

Runnymede 2030

Local Plan

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

April 2021

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Foreword

Guidance on the Council's strategy to avoid and mitigate the impacts of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is set out within this SPD, along with details of how Section 106 planning agreements and undertakings will operate once planning permission has been granted.

This SPD has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening which found no likely significant effects on designated habitats or any other significant environmental effects. The screening document produced by the Council can be found alongside this SPD. In line with regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England have been consulted on the findings of the screening document.

This SPD was adopted on the 14th April 2021 with implementation on the 15th April 2021 and replaces the existing Thames Basin Heaths SPA Supplementary Planning Guidance dated February 2009.

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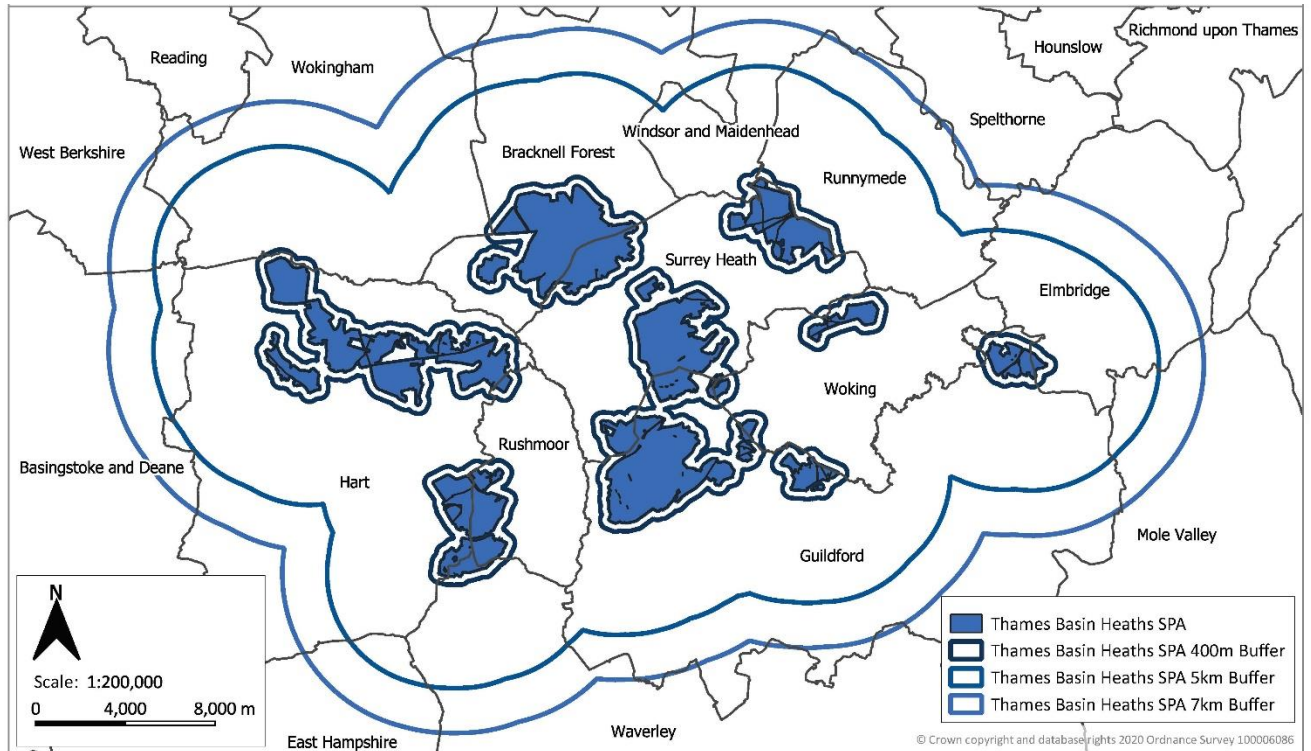
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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

1.1.1 The Thames Basin Heaths (TBH) comprise over 8,000 hectares (ha) of heathland sites located across Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire (Figure 1) and forms part of the National Site Network of sites important to nature conservation (formerly known as the Natura 2000 network prior to the UK exiting the European Union).

Figure 1. Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area



1.1.2 Located only 30 miles to the south west of London on the M3/A3 corridor means that the heaths have historically been subject to high development pressure, and over the last century have become significantly fragmented, reduced in size and subjected to urban development pressures, including pollution and uncontrolled heathland fires.

1.1.3 Heathlands are open spaces, typically featuring extensive areas of groundcover plants with very little tree coverage. This means that birds within these landscapes habitually nest on the ground or within low level vegetation and are therefore vulnerable to disturbance from recreational use and predation from wildlife and domestic pets.

- 1.1.4 The Thames Basin Heaths account for around two-thirds (approximately 2,000 ha) of Surrey's remaining heathland¹ and were designated on 9th March 2005 as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for internationally important birds; providing habitat for woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) and Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*). These birds nest on or near the ground and as a result they are very susceptible to predation of adults, chicks and eggs (particularly by cats, rats and crows) and to disturbance from informal recreational use, especially walking, cycling and dog walking.
- 1.1.5 Approximately two-thirds of the Borough of Runnymede lies within the SPA's 5km buffer zone, requiring avoidance and mitigation strategies to be considered for new residential development within this area.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the SPD

- 1.2.1 This SPD provides an updated avoidance and mitigation strategy to show how the adverse effects of development on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA within Runnymede should be avoided and mitigated. This is essential to protect the Heaths from recreation-related harm and to permit a net increase of residential development between 400m and 5km of the SPA, whilst also ensuring that the Council is in line with the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.2.2 A review of this SPD shall be undertaken within 5 years or earlier, if deemed necessary.

1.3 Policy Framework

- 1.3.1 This SPD provides updated guidance to demonstrate how the adverse effects of development within Runnymede on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA should be avoided and mitigated. Elements of national, regional, and local policies that are relevant to this SPD are outlined below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

- 1.3.2 Chapter 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment', paragraph 177 of the NPPF states that "the principle of 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site".

South East Plan (2009)

- 1.3.3 Although the South East Plan was partially revoked on 25th March 2013, Policy NRM6, which deals with the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, remains in place. This sets out the principle of the protection of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA in the South East. The policy wording can be found in Appendix 1.

Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (2020)

- 1.3.4 Due to the number of new homes proposed over the plan period, and the fact that two-thirds of the Borough lies within the zone of influence, the Local Plan includes Policy EE10 which relates to the protection of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The policy wording can be found in Appendix 2.

¹ https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/49421/Heathland-GuideR.pdf

1.3.5 The plans and policies listed above are supplemented with the following guidance:

Thames Basin Heaths SPA Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance (2009)

1.3.6 This SPD replaces the Council's previous strategy to show how the effects of new (and principally) residential developments on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA should be avoided and mitigated in partnership with other local authorities and in accordance with the Local Plan.

1.3.7 It should be noted that prior to the adoption of this SPD, Runnymede Borough Council employed a dwelling-based strategy to regulating development, the details of which are set out in the 2009 TBH SPA Supplementary Planning Guidance. To ensure a more equitable approach, and to align with the other affected local authorities, this version details the transition to an occupancy-based approach.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework (2009)

1.3.8 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA principally affects 11 local authorities. These are: Hart District Council; the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead; Bracknell Forest; Elmbridge, Guildford, Runnymede, Rushmoor, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Woking and Wokingham Borough Councils.

1.3.9 In order to be sure of a consistent approach across the whole area, a Joint Strategic Partnership (JSP)² was set up in 2007 to provide a vehicle for joint working, liaison and exchange of information between local authorities and other organisations affected by the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

1.3.10 In 2009 the JSP adopted guidelines in the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework; this is available on the Council's website. These guidelines form the basis of the approach adopted in this SPD. The JSP Board meets twice a year and oversees matters such as the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project and the monitoring of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). This joint working also helps to fulfil duty to cooperate requirements.

