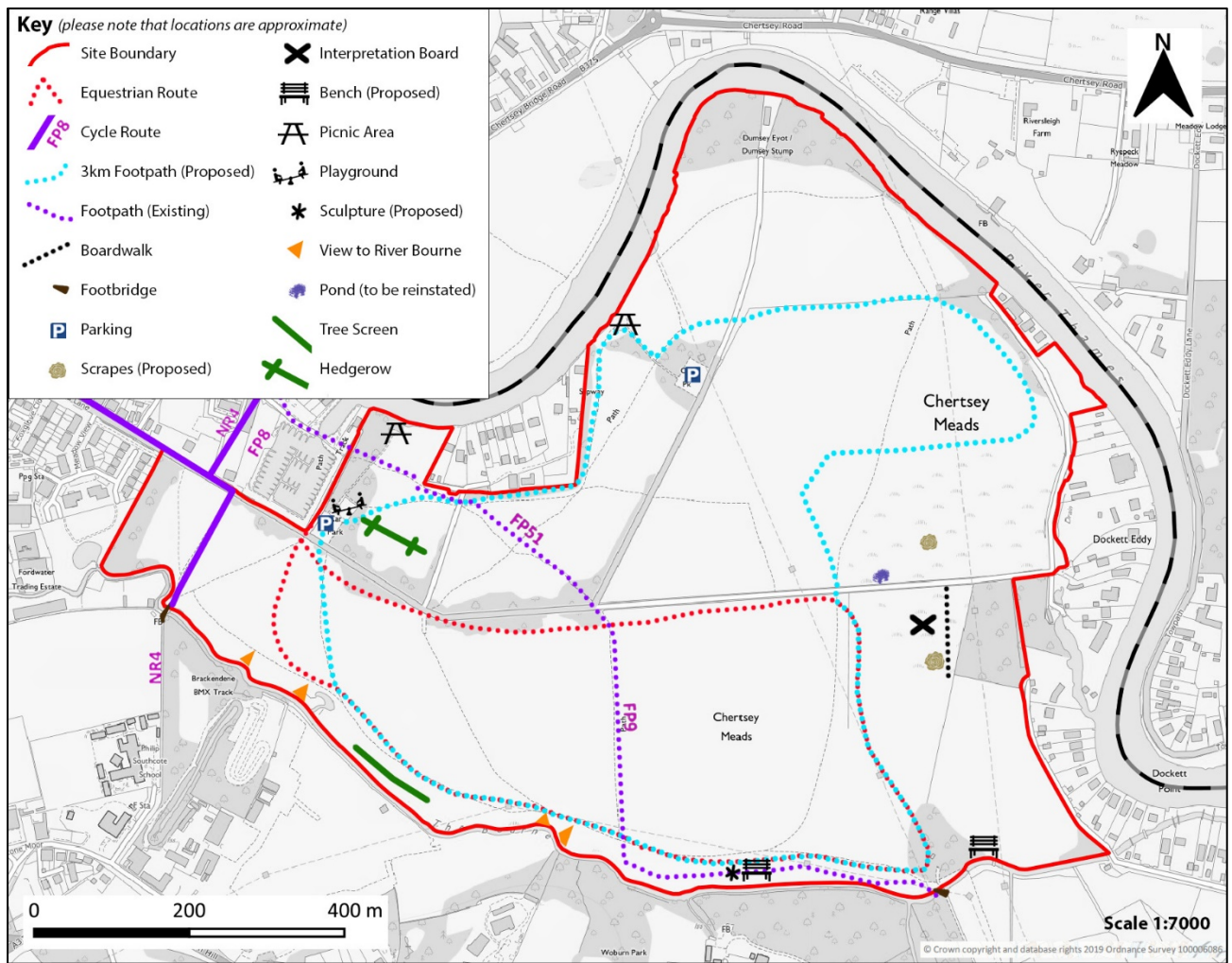
25. Figure 1, which is taken from the SWT report, sets out the spatial distribution of the proposed improvements set out in that document.

