

Rushmoor Plan

PLANNING FOR RUSHMOOR'S FUTURE

Farnborough Town Centre
Supplementary Planning Document

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Rushmoor Borough Council

**Revised Version
July 2007**

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This report has been produced to determine whether the policies and proposals of Rushmoor Borough Council's Farnborough Town Centre Supplementary planning Document (SPD) will have a significant adverse impact on nearby Natura 2000 sites.

Introduction

The reason for the assessment

Assessments are required under article 6 (3) and (4) of the European Habitats Directive⁽ⁱ⁾ where a project or plan may give rise to significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site.

Natura 2000 is a European network of protected sites, which represent areas of the highest value for natural habitats and species of plants and animals, which are rare, endangered or vulnerable in the European Community. The term Natura 2000 comes from the Habitats Directive; it symbolises the conservation of precious natural resources for the year 2000 and beyond into the 21st century. Natura 2000 sites will help to protect these important areas now and for generations to come⁽ⁱⁱ⁾.

The Natura 2000 network will include two types of area. Areas may be designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) where they support rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species of plants or animals (other than birds). Where areas support significant numbers of wild birds and their habitats, they may be designated Special Protection Areas (SPA). SACs are designated under the Habitats Directive and SPAs are classified under the Birds Directive⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾. Some very important areas may become both SAC and SPA.

In Great Britain, the Habitats Directive has been transposed into national law by means of 'the Habitats Regulations'^(iv). Regulation 48(1) of the Habitats Regulations 1994 (as amended), refers to the need for an assessment of 'plans or projects' that meet specified criteria. This requirement applies to 'land use plans', including Local Development Documents (LDDs).

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are LDDs and part of Local Development Frameworks. The Farnborough Town Centre SPD therefore falls within the definition of a Local Development Document (Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004).

Report preparation and consultation

Rushmoor Borough Council is the Local Planning Authority, and as the competent authority, is responsible for assessing the requirement for, and carrying out, this Habitats Regulations Assessment and associated report^(v).

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- i Council Directive of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC)
 - ii Definition available at: www.snh.org.uk/about/directives/ab-dir03.asp
 - iii Council Directive of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC)
 - iv The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994 No. 2716) (as amended). The draft Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/nat-habitats-2006 will make the appropriate amendments to the Habitats Regulations 1994.
 - v Box 1 " provides a summary of why the SPD requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

1 Introduction

Government guidance states that Appropriate Assessment should be applied to the draft SPD and its results published alongside the draft SPD at the regulation 17^(vi) stage (public participation).

During consultation on the draft Farnborough Town Centre SPD (January- February 2007) the Council consulted the following bodies on the SPD and accompanying Habitats Regulations Assessment:

- Natural England^(vii)
- Other relevant nature conservation agencies
- Other relevant bodies^(viii)

The representations received following public participation on the Draft Farnborough Town Centre SPD, Sustainability Appraisal and Article 6 Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) were taken into consideration by the Council before the final Farnborough Town Centre SPD was prepared.

Following consultation with Natural England, this HRA report was prepared to accompany the final Farnborough Town Centre SPD. The purpose of this document is to assess and conclude whether the final proposed SPD does, or does not, affect the integrity of a Natura 2000 network site.

vi Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

vii Natural England is the recognised nature conservation body by virtue of Regulation 4 in the Habitats Regulations.

viii In pursuance of Regulation 17 of the 2004 Town and Country Planning Regulations, the Council must consult other general consultation bodies that it considers appropriate, on the draft SPD and supporting documents relevant to the body to which the documents are being sent.

Natura 2000 network sites

There are two Natura 2000 sites, which the Council must consider:

1. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), which supports important populations of three birds listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive;
2. Areas of the Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI are classified under the Habitats Directive as part of the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Table 1.1 Designated Site (1)

Name:	Thames Basin Heaths
County:	Spans 11 local planning authorities across Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire.
Site designation status:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Protection Area (SPA). • Classified 9 March 2005. • SPA EU Code UK9012141
Site description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TBH SPA is a composite site that is located across the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire in southern England. • Consists of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Hampshire in the West, to Berkshire in the North through to Surrey in the East, the distribution is shown on Map 1.1. • The open heathland habitats overlie sand and gravel sediments which give rise to sandy or peaty acidic soils, supporting dry healthy vegetation on well-drained slopes, wet heath on low-lying shallow slopes and bogs in valleys. The site consists of tracts of heathland, scrub and woodland, once almost continuous, but now fragmented into separate blocks by roads, urban development and farmland. Less open habitats of scrub, acidic woodland and conifer plantations dominate, within which are scattered areas of open heath and mire. • The TBH SPA consists of both dry and wet heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation. • The site supports important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heathland. This includes the fourth largest breeding population of Nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>) and third largest population of Woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>), both of which nest on the ground, often at the woodland/heathland edge. It also supports the second largest concentration of Dartford Warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>), which often nests in gorse (<i>Ulex</i> sp). Scattered trees and scrub are used for roosting. • Together with the nearby Wealden Heaths SPA and Ashdown Forest SPA, the TBH SPA form part of a complex of heathlands in southern England that support important breeding bird populations.
Qualifying species:	See Table 1.2 'Qualifying Species (Dartford Warbler count as 1999. Nightjar count mean (1998-1999). Woodlark count as 1997.)'.