1.3.11 A Councillor from Runnymede Borough Council is a member of the Joint Strategic Partnership Board.

² <https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/about-us/>

2. Principles for the Avoidance of Harm to the SPA

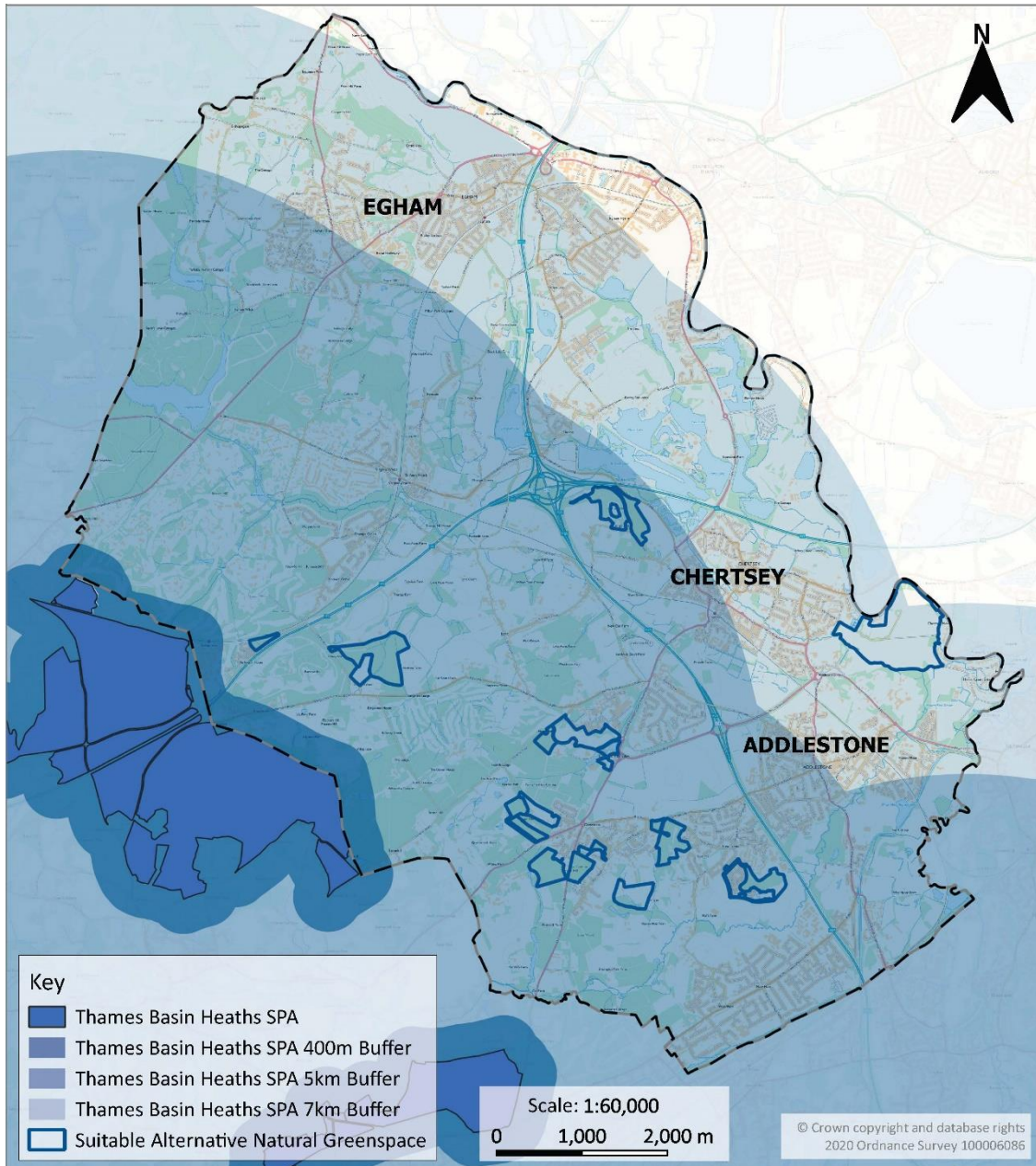
2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 As mentioned within the previous chapter, during 2009 the TBH Joint Strategic Partnership produced the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework. Endorsed by Natural England, the Framework contains guidelines which form the basis of the approach which will be implemented within Runnymede to avoid likely significant effects on the integrity of the SPA from development.
- 2.1.2 Any net increase in residential dwellings within 5km of the SPA is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the SPA either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Consequently, every proposal for net additional dwellings must make provision to avoid and mitigate the effect. Residential developments within 5-7km of the SPA, with a net increase of 50 or more dwellings, may also be required to provide appropriate mitigation. This will be considered on a case by case basis in agreement with Natural England.
- 2.1.3 The Delivery Framework currently recommends a combination of the following three avoidance measures to protect the SPA from the adverse impacts of new residential development:
- The establishment of a 400-metre buffer around the SPA within which no net new residential development will be permitted;
 - Provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to attract people away from the SPA and thus reduce pressure on it; and
 - Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) to reduce the impact of visitors.
- 2.1.4 Habitat management may, theoretically, be taken to be an avoidance measure; however, the focus in the short-term must be improving the quality of the SPA to favourable condition status. This is a duty of SPA landowners which falls outside the planning system and is not the focus of this guidance.
- 2.1.5 The option remains for developers to undertake a Habitats Regulations screening assessment and, where necessary, a full Appropriate Assessment to demonstrate that a proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. Should any other package of avoidance and mitigation measures be put forward, these must be in accordance with the Habitats Regulations and the local authority must adopt a precautionary approach. Any avoidance and mitigation measures must be agreed in advance with the Council and Natural England.

2.2 Buffer Zones

- 2.2.1 A core principle of the approach is the existence of three buffer zones, each measured as a linear distance from the SPA boundary. These zones are shown in Figure 2 and set out in Table 1 below:

Figure 2. SPA Zones within Runnymede



2.2.2 The distance from the SPA perimeter (including both pedestrian and vehicular accesses) to the nearest point of access on the curtilage of the dwellings, is measured as a straight line, as set out within the TBHSPA Delivery Framework.

Table 1. SPA Buffer Zones

Buffer Zone	Linear Distance from SPA Boundary
Exclusion zone	Between 0m to 400m
Zone of influence	Between 400m to 5km
5km to 7km zone	Between 5km to 7km

Zero to 400m Exclusion Zone

2.2.3 There is a presumption against residential development that results in a net increase in residential units within this zone as the impact of net new residential development so close to the SPA is likely to be such that it is not possible to conclude no likely significant effect. This is due primarily to:

- the potential for pet cats to reach the SPA - the use of conditions prohibiting the keeping of pets would be unreasonable, unenforceable and is therefore inappropriate, and
- the inability to prevent increased recreational pressure - 400 metres is the optimum walking distance for people to visit the SPA.

2.2.4 As a result, it is extremely unlikely that any net new residential development within the exclusion zone would be acceptable. All proposals for net new residential development within the zero to 400m zone will be required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment to demonstrate:

- a. That they will not have an adverse effect on the SPA; and/or
- b. The acceptability of any avoidance and mitigation measures provided.

2.2.5 The Council and Natural England will need to be satisfied that any such development will not lead to further recreational use of the SPA or have any other significant effect on its integrity.

2.2.6 Applications for non-residential development within 400m of the SPA will be assessed on a case by case basis, in agreement with Natural England.

400m to 5km Zone of Influence

2.2.7 Where net new residential development is proposed within the zone of influence, avoidance measures must be delivered prior to occupation of new dwellings and provided in perpetuity. Measures must be based on a combination of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and the provision and/or improvement and/or maintenance of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). More information is provided on SANG and SAMM within sections 2.3 and 2.4.

2.2.8 A large proportion of new housing development within Runnymede up to 2030 will be located within this zone.

5km to 7km Zone

2.2.9 Large scale residential developments of 50 or more net new dwellings that fall between 5-7km from the SPA may be required to provide avoidance and mitigation measures. There are various types of other development which may impact on the integrity of the SPA, including permanent caravan sites, student accommodation and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). The strategy for these uses is set out within section 3 but for some applications may be assessed on a case by case basis in agreement with Natural England.

2.3 Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

2.3.1 Two avoidance measures are promoted by Natural England and endorsed by the JSP Board. These are Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). SANGs are areas that currently are not in use for recreation and so are a new alternative provision to the SPA or are existing areas that are significantly under-used and so have the capacity to absorb additional recreational use. In the latter category it is important to consider why the site is under-used and whether it truly represents an alternative resource. SANGs should be in place before development is occupied.

2.3.2 Access management is seen as an important part of the avoidance strategy for Runnymede. It is proposed to promote the use of SANGs by improving the accessibility of sites, identifying recreational routes (in particular circular walks easily accessible from residential areas) and promoting these measures.

2.3.3 Chapter 4 of this document sets out the approach for SANGs to be pursued within Runnymede.

2.4 Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

2.4.1 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA comprises multiple SSSI sites, owned and managed by many different organisations and some private individuals. In order to ensure that access management implemented in one area does not simply displace visitors onto another part of the SPA, it is necessary to take a strategic approach to visitor access management.

2.4.2 SAMM is a joint project between the 11 Local Planning Authorities affected by the SPA (namely Bracknell Forest; Elmbridge, Guildford, Runnymede, Rushmoor, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Woking and Wokingham Borough Councils; Hart District Council; and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), along with Natural England (as the delivery body) and Hampshire County Council (as the administrative body). In July 2011, the SAMM legal agreement was signed by Runnymede Borough Council, Natural England and the ten other local authorities affected by SPA issues.

2.4.3 The aims of the SAMM project are to:

- Promote SANGs as new recreational opportunities for local people and particularly encourage their use during the breeding bird season;
- Provide on-the-ground wardening service to supplement existing wardening efforts;
- Provide an SPA-wide education programme;
- Create new volunteering opportunities;

- Demonstrate best practice for strategic access management of visitors and visitor infrastructure where the supply of greenspace is heavily dependent on protected areas;
- Monitor visitor usage of SANGs and SPA; and
- Monitor populations of the bird species protected under Annex 1 of the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC³.

2.5 Habitats Regulations Assessment for Planning Applications

- 2.5.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) aim to protect a network of sites that have rare or important habitats and species in order to safeguard biodiversity.
- 2.5.2 Under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Competent Authorities have a duty to ensure that all the activities they regulate have no adverse effect on the integrity of any of the National Site Network. The Competent Authority (in this case Runnymede Borough Council) must assess the possible effects of a plan or project on any National Site Network site through a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The European Court of Justice judgement in *'People Over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17'* established the legal principle that a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) must be carried out for all planning applications involving a net gain in residential units in areas affected by the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and that a Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment cannot take into account any proposed measures to mitigate any likely impact at the screening stage. The council is therefore now required to carry out a full Appropriate Assessment of relevant plans and planning applications.
- 2.5.3 New residential and employment development within Runnymede has the potential to increase air pollution. Ongoing studies have highlighted a link between nitrogen deposition from air pollution to adverse impacts on the Heaths' ecology. In time this could result in further review of the SPA avoidance and mitigation strategy. The majority of significant developments have been identified through the Local Plan process, in accordance with the 2017 *'Wealden District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority EWHC 351'* judgement. Any measures proposed to avoid or mitigate the effects of air pollution on the SPA must be agreed with the Council and Natural England and satisfy the Habitats Regulations.
- 2.5.4 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy SPD elaborates on Policy EE10 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and South East Plan Policy NRM6, which have already undergone HRA. Further, this SPD only sets out guidance on the approach to avoiding impacts on the SPA and does not set out proposals for individual SANGs.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm

3. Types of Development Affected

- 3.1.1 This guidance applies to applications for full or outline planning permission, including temporary permission for developments within the vicinity of the SPA. Applicants are advised to seek advice before submitting a planning application or carrying out conversions under Permitted Development Rights and should consider how any impacts of their development on the SPA can be avoided. Reserved matters, discharge of conditions, amendments to existing planning consents and non-residential development will be considered on an individual basis by the Council and will be screened to assess whether they will have a likely significant effect on the integrity of the SPA (individually or in combination with other plans or projects) and where necessary a Habitats Regulations Assessment will be undertaken.
- 3.1.2 Future changes to the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO), to other legal/regulatory frameworks or to Government policy may mean that certain types of development which currently require planning permission may not do so in future. However, if there is a net gain in the types of residential units referred to within this section, the development will be considered to have a likely significant effect and will therefore be required to contribute towards or provide avoidance measures. This strategy largely concerns itself with the effects arising from the developments listed below:

Care homes

- 3.1.3 In assessing any planning application for a C2 or C3 care or extra care facility the Council will take account of whether there is any risk of the residents of the facility causing a likely significant effect upon the integrity of the SPA. The occupancy of C2 or C3 care or extra care facilities will be considered on an individual basis under advice from Natural England.
- 3.1.4 If the development is located within 400m of the SPA and the patrons of the facility are truly immobile or unlikely to ever visit the SPA then the only mitigation which may be required are measures to ensure that the car park cannot be made available to the general public wishing to access the SPA and that residents are prohibited from owning pets, such as cats or dogs, which may access the SPA. For such developments within 400m-5km of the SPA, any facilities that house residents that will never or are very unlikely to visit the SPA would not require any mitigation.
- 3.1.5 Where residents within this SPA buffer zone are in self-contained accommodation and can therefore live reasonably independently, even if there is a level of care required, then it is assumed that the residents are of a mobility level that would not preclude them from visiting the SPA. In these cases, avoidance and mitigation measures will be required.