Figure 1: SANG improvements recommended by SWT



Source: Surrey Wildlife Trust (2017) Public Access Assessment and Constraints and Issues Analysis

Figure 2: Proposed layout of Chertsey Meads SANG



26. The recommendations are set out in further detail in Table 2 below, which includes the likely costs of the measures/upgrades being put in place and ongoing maintenance for a period of 80 years, accounting for annual inflation of 2.58% (the average annual growth seen in the UK over a 20 year period), as well as which funding stream it is likely that each improvement will be funded through.

Table 2: SANG improvements and anticipated costings in perpetuity

Identified works	Comment	Timing / frequency	Indicative cost (initial outlay)	Cost in perpetuity (80 years) (replacement/maintenance)	Total cost (outlay and maintenance)	Capital/Revenue (managed / maintained by + funding stream)
Additional sign on Fordwater Road to be installed	As part of set-up of site as SANG, improvement to the signposting of the site could be made by installing an additional sign on Fordwater Road, coming from a northern direction.	As soon as the site is designated as SANG.	£1200	£20,800 Replace every 10 years	£22,000	Capital funding from SANG developer contributions RBC to manage
Car parks to be adequately signed	As part of set-up of site as SANG, additional car park signage to be installed	As soon as the site is designated as SANG.	£3,000	£90,500 Replace every 6 years	£93,500	Capital funding from SANG developer contributions RBC to manage
Advertising Chertsey meads as a SANG through leaflets and web advertising	Necessary for set up of site as SANG. The Thames Basins Heaths Partnership provides information on all of the TBH SPA area's strategic SANGs	As soon as the site is designated as SANG	£1,000 approx. for 5,000 leaflets and two leaflet dispensers.	£23,200 (£350 per unit) Replace dispensers every 5 years	£24,200	RBC/TBH Partnership to manage. Capital funding from SANG developer contributions

<p>Provide additional benches and opportunity to replace existing picnic benches with a more aesthetically pleasing and natural design</p>	<p>See Map 1 for suggested location of additional benches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - next to proposed sculpture in south of site near River Bourne, - near to the existing dog-entry point along the Bourne - next to existing dog-entry point along River Thames. 	<p>2021</p>	<p>£8,000</p>	<p>£138,300</p> <p>Replace every 10 years</p>	<p>£146,300</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>
<p>Access points with signage outlining the layout of the SANGs and routes available to visitors to be prepared (desirable)</p>	<p>As part of set-up of site. Existing interpretation boards to be updated to include maps with walking routes</p>	<p>2020/21</p> <p>Identified as a medium priority</p>	<p>£3,400</p> <p>for two new interpretation boards</p>	<p>£58,800</p> <p>Replace every 10 years</p>	<p>£62,200</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>

<p>Some upgrade to path in areas prone to waterlogging</p>	<p>These paths may need to be mown more than three times a year in order to keep them open and inviting to the public as part of the set-up of the site as SANG. It may be necessary to mow a wider path, but this needs to be weighed up against potential damage to the flora of the site.</p> <p>Any construction material used should be of a similar chemical make-up to the surrounding soil so that the run-off does not affect surrounding vegetation.</p>	<p>2020/21</p>	<p>£13,000 estimated for upgrading works</p>	<p>£119,000 Replace every 20 years</p>	<p>£132,000</p>	<p>Any additional mowing funded from RBC revenue budgets</p> <p>Physical works to upgrade surfaces would need capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>
<p>Suggest circular walks</p>	<p>See Map 1 for location.</p> <p>A full assessment of the footpaths along the recommended circular walks should be made at different times of year. This will determine whether drainage or upgrading is necessary.</p>	<p>2020/21</p>	<p>£500 for assessment to be completed</p>			<p>Revenue funding.</p> <p>Work managed by RBC</p> <p>Funded from SANG developer contributions</p>