1 Introduction

Non-qualifying species of interest:	Hen harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>), merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>), shorteared owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>) and kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) (all Annex I species) occur in non-breeding numbers of less than European importance (less than 1% of the GB population)
Unit area (ha):	8,274.7ha (total area of TBH SPA)
Condition:	Unfavourable- features contributing to this judgement include scrub/woodland encroachment, management issues, water quality and quantity, and increased development and recreational pressure.
Areas where impacts are most likely to fall:	Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI, Bourley and Long Valley SSSI and Eelmoor Marsh SSSI.

Annex 1 Species	Population	Period	% of GB population
Nightjar. (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>)	264 churring males - breeding	1998/99	7.8%
Woodlark. (<i>Lullula arborea</i>)	149 pairs - breeding	1997	9.9%
Dartford warbler. (<i>Sylvia undata</i>)	445 pairs - breeding	1999	27.8%

Table 1.2 Qualifying Species (Dartford Warbler count as 1999. Nightjar count mean (1998-1999). Woodlark count as 1997.)

Table 1.3 Designated Site (2)

Name:	Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham
County:	Surrey
Site designation status:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special area of conservation (SAC) Designated 1 April 2005 SAC EU Code UK0012793
Site description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The location of the SAC is shown on Map 1.3 (Grid ref: SU914411). Composed of 4 component SSSIs: Ash to Brookwood Heaths, Chobham Common, Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath Heathland is a series of large fragments of previously more continuous areas and is principally dominated by heather – dwarf gorse (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i> – <i>Ulex minor</i>) dry heathland. There are transitions to wet heath and valley mire, scrub, woodland and acid grassland, including types rich in annual plants. This habitat supports an important assemblage of animal species, including numerous rare and local invertebrate species, including the nationally rare white-faced darter <i>Leucorhina dubia</i>, as well as sand lizard <i>Lacerta agilis</i> and smooth snake <i>Coronella austriaca</i>. This site supports the sole area of lowland northern Atlantic wet heath in south-east England. The wet heath at Thursley is mainly cross-leaved heath – bog-moss (<i>Erica tetralix-Sphagnum compactum</i>) and contains several rare

Introduction 1

	<p>plants, including great sundew <i>Drosera anglica</i>, bog hair-grass <i>Deschampsia setacea</i>, bog orchid <i>Hammarbya paludosa</i> and brown beak-sedge <i>Rhynchospora fusca</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depressions on peat substrates are widespread, both in bog pools, mires and in flushes where they occur as part of a mosaic associated with valley bog and wet heath. They show extensive representation of brown-beak sedge and are also important for great sundew and bog orchid <i>Hammarbya paludosa</i>. • Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (5%) • Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (10%) • Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (75%) • Coniferous woodland (10%)
Qualifying species:	<p>Annex 1 species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporian</i> • European dry heaths • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica Tetralix</i> (wet heathland with cross-leaved heath)
Non-qualifying species of interest:	Not applicable.
Unit area (ha):	5138.00ha
Condition:	Unfavourable- features contributing to this judgement include scrub/woodland encroachment, management issues, water quality and quantity, and increased development and recreational pressure.
Areas where impacts are most likely to fall:	Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI. Colony Bog (impact of atmospheric pollution)