Dwellings

- 3.1.6 For developments within Use Class C3 (dwellinghouses) including conversions, where there is a net increase in dwelling units, these are considered to give rise to likely significant effect to the SPA and will be required to contribute towards avoidance measures. This includes dwellings falling within use Classes C3a, C3b and C3c. Replacement dwellings are not subject to the strategy set out within this SPD. Residential annexes will be considered on an individual basis.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

- 3.1.7 For planning applications to convert or increase a property to an HMO each room

meeting the criteria listed in paragraphs 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 will be treated as a separate one-bedroom dwelling for the purposes of calculating net occupancy and avoidance and mitigation measures will be required. This includes HMO's provided as student accommodation. The approach to purpose-built student accommodation such as cluster or studio apartments is set out below.

Student accommodation (Not including HMO's)

- 3.1.8 Applications for new student accommodation will be assessed on a range of criteria and as such, it is strongly advised that applicants engage with the Council at the pre application stage. The occupancy of student accommodation will therefore be assessed on an individual basis under advice from Natural England. Areas of shared living space which are considered to be proportionate to the number of students they are anticipated to serve will not be subject to the strategy set out in this document.

Hotels

- 3.1.9 For traditional hotels offering short stay accommodation, avoidance and mitigation measures will generally not be required. However, for hotels located within 400m of the SPA with a new car park, measures may be required to ensure that the car park cannot be made available to the general public wishing to access the SPA. For hotels offering accommodation for longer periods of time or where the address is to become the full time residence for a person, then this is considered to give rise to likely significant effect to the SPA and will be required to contribute towards avoidance and mitigation measures.

Campsites and caravans

- 3.1.10 Where a plot or pitch becomes the permanent full-time address of a person, then this is considered likely to have a significant adverse effect in combination with other residential development and will be required to contribute towards avoidance and mitigation measures.
- 3.1.11 Allocations in relation to locations for plots and pitches for gypsies, travellers or show people are listed within the site allocations section of the adopted 2030 Local Plan.

Major residential development schemes

- 3.1.12 In exceptional circumstances, evidence may demonstrate that significantly large residential development proposals which, on account of their scale and potential impact on the SPA, their ability to offer their own alternative avoidance measures, and the availability of strategic SANG, may be expected to provide bespoke SANG that provides a combination of benefits including biodiversity enhancement, green infrastructure and, potentially, new recreational facilities. Details of the standards for SANGs within each buffer zone can be found within Table 2, paragraph 4.1.3.
- 3.1.13 The definition of "significantly large residential development proposals" and their ability to provide their own avoidance measures may vary depending on their type, character and specific location.

Non-residential development

- 3.1.14 The Council has a duty to consider the impact of non-residential development within the vicinity of the SPA. Where this is deemed likely to have significant effect (individually or in combination with other plans or projects), a full Habitats Regulations Assessment will be undertaken.

Permitted Development, Prior Approval, Permission in Principle and Technical Consents

- 3.1.15 Some types of development do not require planning permission from the Council. These include developments covered by technical consents, prior approval, permission in principle and permitted development (such as the conversion of non-residential space to residential units). It is a condition of the consent given by the General Permitted Development Order that any development which is likely to have a significant effect upon the National Site Network cannot proceed unless the Council has given written approval under the Habitats Regulations 2017. A Prior Approval Notice does NOT constitute approval under the Habitats Regulations. Therefore, before a development can proceed the owners of the land may need to enter into Section 106 planning obligations in a form approved by the Council. The Council may place an informative on any grant of prior approval, technical consent or permission in principle reminding applicants that written approval under the Habitats Regulations is required before development can proceed.
- 3.1.16 Where avoidance and/or mitigation measures are required, these should be provided in line with the approach set out in this document.

4. SANGs within Runnymede

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The provision of alternative recreational land to attract new residents away from the SPA is a key part of avoiding the effects of new development on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. There are three different types of SANGs, of which details may be found later in this section.

- Strategic SANGs;
- Bespoke SANGs; and
- Third Party Private SANGs.

4.1.2 All SANGs, regardless of type, ownership or organisation responsible for managing and/or maintaining the site, must be open to the public in advance of occupation of the dwellings, provided in perpetuity and require planning permission where a material change of use is to occur.

4.1.3 The following table sets out the SANG standards for each zone. For developments in closer proximity to the SPA the standard applied may be higher than the minimum set out in the table below. All SANGs must comply with Natural England's SANG Quality Guidance (2008), for which checklists can be found under Appendices 5 and 6. A form to assist with gathering information for potential SANGs can be found under Appendix 7.

Table 2. SANG Standards for Net Increase in Dwellings

Buffer Zone	SANG Standard	Notes
0m to 400m	No standard	There is a presumption against any net increase in residential development within this zone. An HRA will be required, and agreed with Natural England, to demonstrate that any development within this zone will not have an adverse effect on the SPA and/or the acceptability of any avoidance and mitigation measures provided.
400m to 5km	Minimum of 8 hectares per 1,000 persons	Some development schemes may require SANGs to be significantly in excess of 8 hectares per 1,000 persons especially those which lay in closer proximity to the SPA.
5km to 7km	Likely to be a minimum of 2 hectares per 1,000 persons but to be assessed on a case by case basis in agreement with Natural England	Only developments of 50 or more dwellings will be affected

- 4.1.4 In line with the table above, Runnymede Borough Council will provide SANGs for new developments within 400m to 5km of the SPA at a standard of at least 8 hectares per 1,000 head of population, as set out in the JSP Board Delivery Framework. All SANGs, including on-site provision, will be expected as a minimum to meet this standard. The provision of new SANG will be subject to a case by case consultation with Natural England and depending upon the characteristics of the site or the proposed development, as well as its proximity to the SPA, a level of provision in excess of 8ha/1,000 persons may be required.
- 4.1.5 Strategic SANGs within Runnymede are owned and maintained by the Council and provide avoidance measures for developments that cannot provide their own on-site SANG. It will usually be possible for developments to take up capacity at the borough's strategic SANGs, subject to availability. However, in exceptional circumstances, evidence may demonstrate that developments should consider the feasibility of providing bespoke SANG. In these cases, the proposed measures must be agreed by Natural England. Further guidance on types of SANGs and the site size threshold is set out within this chapter.

4.2 SANG Catchments

- 4.2.1 Where a SANG does not include a car park, then the catchment area is considered to be 400m. For all other SANGs, catchment areas are based on the overall size of the SANG. Residential developments with a net increase of 10 or more units that are allocated to a SANG should be located within the specific SANG's catchment area. SANG catchment areas are as follows:

Table 3. SANG Catchment Areas

SANG Size	Catchment Area
2 to 12 hectares	2km
12 to 20 hectares	4km
20+ hectares	5km

- 4.2.2 The standards for proximity to SANG apply to all residential developments with a net increase of 10 or more units. Developments with a net increase of less than 10 units need not be within a specified distance of a SANG, provided that overall there is sufficient SANG capacity within the Borough.
- 4.2.3 Natural England have indicated that where a suite of smaller SANGs can be linked through access management measures to function in combination as a much larger SANG, it will be acceptable to assign development against joint capacity.
- 4.2.4 For catchment areas of existing strategic SANGs provision within the borough, see Appendix 3.

4.3 SANG Capacity

4.3.1 Capacity at strategic SANGs is based on a tiered structure so that larger houses, which are likely to accommodate more people, use up more of the SANG capacity than small houses. This is in line with the approach adopted by the other local authorities affected by the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and by the SAMM Project. Rather than being considered in terms of the numbers of dwellings, SANGs are considered in terms of the number of additional people that can be mitigated for. Average occupancy rates will be taken to be as follows:

Table 4. SANGs Occupancy Rates

Dwelling Size	Occupancy ⁴
1 bedroom/studio	1.40
2 bedrooms	1.85
3 bedrooms	2.50
4 bedrooms	2.85
5+ bedrooms	3.70
Traveller Pitch	3.60* unless evidence demonstrates otherwise on a case by case basis

* Occupancy of 3.6 taken from the North Surrey GTAA (2007)

4.3.2 Where calculating the number of bedrooms for the purposes of determining the amount of SANG capacity a development requires, additional habitable rooms capable of realistic conversion to bedrooms will be included. Habitable rooms capable of future conversion into a bedroom will include, for a dwelling house with more than one storey, any room at first floor level and above with an external window (excluding kitchens, bathrooms and other sanitation areas), with a floor area greater than 7.5 sqm⁵.

4.3.3 Where it is reasonable to assume that topography or the nature of the development, such as split level dwellings or houses of multiple occupation, will provide bedrooms on the ground floor, this area will be assessed in accordance with the guidance in paragraph 4.3.2..

4.4 Delivery of SANG

4.4.1 The following guidance is based upon the Delivery Framework and Natural England's guidance on the creation of SANG⁶.

SANGs may be created from:

- Existing open space of SANG quality with limited or no existing public access, which

⁴ Occupancy rates taken from Natural England's SAMM Tariff Guidance document, March 2011 and based on analysis of Census 2001 data for Thames Basin Heaths Authorities.

⁵ Minimum size to provide 1 bed space in a single bedroom as defined in the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (2015) DCLG. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

⁶ Natural England. (May 2006) Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area: Mitigation Standards for Residential Development.

for the purposes of mitigation could be made fully accessible to the public;

- Existing open space which is already accessible to the public but which could be changed in character so that it is more attractive to the specific group of visitors who might otherwise visit the SPA;
- Land in other uses which could be converted into SANG.