<p>Hedge planting</p>	<p>To assist in the perception of semi-naturalness and ensure attractiveness to dogwalkers, and also retaining the ecology value of the site, planting some native hedgerow species along the existing tree line east of the western car park may help to discourage people and their dogs from entering the grassland south of the tree line which supports notable plants. See Map 1 for location.</p> <p>It will be important that sufficient space in the east is maintained to allow the farmer access to cut the grass here annually.</p>	<p>2020/21</p>	<p>£3,900</p>	<p>£88,300</p> <p>Yearly maintenance of hedging</p>	<p>£92,200</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>
<p>Shallow water scrape - location to be agreed</p>	<p>To assist in the perception of semi-naturalness and ensure attractiveness to visitors, and retaining the ecology value of the site, a more appropriate location for an additional scrape.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>Identified as low priority</p>	<p>£900</p>	<p>£15,600</p> <p>Management may be needed to ensure the ongoing use of the scrape</p>	<p>£16,500</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>

<p>Other focal point improvements – reinstate pond</p>	<p>See Map 1 for location of reinstated pond.</p> <p>Water features, particularly ponds and lakes, act as a focus for visitors for their visit, but are not essential.</p> <p>Pond by reedbed should remain inaccessible to dogs.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>Identified as a medium priority</p>	<p>£2500</p>	<p>£75,400</p> <p>Management may be needed to ensure the ongoing use of the pond</p>	<p>£77,900</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>
<p>An interpretation board to be added to the boardwalk</p>	<p>This would provide information about birds and other flora and fauna found in this location.</p> <p>The reeds could also be encouraged to the east of the boardwalk by clearing back scrub which has encroached in recent years. However, a screen of scrub should be maintained so that the eastern pond remains inaccessible to the public and to dogs.</p>	<p>2021/22</p> <p>Identified as a low priority</p>	<p>£3,000</p>	<p>£51,900</p> <p>Replace every 10 years</p>	<p>£54,900</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>
<p>Improve horse route markers</p>	<p>To ensure continued attractiveness to dogwalkers, horse route marker posts also need upgrading in parts.</p> <p>Signage should stress the importance of horse riders sticking to their official route.</p>	<p>2021/22</p>	<p>£3,600</p>	<p>£120,800</p> <p>Replace every 5 years</p>	<p>£124,400</p>	<p>Capital funding from SANG developer contributions</p> <p>RBC to manage</p>

Screen vehicle storage site	To improve the site and ensure no unpleasant intrusions, as part of the set-up of the site as SANG, the view of the vehicle storage site just to the south of the River Bourne could be reduced by the strategic planting of scrub to shield the view to improve attractiveness of site to dogwalkers	Autumn 2021/22 Identified as a medium priority	£3,000		£3,000	Capital funding from SANG developer contributions RBC to manage
Installation of sculpture (desirable)	Suggested location for this potential focal point is alongside the River Bourne in the south of the site (see Map 1).	2022	£2,000	£27,700 Replace every 15 years	£29,700	Capital funding from SANG developer contributions RBC to manage
Other focal point improvements –view to river Bourne (desirable)	It is recommended that the footpath in the south east of the site is moved closer to the river. The river could be made more visible by regularly cutting back the vegetation up to the banks in strategic locations alongside the River Bourne.	2023	£2,100 to create joining path to existing trails, to include boardwalk.	£88,300 Regular scrub maintenance annually over 80 years	£90,300	Capital funding from SANG developer contributions RBC to manage
TOTAL FOR IMPROVEMENT WORKS					£969,100	

Maintenance works	<p>This would include activities such as mowing grass, emptying litter bins, play area maintenance and reactive tree works.</p> <p>Rates provided are based on the current annual budget, which is subject to an anticipated 2.58% annual increase in inflation.</p>	Ongoing	£9,000	£1,780,000 calculation includes an annual 2.58% increase in inflation.	£1,779,000	Existing RBC revenue budgets
TOTAL FOR MAINTENANCE WORKS IN PERPETUITY					£1,779,000	