1 Introduction

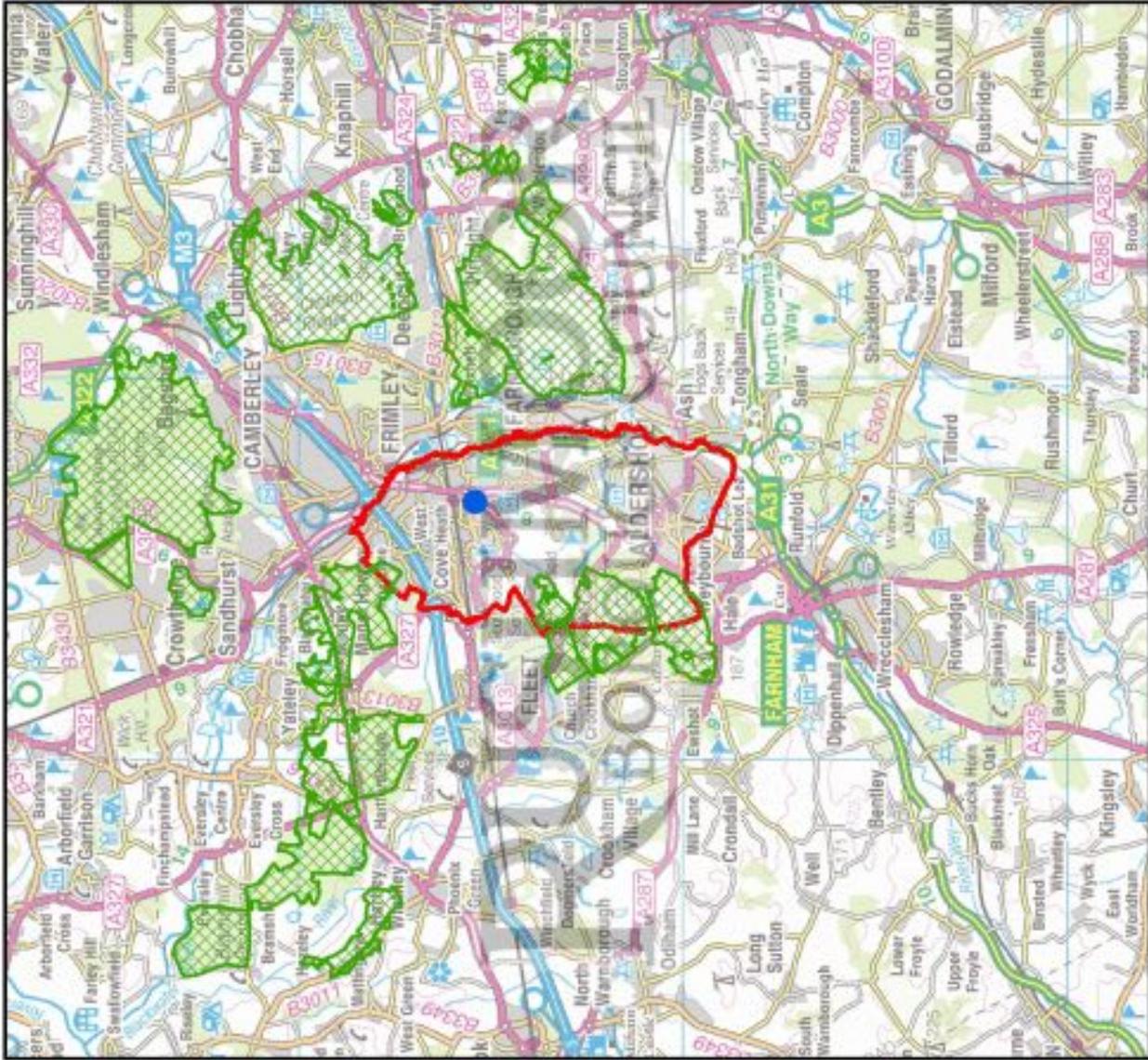


Special Protection Areas

Legend

- Location of Farnborough SPD Context Area
- Special Protection Areas
- Rushmoor Area