- 4.4.2 No guidance is included on minimum site size, but the requirements set out in Appendix 5, including the requirement for a circular walk of a minimum 2.3 - 2.5km, may affect the practical size of a SANG. However, smaller areas of land may be used as SANG provided they physically connect to an existing SANG or other areas of land which are also suitable for SANG. Guidelines for the creation of suites of SANGs are located within Appendix 6.
- 4.4.3 Sufficient SANG must be delivered (identified, functional and secured in perpetuity) in advance of dwelling occupation / prior to first occupancy of a dwelling to ensure that there is no likely significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA from the development. The Council will seek to ensure that adequate SANG capacity is provided in the borough to provide avoidance measures for the expected amount and location of development as set out in the adopted Local Plan.
- 4.4.4 Planning consent is required for all types of SANG where a material change of use is to occur. All proposals for SANGs must include an in depth SANG Management Plan that clearly outlines the practical habitat management and explains how the requirements of the SANG Guidelines (see Appendices 5 and 6) will be met. The Council will seek biodiversity enhancements on sites which are to be SANGs and expect wildfire issues to be addressed where relevant in terms of design and planting.
- 4.4.5 The SANG Management Plan should include details of the managing body or organisation, capital costs and costs for in perpetuity management of the SANG in order to demonstrate that the SANG will deliver effective avoidance both at the outset and in perpetuity. The Management Plan should have regard to Policy EE9 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, as well as any subsequent biodiversity and nature conservation policies in emerging Development Plan Documents, and Chapter 15 of the NPPF (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment).
- 4.4.6 For new SANGs with no existing usage the carrying capacity will normally be the 8ha per 1,000 population standard, as shown in Table 2. Carrying capacity refers to the quantity of new visitors or recreational activity that a SANG can accommodate without detriment to the site. It will be necessary to carry out visitor surveys on potential SANGs prior to their adoption so that current usage levels can be assessed. Calculations of the capacity of individual SANGs will be set out in the proposal document for each SANG and will be agreed with Natural England.
- 4.4.7 Where a proposal for a SANG includes the use of existing public open space, the existing rights and patterns of public use must be taken into account and protected, and a degree of discounting carrying capacity must be applied to reflect this. Discounting is used to account for the existing carrying capacity for a given area, meaning the overall capacity of the SANG is reduced because some of the visitor capacity is already used. The impact of the proposed improvements to the land and accessibility through implementation of a SANG will, to some extent be absorbed by existing visitors' use of the site area. Appendix 7 includes a template for initial information gathering for prospective SANG proposals.
- 4.4.8 In the case of SANGs which have a recognised nature conservation interest, capacity will only be released where monitoring indicates that additional usage is having no adverse effect and the site can accommodate more recreational usage. In such cases

it will be difficult to identify a definitive capacity. For this reason, it may be necessary to identify SANG capacity at a rate that is above the 8ha per 1,000 population standard.

- 4.4.9 As set out earlier in this document, SANGs are expected to be provided and funded in order that they can function in perpetuity which is considered to be at least 125 years, in accordance with legislation which defines ‘in perpetuity’ period (Perpetuities and Accumulations Act 2009).
- 4.4.10 The provision of SANG means that increased local pressure on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will be offset in perpetuity. In considering what represents an “in perpetuity” solution for the purposes of funding, the Council will have regard to the following matters as appropriate:
- The funding must be sufficient for the indefinite future;
 - Where appropriate, as the basis for calculations, regard will be given to the statutory definitions of in perpetuity in force at the time; and
 - Funding mechanisms must be reliable, workable and enforceable, providing sufficient funding for the long-term management of the SANG over an indefinite period to the satisfaction of the Council as the competent authority.
- 4.4.11 Natural England’s preference is for SANGs to be handed over to local authorities or similar bodies. This is to ensure that in perpetuity management can be securely provided by a body that is unlikely to become insolvent or dissolve. Where SANG land is not owned by the Council, 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. Step-in rights will always be required where a third-party management company is proposed to own and/or manage a SANG.
- 4.4.12 The use of step-in rights will be triggered where a SANG’s Management Plan is not being fulfilled, or in instances where it is necessary to ensure a SANG remains funded and maintained in perpetuity. In all cases where SANG land is not owned by the Council, the Council will seek an interest in the land to ensure that the SANG endures and the funding is used as set out in the SANG agreements. In every situation where step-in rights are required, they will be secured through a Section 106 or similar legal agreement and must be agreed with Natural England.
- 4.4.13 For large-scale developments, bespoke or third party private SANG proposals, Runnymede Borough Council encourage developers to engage with both Natural England and the Council at an early stage.
- 4.4.14 The Council will continue to work with other Councils, organisations and separate parties to deliver new SANGs. Joint working between the Council and other parties may be appropriate where the Council alone cannot provide sufficient SANG or there is the opportunity to add value and/or capacity to individual SANG by developing a network of SANG across local authority boundaries.

4.5 **Strategic SANGs**

- 4.5.1 Strategic SANGs are land which is owned and managed by the Council and to which developers pay financial contributions towards their enhancement to SANG status and long-term management. Strategic SANGs provide avoidance for developments that cannot provide land for their own SANG. These are generally smaller developments for which the provision of bespoke SANG is not viable. Developments using strategic SANGs as mitigation contribute towards their enhancement, ongoing management and maintenance through contributions secured through a unilateral

undertaking made pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The level of the financial contribution depends upon anticipated net occupancy levels and their distance from the SPA as set out in Table 2.

- 4.5.2 Appendix 3 contains maps showing the location and catchment areas of Runnymede’s strategic SANGs. Table 5 below lists the spaces in the borough which have been designated as suitable strategic SANGs and their catchment areas.

Table 5. Existing Strategic SANGs within Runnymede

Site	Date Designated ⁷	Original Capacity (units)		Discounted SANG (ha)	Catchment (km)
		Phased	Total		
Chertsey Meads	June 2020	1,822	1,822	35	5
Hare Hill	April 2007 December 2012	83 82	165	3.38	4
Homewood Park	August 2008	300	300	5.85	5
Queenswood / Ether Hill	April 2007 December 2012	151 150	301	2.3	4
St Anns Hill	August 2008 December 2012	100 174	274	5.38	5
Timber Hill / Chaworth Copse / Ottershaw Chase	April 2007 December 2012	266 267	533	8.95	5
		Totals	3,395	60.86	

- 4.5.3 A schedule of Runnymede’s remaining strategic SANG capacity will be made available on the Council’s website and updated regularly.
- 4.5.4 Developers with large sites of residential units who wish to use a strategic SANG are encouraged to engage with the Council at an early stage to establish whether this approach will be acceptable. In exceptional circumstances, evidence may demonstrate that a bespoke solution will be effective in avoiding or mitigating the adverse impacts of housing development and visitor pressure on the SPA. In these cases, the proposed measures must be agreed by Natural England. A key consideration will be whether allocating strategic SANG capacity to the site would result in a shortage of SANG within Runnymede, especially for small scale developments.

4.6 Bespoke SANGs

- 4.6.1 Bespoke SANGs are new open spaces provided in exceptional circumstances by large developments, where the developer upgrades part of the land to SANG status or provides SANG off-site. Due to the scale of these developments; and the concentration of new residents arising in these locations, developers should seek to provide areas of SANG on-site in the first instance. Where this is not possible, off-site provision may be acceptable, assuming that the Council, in agreement with Natural England, can conclude that the off-site SANGs will function as an effective alternative to the SPA.

⁷ Two dates indicate that a second phase of SANG came forward following the original designation.

- 4.6.2 The land must be enhanced to SANG standard through in-kind works by developers as established within a s106 Agreement. Levels of existing visitor use on the land in question will need to be discounted to protect current access. Any existing nature conservation interests must also be taken into account and potentially discounted.
- 4.6.3 Whilst the SANGs quantity and quality standards set out within Table 2 and Appendices 5 and 6 are a useful starting point for the assessment of bespoke SANGs, compliance with these standards may not be sufficient to demonstrate that the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are met. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will be necessary to ensure that there is no likely significant effect or no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.
- 4.6.4 Due to the practicalities of providing bespoke SANGs which are large enough to be attractive to new residents, it is likely that only larger developments will be in a position to deliver acceptable bespoke SANGs. In order to generate a requirement for a minimum 2ha SANG, it is calculated that a minimum of 113 additional dwellings is necessary. This is based upon an average of 2.2 persons per dwelling and a SANG standard of at least 8ha per 1,000 new population. In practice SANGs are generally much larger since they are required to incorporate a minimum 2.3 to 2.5km walk.
- 4.6.5 In some circumstances, sites of fewer than 100 units situated between 400m and 5km of the SPA may be asked to make some on-site provision. Where the Council considers that an individual development proposal represents phased or piecemeal development of a larger overall site, the total capacity of the larger site will be taken into account when reaching a decision on whether an individual proposal should provide on-site mitigation.
- 4.6.6 Bespoke SANGs may have excess SANG capacity which can be allocated to developments in their catchment area in addition to those for which they were originally constructed. This needs to be carried out with the permission of the owner of the SANG and agreed with the Council and Natural England.
- 4.6.7 Rather than retain responsibility for maintaining in-kind semi-natural open space, a developer may want to offer the land to Runnymede Borough Council (with an in perpetuity maintenance contribution), another public body or set up a management company or community trust (all subject to appropriate ongoing funding). In this case the Council will need assurance that such an organisation has the necessary skills and resources to maintain the SANG and that it will remain in existence to achieve this in perpetuity. Early dialogue with the Council and Natural England is encouraged.
- 4.6.8 The maps in Appendix 4 show the locations and catchment areas of the agreed Bespoke SANG sites listed below in Table 6.

Table 6. Existing Bespoke SANGs within Runnymede

Site	Capacity Allocated (units)	Discounted SANG (ha)
Franklands Park	350	11.8
Chertsey Common, Longcross	200	5.1
Totals	550	16.9

4.7 Third Party Private SANGs

- 4.7.1 Third party, privately owned SANGs are SANGs provided and run by organisations or individuals other than the Council that are not tied to a particular development.
- 4.7.2 The land must be upgraded to SANG status in accordance with Natural England's SANG Quality Guidance and in agreement with the Council and Natural England, made publicly accessible at all times and arrangements put in place to ensure their maintenance in perpetuity.
- 4.7.3 Developers seeking to purchase SANG capacity from the third party SANG provider must agree the cost via a private contractual agreement between themselves and the owner of the SANG. Council approval must be sought to ensure that the development is located within the catchment area of the SANG and that there is sufficient SANG capacity remaining. The purchasing developer must then ensure that the mitigation is tied to their development scheme and ensure that SAMM payments are secured with the Council via a s106 Agreement. The s106 will include clauses to:
- ensure that the development is not occupied prior to the third party SANG capacity being secured, provided, made publicly available and that in perpetuity maintenance has been guaranteed; and
 - pay the required SAMM contributions.
- 4.7.4 For all privately owned SANGs, the Council will need to be able to monitor the allocation of SANG to new developments to ensure that the capacity of the site will not be exceeded. The Council will also need to monitor the cost of SANG provision to developers in order to monitor development viability. An effective mechanism for this process must be agreed with the Council and a monitoring fee may be charged.
- 4.7.5 At the time of writing, Runnymede does not contain third party private SANGs.