27. Regular maintenance of the site is set out in the Chertsey Meads Management Plan. Maintenance of the site currently includes operations such as grass cutting, maintaining the play area and park infrastructure (gates, fences, seats, bins etc.) and reactive tree work and maintaining grass paths. The annual cost currently stands at £7,100 and this is funded through existing RBC revenue budgets. Double funding of works is to be avoided and the regular maintenance and works identified in the table above will not be funded through the existing Countryside Stewardship scheme as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3: Funding summary

Description of work	How funded
All the work in Table 2 above (apart from additional mowing of paths) and any further works identified to enhance the visitor experience, such as access improvements, habitat enhancements and improved interpretation and marketing	SANGs developer contributions
Ongoing maintenance such as mowing grass, emptying litter bins, play area maintenance and reactive tree works.	Existing RBC revenue budgets
Manage the meadows by cutting for hay and/or grazing	Countryside Stewardship Scheme funding

28. The Countryside Stewardship Agreement for Chertsey Meads provides £6,870 funding per annum for some of the works on site – specifically the management of the meadows by cutting for hay and/or by grazing. The current agreement expires at the end of December 2023. Prior to that an application will be made for similar funding through any appropriate environmental stewardship schemes that are available at the time. If none exist or an application is unsuccessful, the Council will cover these costs.

29. In terms of the management of the site, and to secure its continued ecology maintenance and enhancement, if the suggested recommendations and mitigation measures were to be implemented, SWT comments in its report that it is not felt that the creation of the SANG on Chertsey Meads and the likely increase in visitor numbers would have a significant negative impact on the site's ecology.

30. Although not part of the SANG Management Plan, SWT state that if grazing is considered in the future on Chertsey Meads, as suggested in the Chertsey Meads Management Plan, consultation with the public through leaflets, notices and public meetings will be particularly important so that they understand the benefits of grazing to alleviate any concerns.

31. Following SWT's suggestion of a low intensity grazing programme, it is proposed to introduce between 10-15 Sussex or Belted Galloway cattle (both docile breeds) across the whole site to aftermath graze only. This would entail moving the cattle onto site during late summer, following the hay cut and removing them during the winter when the ground becomes soft and the risk of surface damage

increases. Therefore, for most of the year no livestock would be kept on site. Whilst the cattle are resident, it is not proposed to cordon off or otherwise segregate them from dog walkers, so that dogs and walkers will be able to continue to roam freely, a key component of SANG. Low cost temporary signage will be used to ensure that visitors are made aware of the cattle before they enter the site; funding of the notices will be included within future grazing infrastructure project costs.

32. Over the course of the SANG's lifetime, further improvements may be identified that could add to the site's appeal as an alternative to visiting the Special Protection Area. It will be necessary to ensure that any improvements that are identified in the future will continue to maintain or enhance the ecology at Chertsey Meads. Should any significant improvements be identified, these would be included in a review of the SANG Management Plan.

Management, Maintenance and Funding

33. The Chertsey Meads Management Plan sets out how the site will be managed in relation to its existing nature designations. The contents of the management plan proposals will not be repeated here, suffice to say that any improvements funded through existing mechanisms will not also be funded through SANG monies, to avoid double funding. This includes funding secured under the Countryside Stewardship scheme. Improvements identified in Table 2 are not currently funded through this scheme and therefore it is not considered that double funding will be an issue.
34. Table 2 sets out when improvements will be implemented and who will undertake them. Chertsey Meads is owned and managed by the Council. However, if such a situation should arise where the land ownership or management changes, Natural England may require the Council to agree 'step-in rights' either for itself or an approved and named organisation to ensure that mitigation is secure in perpetuity.
35. Only projects necessary for the site's use as SANG, as set out in Table 2 can be funded through the collection of developer contributions for this purpose. The use of the site as SANG will not preclude projects identified in the SANG Management Plan.
36. It is considered that there is the potential to raise some £3.6 million towards SANG improvements and maintenance for this SANG alone, given that £2000 is collected per dwelling and given that the site is agreed to have SANG capacity of 1822 dwellings. This money will be able to fund the improvements to the site as set out in Table 2. The Council's planning funding officer holds a record of the funds raised by the Council towards SANG improvements. This would help ensure that there continue to be enough funds to enable Chertsey Meads to be maintained in perpetuity. In Runnymede, all the strategic SANGs are owned and managed by the Council. SANG moneys collected go into a central fund and when SANG projects/repairs are identified for any of the SANG, the money comes out of this pot to fund the works. Therefore, any works identified for Chertsey Meads that may be necessary to make the site suitable as SANG can be taken from the central pot and will be recouped once developer contributions