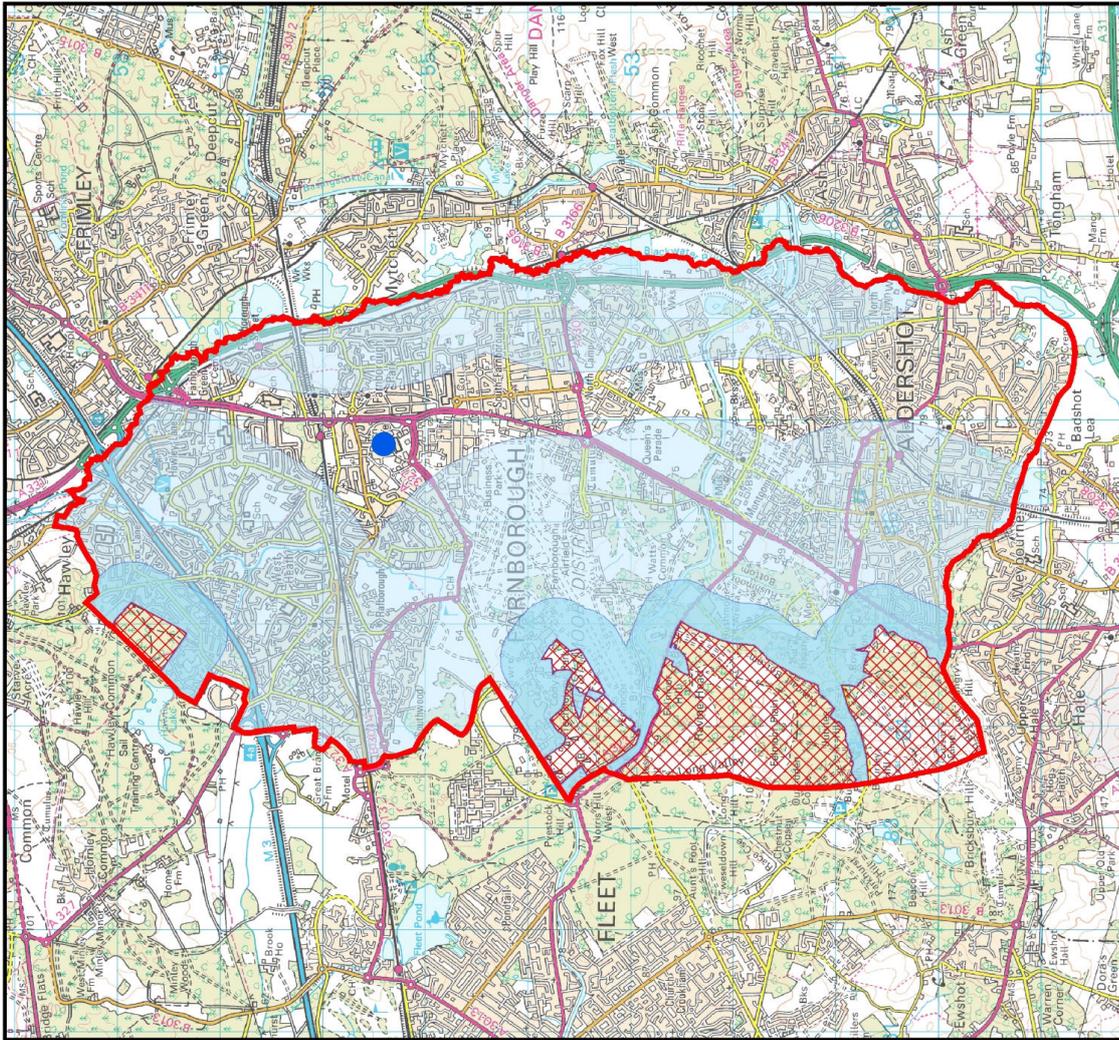
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Map 1.1 Location of Farnborough Town Centre in relation to Thames Basin Heaths SPA

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

Special Protection Areas within Rushmoor



Legend

- Rushmoor Area
- Location of Farnborough SPD Context Area
- Area within the SPA
- Area within 400m of the SPA
- Area within 2Km of the SPA

(The entire area of Rushmoor Borough is within 5kms of the SPA)



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Map 1.2 Natural England's buffer zones for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (Rushmoor)