5. Strategic SANG Contributions

- 5.1.1 New development will be required to make financial contributions toward both SANG and SAMM. Contributions may in part be used to fund the staffing costs for monitoring and administration either within the Council or by a joint body to oversee parts or all of this work.
- 5.1.2 Monitoring will include surveys to be undertaken in future to observe visitor numbers to SANGs and the SPA.
- 5.1.3 For developments that must provide avoidance measures and which are not providing a bespoke SANG solution, contributions must be made to the Council for the use of capacity at one of the strategic SANGs the Council allocates to. As stated elsewhere in this SPD, it is advised that in exceptional circumstances developments may be required to consider the feasibility of providing bespoke SANG.
- 5.1.4 Each Strategic SANG has a finite SANG capacity in terms of the number of occupants it can accommodate. Applications that require the allocation of strategic SANG capacity will be reserved when the application is registered. Strategic SANG capacity will be reserved on a first come, first served basis. This also applies to appeals that are registered. In instances where applications are refused or dismissed on appeal or where planning permission lapses, then the relevant allocated SANG capacity is returned for another development to utilise. Capacity is assigned when planning permission is granted but requires completion of a s106 agreement and payment in full of both SANG and SAMM contributions in order to secure the allocation in perpetuity. The Council monitors strategic SANG capacity on an ongoing basis. The exception will be applications which require separate written approval under the Habitats Regulations such as permitted development, prior approvals, permissions in principle and technical consents. For these applications' capacity will be assigned when written approval under the Habitats Regulations is given by the Council.
- 5.1.5 Existing SANGs are required to be maintained to in accordance with Natural England's SANG standards. For new strategic SANG, the Council enhances the site on an incremental basis. These works are funded through contributions secured under a s106 obligation. Each development cannot be occupied until the relevant enhancement works are provided on the assigned strategic SANG. This is secured via a s106 Agreement with the developer to restrict occupation. The Council does not wait for the contributions to come in but instead 'pump primes' SANG enhancement works, the cost of which is then paid back by an equivalent amount from pooled s106 contributions. This ensures that occupations can take place in a timely manner.
- 5.1.6 All SANGs have catchment areas as described in section 4.2. Developments with a net increase of 10 dwellings or more can purchase capacity (subject to Council approval) if they fall within the catchment of a SANG. However, developments under 10 dwellings do not need to be within the catchment of a specific SANG and may be allocated SANG capacity from any Strategic SANG in the Borough.
- 5.1.7 Monies that are collected through s106 obligations for SANG will be ring-fenced in perpetuity to provide:
- Initial capital enhancements of new strategic SANGs in accordance with the relevant SANG Management Plan;
 - Management and maintenance of strategic SANGs;
 - Facilitation costs associated with the operation and review of the strategy.

5.1.8 The Council has agreed the SANG enhancement works with Natural England and these are set out in SANG Management Plans. The works are carried out by the Council in accordance with the relevant SANG Management Plan. To determine the extent of the works required in the SANG Management Plan information is collated such as:

- survey information regarding visitors; accessibility; parking; user perception; and habitat/nature conservation qualities;
- the expertise of those with responsibility for open space management; and
- information from Natural England based upon its research.

5.1.9 The key SANG enhancements are to improve accessibility, to provide well-designed circular walks of more than 2.3 - 2.5km and to make semi-natural habitat more attractive in line with research carried out by Natural England.

5.1.10 The TBH Joint Strategic Partnership has agreed that the SANG contribution should be applied on a 'per bedroom' basis. Contributions need to be in proportion to the proposed development and sufficient to avoid and mitigate adverse effects.

5.1.11 The level of SANG contributions for a net increase in anticipated occupancy rate and within the 400m to 5km zone of influence are summarised as follows and equate to £903.50 per occupant. The occupancy contribution is based on and will replace the £2,000 per dwelling contribution the Council currently charges for its strategic SANG, the basis for which can be found in the 2009 Runnymede Thames Basin Heaths Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Table 7. SANG Tariff

Dwelling Size	Expected Occupancy	SANG Tariff
1 bedroom/studio	1.40	£1,264.90
2 bedrooms	1.85	£1,671.48
3 bedrooms	2.50	£2,258.75
4 bedrooms	2.85	£2,574.98
5+ bedrooms	3.70	£3,342.95

5.1.12 For residential conversions within use class C3 (residential) where the overall number of occupants increases, such as through sub-division of an existing dwelling, avoidance measures must be provided through the allocation of SANG.

5.1.13 The SANGs contribution will be calculated by taking both the net additional capacity and the occupancy of the existing dwelling into consideration, as demonstrated in the following worked example.

Example: Conversion of a 4-bedroom house to two 2-bedroom houses

Existing Occupancy: 1×2.85 (1 x 4-bed) = 2.85

Proposed Occupancy: 2×1.85 (2 x 2-bed) = 3.70

Net Occupancy: $3.70 - 2.85 = 0.85$ additional people

Therefore, mitigation would be required for 0.85 additional people which at £903.50 per person equates to £768.

5.1.14 As noted within section 2.2, schemes incurring a net increase of 50 or more residential dwellings within the 5-7km zone are likely to be subject to discounting, the level of which is to be agreed by Natural England on a case by case basis.

5.1.15 Where development involves the creation and/or loss of non-C3 developments as defined in Section 3 of this strategy, net occupancy will be considered on an individual basis under advice from Natural England.

6. SAMM Contributions

- 6.1.1 Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) is a further avoidance measure, which is separate from SANGs. A contribution towards the SAMM project is required for all net new residential development, regardless of whether the SANGs provision is strategic, bespoke or via a third party private SANG. SAMM funds are not used for the delivery, maintenance or management of SANGs. Contributions are divided between annual expenditure (30%) and a long-term investment fund (70%). Whereas SANG contributions are collected individually by each local authority, the Board of the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSP) endorsed the principle of a separate single tariff to fund SAMM measures, to be collected centrally and used strategically across the SPA.
- 6.1.2 The SAMM Project is funded by s106 contributions. The tariff is collected from the relevant local authorities by an administrative body (Hampshire County Council) and the delivery managed by Natural England. The JSP has agreed that the SAMM contribution should be applied on the basis of expected occupancy. Local occupancy rates based on evidence underpinning the adopted Local Plan have been used to calculate SAMM contributions. This is based on a programme of access management and monitoring measures set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SAMM Project Tariff Guidance document, produced by Natural England in March 2011⁸.
- 6.1.3 SAMM contribution rates for a net increase in residential dwellings within the 400m to 5km zone of influence, and prior to any level of discounting permitted by Natural England, are set out within Table 8. These equate to £360 per occupant and include an uplift agreed by the JSP on 19 November 2020⁹

Table 8. SAMM Tariff

Dwelling Size	Expected Occupancy	SAMM Tariff
1 bedroom/studio	1.40	£504
2 bedrooms	1.85	£666
3 bedrooms	2.50	£900
4 bedrooms	2.85	£1,026
5+ bedrooms	3.70	£1,332

- 6.1.4 Schemes incurring a net increase of 50 or more residential dwellings within the 5-7km zone are likely to be subject to discounting, subject to agreement by Natural England and evaluated on a case by case basis.
- 6.1.5 The level of contributions set out above are base figures. SAMM contributions will be updated annually to take account of inflation and will be published on the Council's website. Contributions may also be updated to reflect increased costs or works, in accordance with guidance from the JSP. This will not affect contributions already paid or committed. Where a development site is providing mitigation through a bespoke onsite SANG, there will still be a requirement to provide SAMM contributions.

⁸ Natural England (2011) Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project Tariff Guidance

⁹ <https://surreyheath.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=316&MId=3398&Ver=4>

- 6.1.6 Where developments are seeking to contribute to a SANG controlled by a third party, all contributions for SANG must be paid to the Council who will release funds to the third party in accordance with the arrangements in place to deliver and maintain the SANG. In addition to the tariff quoted below, an administration cost would also be applied in such instances to account for officer hours. This will ensure that the Council fulfils its duty as competent authority to ensure that avoidance measures are provided to the required standard and that monies are available for access management and monitoring.
- 6.1.7 Based on the information contained within chapters 5 and 6, Table 9 provides a summary of cumulative SAMM and SANG contributions within the 400m to 5km Zone of Influence which equate to £1,263.5 per occupant:

Table 9. Summary of Tariffs

Dwelling Size	SANG Tariff	SAMM Tariff	Tariffs Total
1 bedroom/studio	£1,264.90	£504	£1,768.90
2 bedrooms	£1,671.48	£666	£2,337.48
3 bedrooms	£2,258.75	£900	£3,158.75
4 bedrooms	£2,574.98	£1,026	£3,600.98
5+ bedrooms	£3,342.95	£1,332	£4,674.95

- 6.1.8 Any s106 contribution payments to be made to the Council are to be secured by planning obligations and paid no later than prior to occupation of the first dwelling. If a large development is likely to be built in phases, payment by instalment may be considered. If paying in instalments, each instalment should be paid no later than prior to occupation of the first dwelling for each phase of the development.
- 6.1.9 For applications where occupancy is unknown such as outline or prior approval the Council will, where it is deemed by officers appropriate to do so, apply a formula based approach in any S106 or undertaking to ensure that SANG & SAMM contributions are secured which reflect the development as implemented.

Glossary and Abbreviations

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR): A statutory requirement, the report contains specific information such as status and progress of the Authority's Local Plan, the performance of policies and details as to the Authority's endeavours with regard to Duty to Cooperate

Appropriate Assessment (AA): An assessment, required under the Habitats Regulations, if a plan or project is judged as likely to have a significant effect on a National Site Network site.

Competent Authority: The decision maker under the Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (or as subsequently amended); often the local authority but could be a planning inspector or other body responsible for assessing a plan or project.

Delivery Framework: Sub-regional guidance on Thames Basin Heaths SPA avoidance and mitigation methods, produced and endorsed by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board.

Development Plan: A set of documents, which at the time of this SPD's adoption comprises the Runnymede Local Plan 2030, saved Policy NRM6 in the South East Plan and the waste and minerals plans produced by Surrey County Council. It also includes any 'made' neighbourhood plans. Section 54A of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 requires that planning applications and appeals be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Duty to Cooperate (DtC): The Duty to Cooperate was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to replace Regional Strategies. It places a legal duty on all local planning authorities and other public bodies to work together constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the planning of cross-boundary issues.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA): An assessment, required under the Habitats Regulations, if a plan or project is judged as likely to have a significant effect on a National Site Network site.