start coming in in relation to the site. The TBH SPA Joint Strategic Partnership⁶ monitors the collection of SAMM funds on a quarterly basis.

Monitoring

37. The Chertsey Meads Management Plan sets out the requisite levels and frequency of monitoring from an ecology perspective, which will not be repeated here. The monitoring of the onsite habitats will need to feed into the continued use of the site for SANG. It is important to note that the Chertsey Meads Management Plan work programme has been committed to and will be reviewed to ensure identified works have been completed. The objectives within the management plan will be reviewed in 5 years' time, with a full review in 2030.
38. With regards to this SANG Management Plan, the implementation of identified improvements will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that the identified measures have been put in place at the appropriate time. The SAMM project has taken on responsibility for monitoring the SANGs in the TBH SPA on a rolling basis and at such a time when Chertsey Meads SANG is reviewed, the SANG Management Plan will also be reviewed to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. It will be particularly important to understand the potential impacts of introducing cattle grazing and how this would impact on the site's use as SANG.
39. The Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group meets twice a year to discuss the management of the site and advise the Council accordingly. The group comprises a variety of members, including the Environment Agency; Surrey Wildlife Trust; residents' groups; Council elected Members; and a dog walkers' group. The on-going management of the site as SANG can be fed to this group annually.

Conclusion

40. This plan brings together the findings of the Chertsey Meads Management Plan and the SWT report. The site in its current form meets almost all the SANG criteria, but some improvements have been suggested to improve its ability to be a successful SANG, whilst being both SNCI and LNR.
41. This Chertsey Meads SANG Management Plan; Chertsey Meads Management Plan; and 2017 SWT report documents should be read in conjunction with one another and should there be any updates to any of these documents, the relevant findings would need to be considered as part of any review of this SANG Management Plan.
42. Off-site projects that have been identified as needed to make the site suitable as SANG include provision of maps and online advertising, which will be produced as soon as possible. The SAMM project will be informed so that their dedicated SANG webpage can include Chertsey Meads on its area of maps⁷.
43. The SANG Management Plan will be reviewed to ensure that the essential projects that have been identified to improve Chertsey Meads' appeal as a SANG are implemented, and where possible the desirable projects, and that improvements made are managed and maintained in perpetuity.

⁶ <https://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/joint-strategic-partnership>

⁷ <https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/>

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Appendix 1: Correspondence from Natural England

Letter from Natural England regarding Chertsey Meads capacity and updated position in 2018; excerpts from 2018 emails.

Date: 05 April 2013
Our ref: 75561
Your ref: Chertsey Meads SANG



Mr B Etheridge
Planning Policy
Runnymede Borough Council

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

BY EMAIL ONLY

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Bob

Potential new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at Chertsey Meads

Thank you for your email dated 16 January 2013 inviting Natural England's initial comments on the suitability of the Chertsey Meads site as a SANG. Thanks also to your colleague Peter Winfield for accompanying my colleague David Pearce on a site visit to Chertsey Meads on 20 March 2013. My comments below are based on the draft Runnymede Summer 2012 SANG Survey Report and on David Pearce's notes from the site visit.