1 Introduction

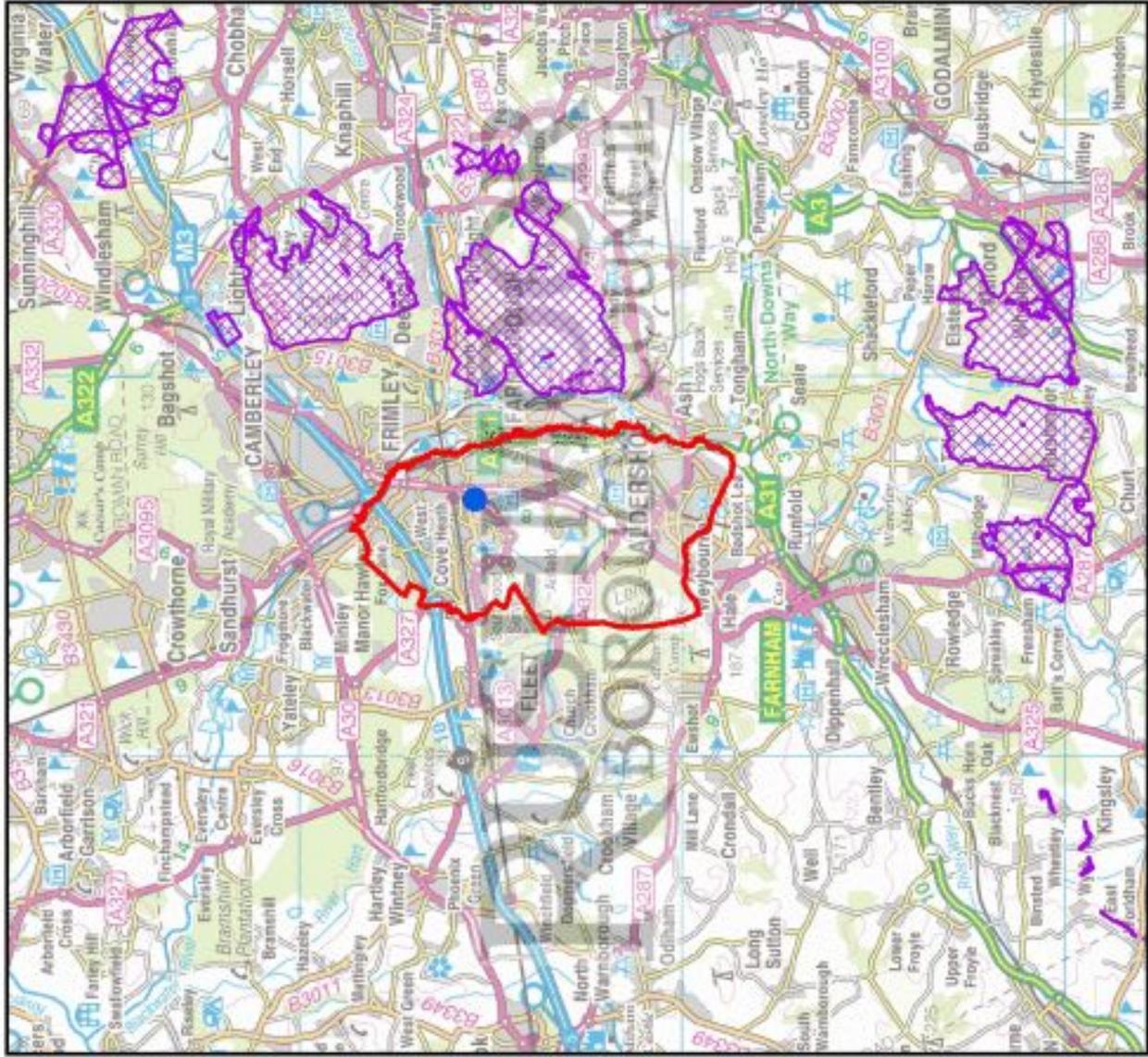
RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

Special Areas of Conservation of Conservation

Legend

-  Location of Farnborough SPD Context Area
-  Special Areas of Conservation © Natural England
-  Rushmoor Area

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Map 1.3 Location of Farnborough Town Centre in relation to SAC sites

Farnborough Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document

The Farnborough Town Centre SPD is **not** directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Thames Basin Heath SPA or the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Heaths SAC for nature conservation. Considerations of likely significant effect are therefore necessary.

The Farnborough Town Centre SPD provides detailed guidance for any new development in the town centre and will be one of the material considerations that can be taken into account by the Council when determining a planning application in the town centre.

The plan area lies within 5 km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the SAC sites. For this geographical area, it is suggested that plans must be assessed for their potential to threaten SPA/SAC site integrity.

The purpose of the screening assessment is to consider whether the proposed Farnborough Town Centre SPD is likely to have a significant effect on the internationally important interest features of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Considerations of likely significant effect are necessary, because the proposed SPD is **not** one of the following:

Box 1

- a. directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site;
- b. a plan that has only significant *positive* effects on European sites;
- c. a plan that clearly would not have a significant effect on European sites (e.g. for an area that does not have European sites near its boundary);
- d. a plan for activities that clearly have no effect on biodiversity e.g. design statements.

Location:	Farnborough town centre and wider context area, Rushmoor Borough, Hampshire.
Distance from designated site boundary to plan proposal boundary:	The plan area is Farnborough town centre and wider context area. The boundary of the plan area lies within 5 km of the Thames Basin Heaths (TBH) Special Protection Area (SPA). The boundary of the component SSSIs (SAC) lies within 5km of the SPD plan area boundary. See location maps (including distance from plan area to buffer zones).
Site area (ha):	Approx. 150
Brief description of proposal:	Proposed plan: Rushmoor Plan Farnborough Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (Rushmoor Borough Council, 2007).