Local Plan: A Local Plan is a portfolio of documents which plans for the future development of a local area. It is drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community and subject to an examination before an independent Planning Inspector. It sets planning policies for the area as well as allocating land for development or protection. A Local Plan is part of the development plan for an area and is the key document used to determine planning applications for new development within Runnymede.

Local Planning Authority (LPA): A Local Planning Authority undertakes the town planning function at the local level (except minerals and waste planning which is undertaken at a County Council level).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the government's planning policies for England.

National Site Network (Formerly Natura 2000 Sites): An ecological network of sites (SPAs and SACs) protected under the Habitats Regulations to provide a strong protection for the UK's wildlife areas.

Natural England (NE): A non-departmental public body that advises the government about the natural environment for England. NE is responsible for ensuring that England's natural environment, including its land, flora and fauna, freshwater and marine environments, geology and soils, are protected and improved. It also has a responsibility to help people enjoy, understand and access the natural environment.

Section 106 Agreement (s106): A legal agreement between planning authorities and developers, described at section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended. S106 agreements secure planning obligations (such as financial contributions or infrastructure) that are required to make a development acceptable in planning terms.

South East Plan (SEP): The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England which was adopted in May 2009 and set out a vision for the future of the region to 2026. It outlined how the region would respond to challenges such as housing, the economy, transport and protecting the environment. It was partially revoked in February 2013, excepting Policy NRM6 'Thames Basin Heath SPA' which remains in force.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Sites that are protected by the Habitats Regulations and formally designated for nature conservation. They form part of a National Site Network of important high-quality sites that make a significant contribution to nature conservation.

Special Protection Area (SPA): Sites which are strictly protected under the Habitats Regulations. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds and for regularly occurring migratory species for rare and vulnerable birds and for other migratory species.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): A conservation designation, the SSSI designation provides statutory protection for the best examples of the UK's flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features. It also underpins other national and international nature conservation designations, such as national nature reserves, SPAs and SACs.

Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM): This is a financial contribution sought from certain types of new development within the Borough which goes towards access management of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and towards monitoring this and the effectiveness of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces.

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project: This is a project overseen by Natural England that implements monitoring, warden arrangements and public education messages across the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG): This is the name given to the green spaces that are of a quality and type suitable to divert potential visitors away from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): A planning document produced at the local level to build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on local policies.

Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership (JSP): Partnership of Thames Basin Heaths-affected Local Authorities and key stakeholders, which form and oversee the implementation of sub-regional guidance, for example the Delivery Framework.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA): Designated on 9th March 2005, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area forms part of the National Site Network, a UK network of sites of importance for nature conservation protected under the Habitats Regulations. It comprises lowland heath supporting important populations of Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark - vulnerable ground-nesting birds. It extends over 11 local authorities in Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire.

Appendix 1: Saved South East Plan Policy NRM6 (2009)

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

New residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Such measures must be agreed with Natural England.

Priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures. Where mitigation measures are required, local planning authorities, as Competent Authorities, should work in partnership to set out clearly and deliver a consistent approach to mitigation, based on the following principles:

- i. a zone of influence set at 5km linear distance from the SPA boundary will be established where measures must be taken to ensure that the integrity of the SPA is protected.
- ii. within this zone of influence, there will be a 400m “exclusion zone” where mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. In exceptional circumstances, this may vary with the provision of evidence that demonstrates the extent of the area within which it is considered that mitigation measures will be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. These small locally determined zones will be set out in local development frameworks (LDFs) and SPA avoidance strategies and agreed with Natural England.
- iii. where development is proposed outside the exclusion zone but within the zone of influence, mitigation measures will be delivered prior to occupation and in perpetuity. Measures will be based on a combination of access management, and the provision of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG).

Where mitigation takes the form of provision of SANG the following standards and arrangements will apply:

- iv. a minimum of 8 hectares of SANG land (after discounting to account for current access and capacity) should be provided per 1,000 new occupants
- v. developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should not be required to be within a specified distance of SANG land provided it is ensured that a sufficient quantity of SANG land is in place to cater for the consequent increase in residents prior to occupation of the dwellings
- vi. access management measures will be provided strategically to ensure that adverse impacts on the SPA are avoided and that SANG functions effectively
- vii. authorities should co-operate and work jointly to implement mitigation measures. These may include, inter alia, assistance to those authorities with insufficient SANG land within their own boundaries, co-operation on access management and joint development plan documents
- viii. relevant parties will co-operate with Natural England and landowners and stakeholders in monitoring the effectiveness of avoidance and mitigation measures and monitoring visitor pressure on the SPA and review/amend the approach set out in this policy, as necessary

- ix. local authorities will collect developer contributions towards mitigation measures, including the provision of SANG land and joint contributions to the funding of access management and monitoring the effects of mitigation measures across the SPA
- x. large developments may be expected to provide bespoke mitigation that provides a combination of benefits including SANG, biodiversity enhancement, green infrastructure and potentially, new recreational facilities.

Where further evidence demonstrates that the integrity of the SPA can be protected using different linear thresholds or with alternative mitigation measures (including standards of SANG provision different to those set out in this policy) these must be agreed with Natural England.

The mechanism for this policy is set out in the TBH Delivery Framework by the TBH Joint Strategic Partnership and partners and stakeholders, the principles of which should be incorporated into local authorities' LDFs.

Appendix 2: Runnymede 2030 Local Plan Policy EE10

Policy EE10: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Within 400m of the boundary of the Special Protection Area, no additional residential development will be permitted. Non-residential development within 400m may require an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations.

All additional residential development (including strategic allocations) beyond the 400m Special Protection Area exclusion zone, but within 5km of the Special Protection Area boundary, will need to put in place adequate measures to avoid and mitigate potential effects on the Special Protection Area. These must be delivered prior to occupation and in perpetuity and agreed with Natural England. To meet these requirements developments will need to:

- provide or contribute to Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space at a standard of at least 8 hectares per 1000 residents (minimum after any discounting); Proposals for new Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces will not be accepted unless agreed by Natural England; and
- Make a financial contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring at the Special Protection Area.

or

- contribute towards enhancing the strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space provision that is made in the Council's Special Protection Area Interim Guidance or any subsequent update of it through the existing licensing scheme or any future agreed mechanism. Developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should not normally be required to be within a specified distance of SANG land; and
- make a financial contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring at the Special Protection Area.

or

- in exceptional circumstances, evidence may demonstrate that a bespoke solution will be effective in avoiding or mitigating the adverse impacts of housing development and visitor pressure on the Special Protection Area. In these cases, the proposed measures must be agreed by Natural England.

For sites beyond the 5km zone of influence, an Appropriate Assessment may be required under the Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine whether there will be a likely impact on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. This is likely for residential developments of 50 new dwellings and above between 5km and 7km from the Special Protection Area. Likewise, development that falls within a C1 or C2 use may have an impact on the integrity of the SPA. For any sites where impacts are likely, a bespoke solution will need to be assessed on a case by case basis and agreed with Natural England but will be based on the above three options.

Over the lifetime of the Local Plan, should the Council not be able to demonstrate there is sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces capacity for mitigation, the Local Plan will need to be reviewed.