Following the site visit I am satisfied that the Chertsey Meads site either meets or could be enhanced to meet all of Natural England's SANG Guidelines. Chertsey Meads is locally designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) for its grassland flora and care must be taken to protect this conservation interest if the SANG is taken forward. Although the site has existing public access, consideration should be given to the impact of increasing this. To this end Natural England would encourage your Authority's engagement with the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) when working up a SANG Management Plan. We would also encourage you to fully involve the local preservation group associated with the site.

I understand that there is a desire to reintroduce cattle grazing to Chertsey Meads as trials have shown that this is beneficial for the grassland biodiversity. Natural England has no objection in principle with SANGs being partly grazed provided that this is managed sensitively and does not impinge upon their primary purpose. Some areas of the site should always remain where dogs can be exercised freely off the lead. Much of the site is also being managed under a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement and while this is not necessarily incompatible with the site becoming a SANG care must be taken that there is no dual funding of works on the site. We would encourage you to discuss the SANG proposals with your Natural England Land Management adviser.

With regards to the capacity of the site Natural England has reviewed the calculations provided in Annex A of the Summer 2012 SANG Survey Report. This gives the total site size as 71ha and discounts by 50% to give a useable capacity figure of 35ha. By my calculations, as set out below, this would allow capacity for up to 1,960 dwellings.

1,000 population / 8ha = 1ha per 125 people
125 / 2.2 persons per dwelling gives 56 dwellings per ha
35ha x 56 = 1,960 dwellings can be accommodated by the discounted SANG.

I am assuming that departure from the Delivery Framework standard of 2.4 persons per dwelling is based on robust local evidence.

Under certain circumstances the capacity of SANGs may also need to be discounted to account for

existing nature conservation interest. At this stage I am not in a position to say if this would be the case for Chertsey Meads but the site is currently an LNR, SNCI, under HLS and an interest is expressed in your Authority's Survey Report to regain the site's lost status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Together these indicate that it may not be appropriate to fill the site up to its maximum visitor capacity. I would be interested to get the thoughts of yourself and other stakeholders on this matter.

I understand that the method that your Authority currently uses to work out the level of discounting for SANGs was previously agreed by Natural England and dates back to the beginning of the Thames Basin Heaths project. I would still strongly encourage you to go back to the raw survey data for Chertsey Meads and try the discounting method first pioneered by Bracknell Forest Council as a comparison. As the Thames Basin Heaths approach has developed over time, various aspects have improved and the Bracknell Forest approach is considered to be best practice when calculating discounting rates. It is more closely based on the survey data and so can provide a more accurate assessment of remaining capacity than the current Runnymede method which relies on categories of capacity. A comparison with the Bracknell Forest approach for Chertsey Meads would not mean that you have to go back and revisit the capacity calculations for your existing SANGs as these were agreed using the best available methodology at the time.

Next Steps

If your Authority wishes to progress this site as a SANG then the next step is to begin work on a more detailed SANG design and SANG Management Plan in consultation with other stakeholders as outlined above. Natural England would be happy to provide further advice at any stage during this process.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Heather Twizell on 0300 060 1711 or heather.twizell@naturalengland.org.uk. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Heather Twizell
Lead Adviser
Land Use Operations