1 Introduction

	<p>SPD aims to help bolster confidence (attract investment) back into the town centre.</p> <p>SPD provides detailed guidance for any new development in the town centre and will be one of the material considerations that can be taken into account by the Council when determining a planning application in the town centre.</p> <p>SPD forms part of the Rushmoor Local Development Framework, also known as the Rushmoor Plan, and elaborates upon policies in the Development Plan Documents, notably the emerging Core Strategy.</p> <p>SPD's strategic objectives aim to create a lively and vibrant shopping and leisure destination in Farnborough town centre, with a high quality public realm, which meets the needs of local residents, businesses, workers and visitors. Any new development which does not contribute to the revitalisation of the town centre as a whole will not be permitted.</p> <p>SPD supplements policies in Rushmoor Local Plan Review 1996-2011 (mainly TC1-TC3).</p>
Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to the site management for nature conservation?	No
Projects/ plans which might act in combination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing allocations in the Local Plans and Local Development Frameworks of districts within the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley and the London Fringe (the 15 Boroughs and Districts affected by the designations). ● The submitted South East Plan. ● Hampshire and Surrey County minerals and waste plans ● Hampshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011. ● Emerging Rushmoor Plan LDDs (including Aldershot Town Centre SPD).
Defined boundaries for examination of cumulative effects:	Relevant parts of Hampshire, Surrey, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham, West Berkshire administrative areas.

Table 1.4 Description of the proposed plan

Likely significant effects 2

Likely significant effects

Adopting a precautionary approach, the following 'screening stage' lists and explains the possible effects of the Farnborough Town Centre SPD on the Natura 2000 sites identified in Chapter 1 'Introduction'.

The table below examines the likely effects of a plan, either alone, or in combination with other plans, upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant.

The SPD proposes a number of policies which do not provide for development (primarily design standards related to new development). In principle, development in the town centre could have a significant adverse effect on the internationally important interest features of the sites (i.e. by leading to a net increase in residential units, increase vehicular traffic, or some other potentially significant effect such as 'construction' or 'occupation' effects),

The screening stage therefore considered that the SPD (in the absence of avoidance measures), is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 network site (in combination with other plans and projects), and therefore that an Appropriate Assessment was required to ascertain the effect on site integrity and how these effects can be mitigated.

2 Likely significant effects

Does the Farnborough Town Centre SPD have the potential to:

Impact	Risk of significant effect?	Explanation
<p>Increase the risk of disturbance from recreational use of the SPA (walking, dog walking, running, cycling, horse riding and motor biking)?</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>The chief risk to the SPA is that of disturbance dogs and walkers on breeding birds, which may result in a decrease in populations over time. Natural England (NE) is concerned about the pressure on the SPA generated by new residential development through increased recreational usage and dog walkers. Impacts would occur throughout the year but are likely to be most acute during spring and summer i.e. the breeding season (and when people prefer to visit). Impacts would be reversible if recreation access was reduced.</p> <p>The SPD does not propose any specific development projects in detail (i.e. details with regards to the size or scale of a development). It does however include policies which provide for development (by allocating in principle the location and type of new development in the town centre). Several policies encourage new residential development in the Borough or refer to development in the pipeline. These proposals could increase the risk of disturbance due to their nature (mainly new residential development within 5km of the SPA):</p> <p>Key Development Areas (including crude estimates of net additional units):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Union Street/ Station Environs: 105 units (housing and some mixed-use blocks) ● Farnborough Road North: 30 units (flats); 50 units (infill mixed-use); 250 units (Concept House); hotel or high density housing development (15 units) ● Town Centre: 131 units (infill, new housing and mixed-use schemes) ● Princes Mead West: 130 units (new residential development) ● Civic Quarter: 225 units (redevelopment of existing uses for mixed-use development) ● Farnborough Business Park North: 250 (new residential development); 476 units (existing permission) ● TOTAL ADDITIONAL UNITS=1662 <p>Based on the 2.4 persons per unit estimate, this would equate to a total occupancy of 3989 people for these schemes (No. of potential new visitors to the SPA).</p>
<p>Increase traffic noise?</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>SPD aims to encourage and facilitate the development of a robust retail core with a broad range of shops and services.</p>

Likely significant effects 2

Impact	Risk of significant effect?	Explanation
		Possible increase number of visitors to area by car (280,000 people within a 15-minute drive time catchment area), due to more attractive retail environment offered. Policy has the potential to increase traffic noise and atmospheric pollution.
Increase levels of atmospheric pollutants?	YES	One of the chief risks to the SAC sites is continued exposure to elevated levels of atmospheric pollution (see above).
Increase disturbance from light pollution?	NO	SPD proposes a lighting strategy (part of public realm improvements). However light pollution is not identified as having an adverse impact on SPA/SAC site integrity.
Increased risk of egg predation by domestic cats?	NO	Preliminary research suggests that ground-nesting birds may be vulnerable to cat and vermin predation associated with urban development ^(ix) . Cats tend to travel less than 1km, and therefore proposals in the SPD would not increase the number of pet cats within a realistic cat range of the SPA.
Increase risk of fly tipping (esp. disposal of garden waste)?	YES	Due to the proximity of the town centre to SPA sites, the incidence of fly tipping concentrated around car parks close to the SPA is a risk (although fly tipping concentrated around gardens close to the SPA is not an issue).
Increase risk of heathland fire?	YES	There is some evidence to suggest that children of school age present the greatest risk of causing fires, either accidentally or deliberately ^(x) . An increase in population near the SPA could result in an increase in the number of unaccompanied children travelling to the SPA (e.g. by bicycle) and, potentially, an increase in the number of fires.
Direct loss of SPA/SAC habitat?	NO	The SPD does not propose any projects, which would cause direct loss of SPA or SAC habitat. Collectively, the SPD policies aim to concentrate development in urban areas, steering development away from greenfield land (i.e. focusing development on previously developed land).
Increase pressure on water resources?	YES	One of the chief risks to SAC sites is pressure on water resources which could affect the hydrology of the site, and eventual loss of the conservation value of importance for this site.