Appendix 3: Strategic SANG and Catchment Area Maps

Figure 3. Chertsey Meads SANG Catchment Area

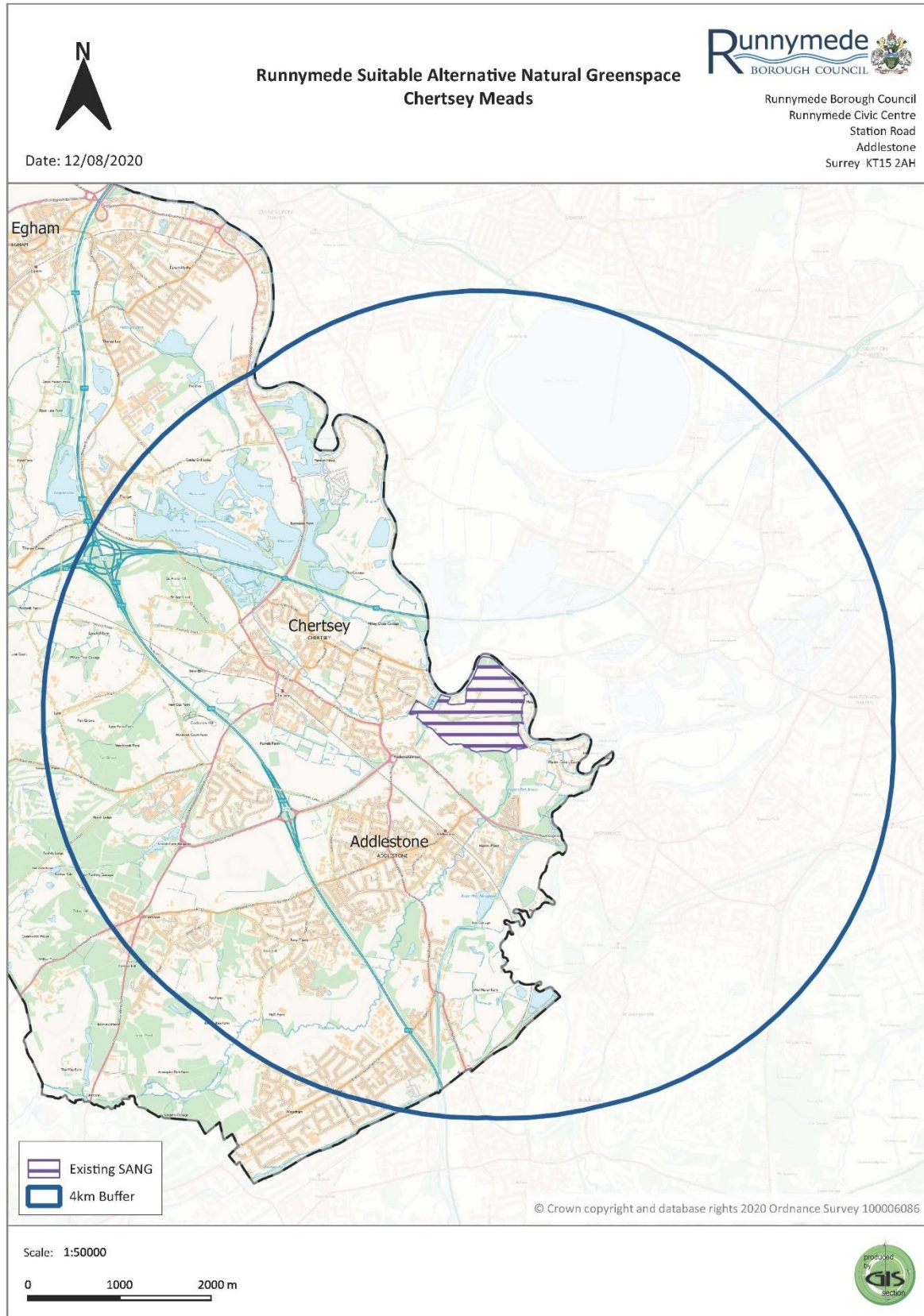


Figure 4. Hare Hill SANG Catchment Area



Figure 5. Homewood Park SANG Catchment Area

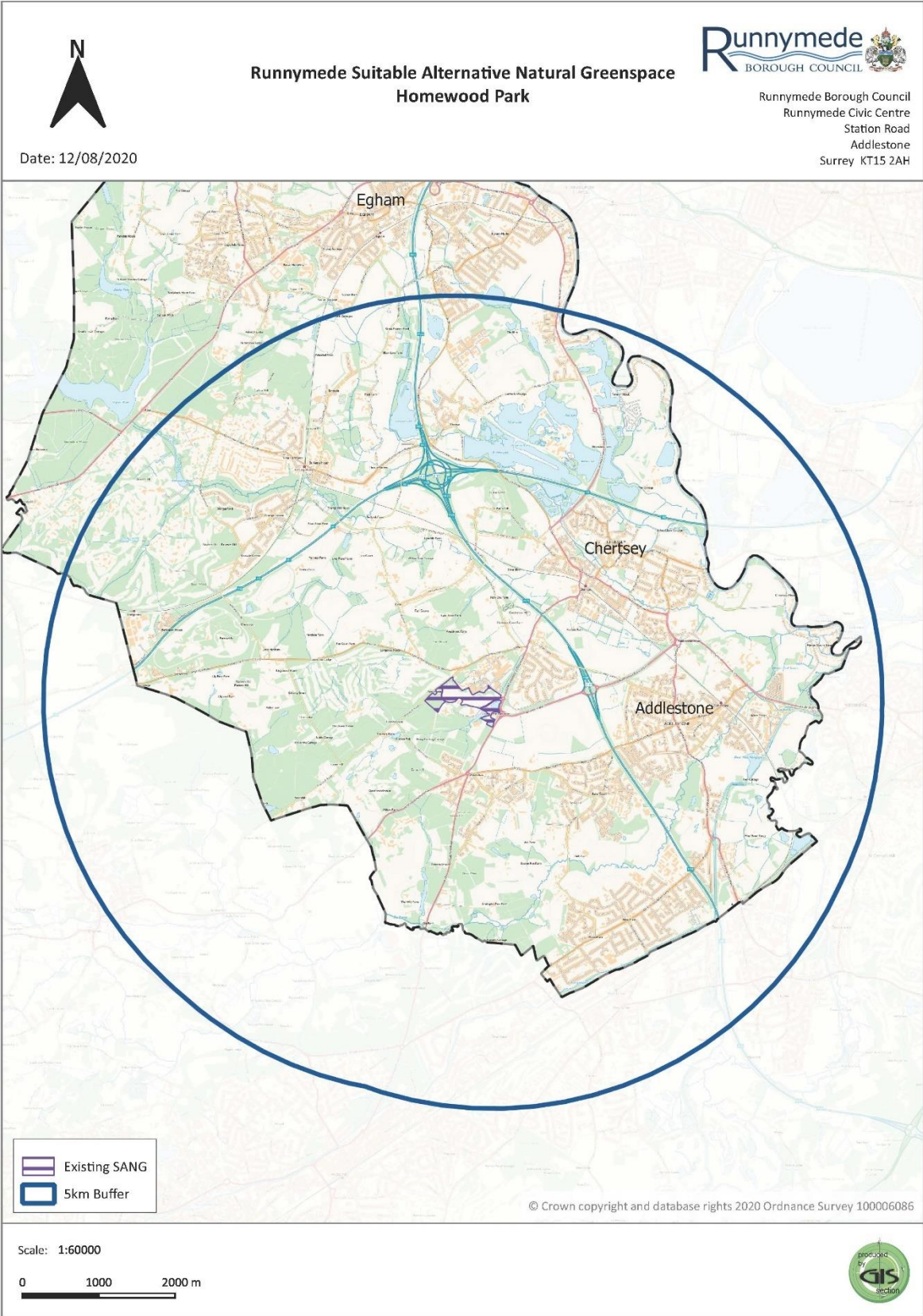


Figure 6. Queenswood and Ether Hill SANGs Catchment Area



Figure 7. St. Ann's Hill SANG Catchment Area

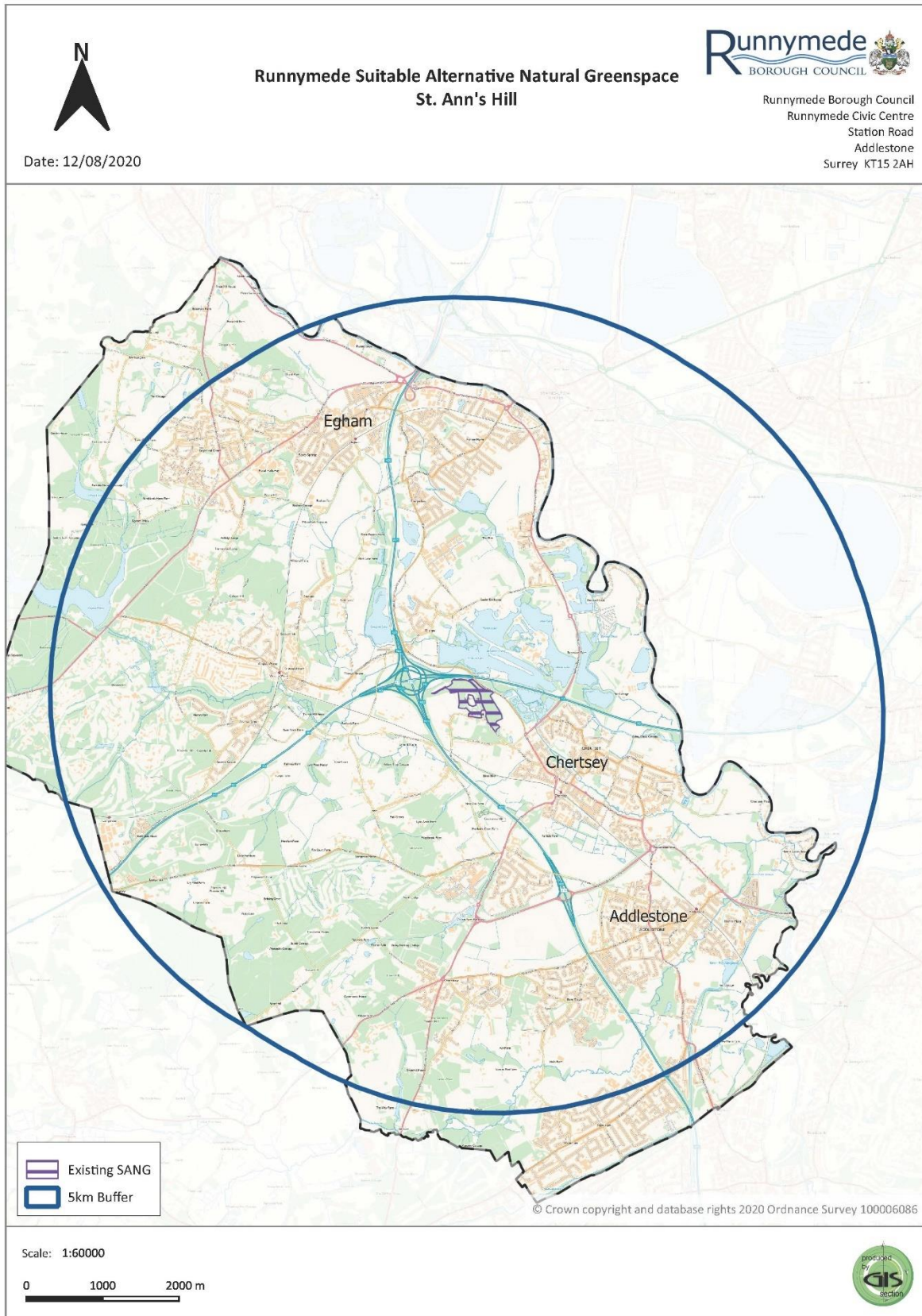


Figure 8. Timber Hill, Chaworth Copse and Ottershaw Chase SANGs Catchment Area



Appendix 4: Bespoke SANGs Maps

Figure 9. Chertsey Common SANG

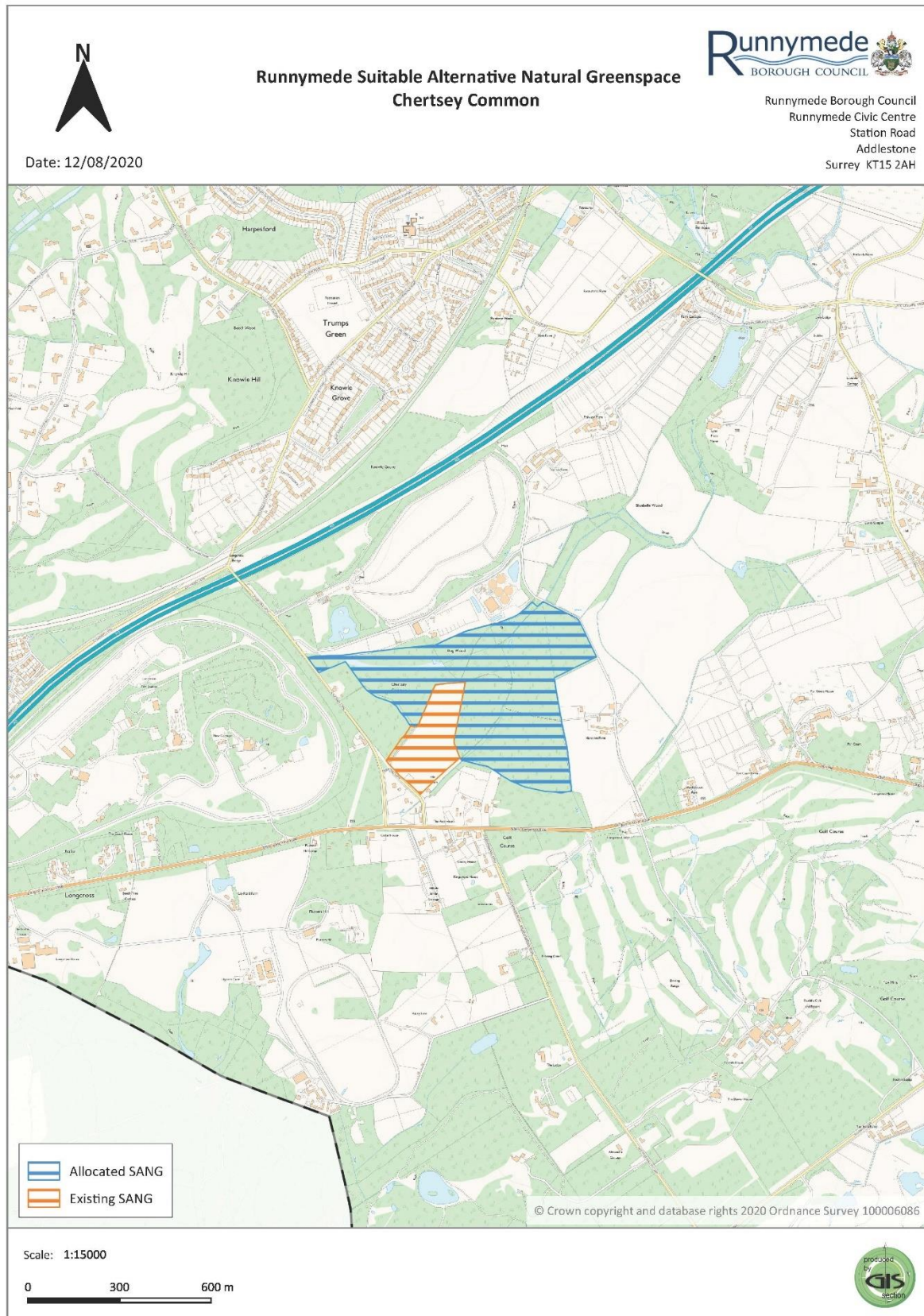
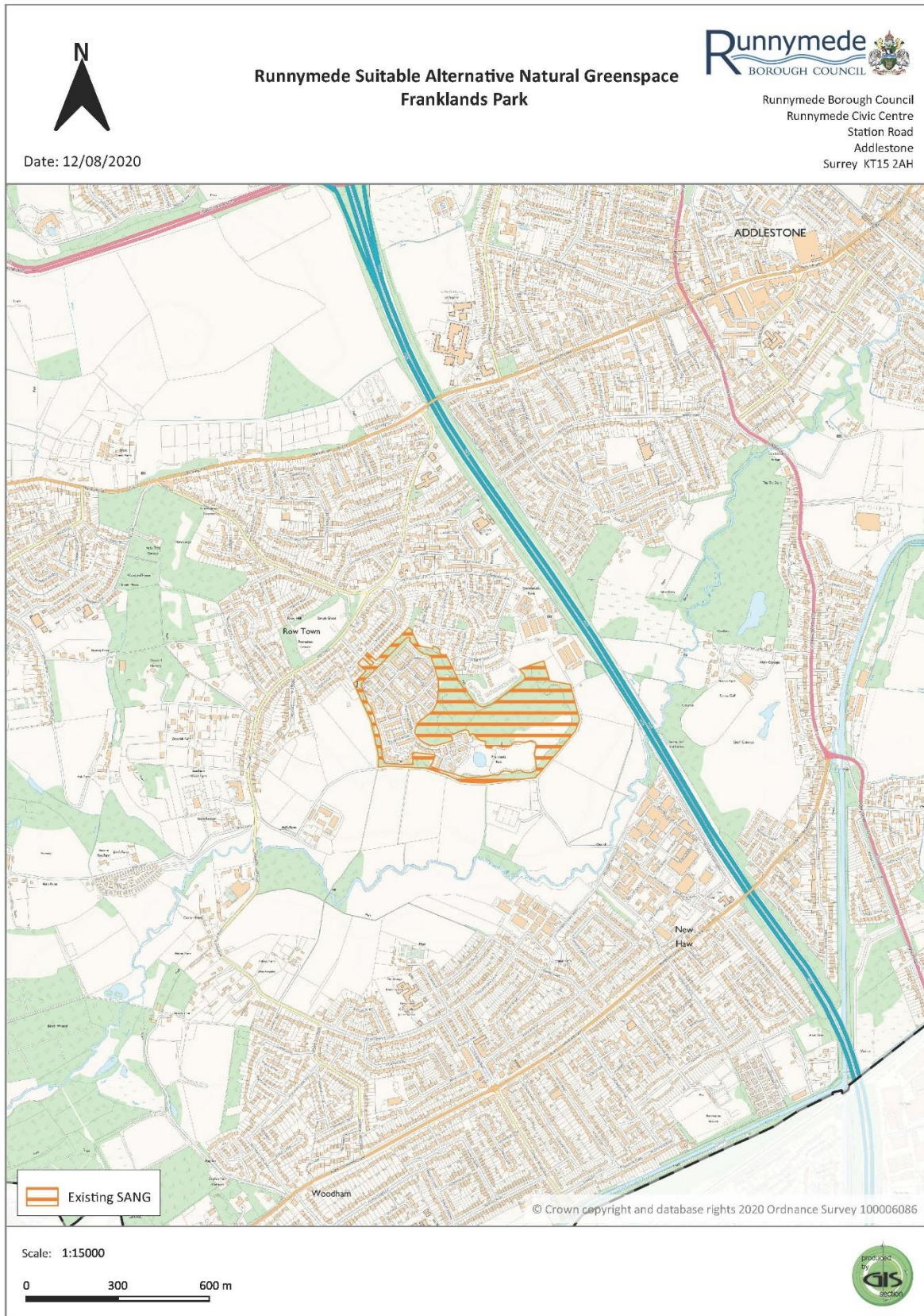


Figure 10. Franklands Park SANG



Appendix 5: Guidelines for the Creation of SANGS

Natural England (2008)

The wording in the list below is precise. The requirements referred to as “must” are essential in all SANGs. Those requirements listed as “should have” should all be represented within the suite of SANGs, but do not all have to be represented in every site. All SANGs should have at least one of the features on the “desirable” list.

The Natural England guidelines also state that:

‘These guidelines relate specifically to the means to provide mitigation for housing within the Thames Basin Heaths Planning Zone. They do not address nor preclude the other functions of green space (e.g. provision of disabled access).’

As the guidelines do not preclude other functions of green space, the Council has added a further ‘must have’ criteria regarding accessibility by those using a mobility scooter or similar and provision of disabled parking bays.

Must haves

- For all sites larger than 4ha there must be adequate parking for visitors which includes a proportion of disabled parking bays, unless the site is intended for local use, i.e. within easy walking distance (400m) of the developments linked to it.
- It should include a circular walk of 2.3-2.5km around the SANGS. On sites with car parks this should start and finish there.
- Sites of 10ha or more must have adequate car parking. These should be clearly signposted and easily accessed.
- Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
- The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGS is intended to cater for. Access points must be designed so that access by those using a mobility scooter or similar is achievable.
- The SANGS must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath/s.
- SANGS must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users; they must not have tree and scrub cover along parts of the walking routes.
- Paths must be easily used and well maintained but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.
- SANGS must be perceived as semi-natural spaces with little intrusion of artificial structures, except in the immediate vicinity of car parks. Visually sensitive way-markers and some benches are acceptable.
- All SANGS larger than 12 ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience.
- Access within the SANGS must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.
- SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works smells etc).

Should haves

- SANGS should be clearly sign-posted or advertised in some way.
- SANGS should have leaflets and/or websites advertising their location to potential users. It would be desirable for leaflets to be distributed to new homes in the area and be made available at entrance points and car parks.
- SANGS should link into longer walks of 5km or more through footpath or other green networks

Desirables