Cc. Richard Ford, RBC
Jane Sevenoaks, NE
David Pearce, NE

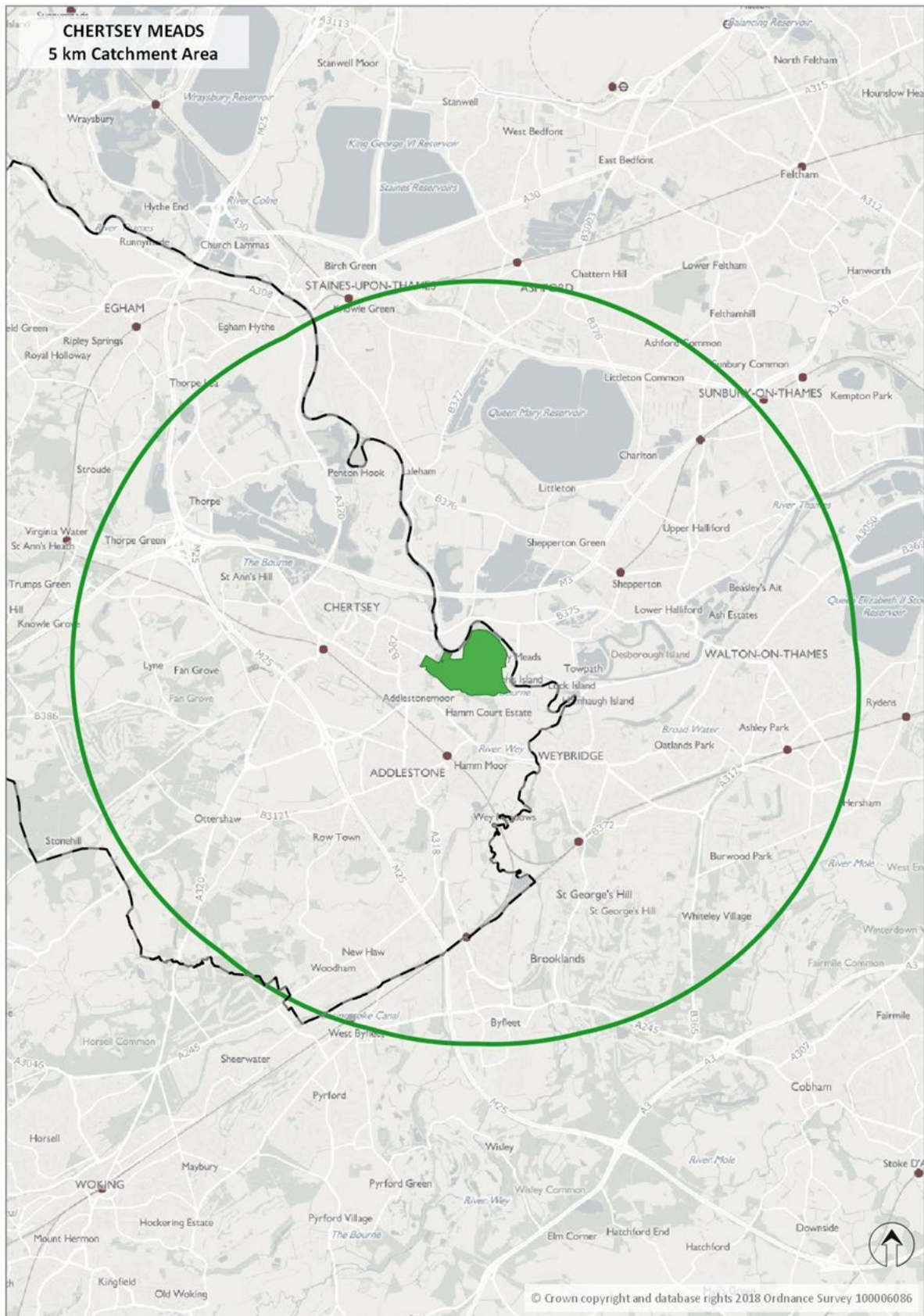
Email excerpt sent to Natural England 16 May 2018:

The Council had agreed the capacity of the site with NE in 2013 (attached), after having undertaken site surveys. Since then, we have amended the assumption used from 2.2 to 2.4 people per house (as we did not know where the justification for a lower figure had been derived) and the capacity has reduced from 1960 to 1822 dwellings, although I don't believe this updated capacity has been agreed with Natural England? Can you advise what further information you would need to confirm the site's amended capacity?

Email excerpt received from Natural England 24 May 2018:

I...can confirm that a value of 2.4 residents/dwelling is fine for the purposes of calculating capacity.

Appendix 2: Chertsey Meads' Catchment Area Map



Runnymede Borough Council

Runnymede Borough Council
Runnymede Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 2AH
www.runnymede.gov.uk