ix English Nature (2006) Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area: Mitigation Standards for Residential Development (draft version May 2006).
x *ibid.*

2 Likely significant effects

Impact	Risk of significant effect?	Explanation
		More housing development can have a negative impact upon water quality (potential to increase pressure on water resources). Some development sites are situated over a culvert and so could impact on ground water quality.
Increase risk of interference with heathland management?	YES	As explained above, the SPD proposals could increase the risk of visitor disturbance due to their nature (mainly new residential development within 5km of the SPA). An increase in visitor numbers to the SPA may affect the safeguarding of the sites.

Table 2.1 Screening for significant effects

Assessing effects on site integrity 3

Assessing effects on site integrity

Conservation objectives

Adequate information is required on conservation objectives of the site and the aspects of the plan that will affect those objectives.

The conservation objective that has been assigned to Thames Basin Heaths SPA is to maintain in favourable condition the habitats of the bird species European importance with particular reference to lowland heathland. European species of importance are Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark.

The conservation objectives that have been assigned to the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC are:

- to maintain ^(xi)in favourable condition, the Northern Atlantic wet heath with cross leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*);
- to maintain in favourable condition the depression on peat substrates; and
- to maintain in favourable condition the dry heath.

xi 'Maintain' implies restoration if the feature is not currently in favourable condition.

3 Assessing effects on site integrity

Impact	Due to this impact, could the SPD have an adverse affect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network sites?	Explanation
<p>Disturbance from recreational use of the SPA (walking, dog walking, running, cycling, horse riding and motor biking)</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>Recreational pressure can have a significant adverse impact on the Annex 1 bird species for which the SPA is designated. Woodlark and nightjar are ground nesting and therefore sensitive to disturbance, particularly from dogs. Dartford warblers nest close to the ground and an area also susceptible to disturbance.</p> <p>Impact identification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased nest predation by natural predators when adults are flushed from the nest or deterred from returning to it by the presence of people or dogs resulting in reduction in species density. ● Chicks or eggs dying of exposure because adults are kept away from the nest resulting in reduction in species density ● Accidental trampling of the eggs by people, given that the nest is on the ground and often close to footpaths resulting in reduction in species density ● Through predation of chicks or eggs by domestic dogs resulting in reduction in species density ● Increasing stress levels in adult birds resulting in reduction in species density

Assessing effects on site integrity 3

Impact	Due to this impact, could the SPD have an adverse affect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network sites?	Explanation
Traffic noise	YES	Dorset studies showing sites surrounded by a high amount of development supported fewer nightjars ^(xii) . -Studies showing lower breeding success and nest density on sites with higher levels of use ^(xiii) .
Atmospheric pollution	YES	<p>Non-physical disturbance (increased noise). Increasing stress levels in adult birds resulting in reduction in species density. Studies have shown that noise from road traffic can affect birds^(xiv).</p> <p>Atmospheric pollution particularly nitrogen deposition represents a threat to naturally nutrient-poor plant communities such as those found within this SAC. Nitrogen deposition contributes to acidification as well as nutrient enrichment, in turn this can result in an increased dominance of grasses (an effect which can be linked to both atmospheric pollution and habitat management).</p> <p>Diffuse atmospheric pollution particularly from increased urbanisation (vehicular traffic) can adversely affect the vegetation communities of lowland heathland (habitat fragmentation and edge effects)^(xv). Researchers have found seedling invasion and establishment by herbaceous species (including grasses) were higher for higher levels of nitrogen^(xvi).</p> <p>The chief risk is that continued exposure to elevated levels of atmospheric pollution that will eventually lead to a loss of the conservation value of importance for this site.</p>

xii Liley, D and Clarke R.T. (2002) 'Urban development adjacent to heathland sites in Dorset: the effect on the density and settlement patterns of Annex 1 bird species', (English Nature Research Report 463: Peterborough).