- It would be desirable for an owner to be able to take dogs from the car park to the SANGS safely off the lead.
- Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS.
- It is desirable for access points to have signage outlining the layout of the SANGS and the routes available to visitors.
- It is desirable that SANGS provide a natural space with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside and areas of dense and scattered trees and shrubs. The provision of open water on part, but not the majority of sites is desirable.
- Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a viewpoint within the SANGS.
- Larger SANGS or those grouped close together should aim to provide longer walks of 5km or more.
- Design and management of the SANG should contribute to relevant Biodiversity Opportunity Area Priority habitat restoration/creation objectives, where appropriate.

Appendix 6: Guidelines for the Creation of a Suite of SANGS

Natural England (2008)

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

- Requirements referred to as “must” are essential in all SANGS
- Those requirements referred to as “should have” should all be represented within the suite of SANGS, but do not all have to be represented in every site.
- All SANGS should have at least one of the “desirable” features.

Must have

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

Should have

- SANGS should be clearly sign-posted or advertised in some way.
- SANGS should have leaflets and/or websites advertising their location to potential users. It would be desirable for leaflets to be distributed to new homes in the area and be made available at entrance points and car parks.

Desirable

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

Appendix 7: SANGs Information Form

This form is designed to help you gather information about any potential SANGS. For more guidance on the creation of SANGS, please also refer to the relevant Borough Council's Thames Basin Heaths SPA Interim Avoidance Plan.

Natural England, Local Planning Authorities, and other organisations will then be able to consider the potential suitability of the proposed SANGS based on this initial information.

Background information

Name and location of proposed SANGs <i>(please attach a map of the site with the boundaries clearly marked)</i>	Name: Address: Grid reference:
Size of the proposed SANGs (hectares), excluding water features	
Any current designations on land – e.g. LNR / SNCI	
Current owners name and address <i>(if there is more than one owner then please attach a map)</i>	
Who manages the land?	
Legal arrangements for the land – e.g. how long is the lease?	
Is there a management plan for the site? <i>(if so, please attach)</i>	

Current visitor arrangements

Is the site currently accessible to the public?	
Does the site have open access?	
Has there been a visitor survey of the site? <i>(if so, please attach)</i>	
If there has been no visitor survey, please give an indication of the current visitor levels on site	High / Medium / Low
Does the site have existing car parking? <i>(if yes, please mark car parks and number of car parking spaces on the site map)</i>	Yes / No How many car parks? How many car parking spaces?
Are there any existing routes or paths on the site? <i>(if yes, please mark these on the map)</i>	Yes / No
Are there signs to direct people to the site? <i>(please indicate where and what type of sign)</i>	

All enquiries about this paper should be directed to:

Planning Policy Team,
Planning Policy and
Economic Development Business Unit.

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