xiii Murison G. (2002) 'The impact of human disturbance on the breeding success of nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* on heathlands in south Dorset, England', (English Nature Research Report 483: Peterborough).

xiv Kaseloo, P.A. (2005) 'Synthesis of noise Effects on Wildlife Populations'. International Conference on ecology & Transportation, August-September.

xv Angold, P.G. (2002) 'Environmental impacts of transport infrastructure: habitat fragmentation and edge effects', in: B. Sherwood, D. Cutler and J.A. Burton (eds) *Wildlife and Roads*, pp 161-168 (Imperial College Press).

xvi Barker, C.G., Power, S.A, Bell, J.N.B. & Orme, C.D.L. (2004) 'Effects of habitat management on heathland response to atmospheric nitrogen deposition', Biological Conservation.

3 Assessing effects on site integrity

Impact	Due to this impact, could the SPD have an adverse affect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network sites?	Explanation
Fly tipping	YES	Elevated rates of nitrogen deposition have been linked to the conversion of heathlands to grasslands in the Netherlands, with the loss of more than 35% of areas formerly dominated by <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> ^(xvii) . Rubbish dumping and disposal of garden waste on heathland sites presents a threat to the composition of heathland vegetation, due to the risk of invading plants and nutrient enrichment of the soils. Heathlands require nutrient poor soils. A study of Yateley Common to Castle Bottom SSSI found that garden waste dumping was concentrated around the developed edges of the SSSI/SPA. The same study found fly-tipping to be spread along all roads and tracks around the site ^(xviii) .
Fire Risk	YES	'Wild fires' that tend to be associated with urban development can be damaging to ecological interest of heathland areas ^(xix) . Little is currently known about the impact of fires on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, although anecdotal evidence and data from the Dorset Heaths LIFE project suggests that this is a significant issue ^(xx) . The effects of fire on the SPA would express themselves in the short term. Frequent fires would also lead to a progressive degradation of heathland habitat.
Pressure on water resources	YES	Increase in demand for drinking water on underlying hydrology of SAC. Pressure on water resources represents a threat to the wet soils on which plant communities such as those found within this SAC require. Toxic or non toxic contamination- changes in water quality due to changes in runoff regimes and increased pressure on existing water treatment works.

xvii E.g. Van der Eerden, L, Dueck, T, Berdowski, J, Greven, H & Van Dobben, H. (1991) 'Influence of NH3 and(NH4)2SO4 on heathland vegetation', Acta Botanica Neerlandica, 40, 281-296.

xviii see English Nature (2006) Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area: Mitigation Standards for Residential Development (draft version May 2006), p.34.

xix Bullock, D.J., and Gunn, S. (1998) The impact, use and control of fire: a joint workshop organised by English Nature and the National Trust (English Nature Research Report 297: Peterborough).

xx English Nature (2006) Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area: Mitigation Standards for Residential Development (draft version May 2006)

Assessing effects on site integrity 3

Impact	Due to this impact, could the SPD have an adverse affect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network sites?	Explanation
Impacts on heathland management	YES	<p>The SAC contains examples of Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion in south-east England, where it occurs as part of a mosaic associated with valley bog and wet heath (plant communities requiring wet soils). The vegetation is found in natural bog pools of patterned valley mire and in disturbed peat of trackways and former peat-cuttings. The site is characterised by inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (5%), and bogs, marshes and water fringed vegetation, fens (10%).</p>
		<p>Increased visitor pressure could increase the risk of vandalism or accidental damage to access management measures (e.g. fencing aimed at preventing unwanted vehicles and direct public access). Links to impacts identified above (disturbance from recreational use).</p>

Table 3.1 Ascertainning the possible effects on site integrity

4 Avoiding effects on site integrity

Avoiding effects on site integrity

How will adverse effects be avoided or mitigated?

Impact	How will adverse effects on site integrity be avoided or mitigated?
General threat to SPA/SAC	<p>The Rushmoor Local Plan Review (which the SPD will supplement in the interim period) contains plan policies, which protect the SPA/SAC sites from harmful development (ENV6: SPAs, SACs & Ramsar priority habitats/ species). The SPD will also form part of the Rushmoor Local Development Framework, which includes emerging policies to deliver housing development without having an adverse impact on the Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>SPD states that the KPI scheme will introduce a significant amount of residents into the town centre. The permission was given before the European site designation (March/ April 2005). As this is now under construction, it is not feasible to modify or revoke this decision following any appropriate assessment. These net-completions will provide 51 units (permitted November 2004).</p> <p>All other applications for proposed developments made in accordance with the SPD will be screened by the Council (i.e. project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment). Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will therefore be agreed prior to granting permission for any of the proposals suggested in the SPD.</p>
Disturbance from recreational use of the SPA	<p>Existing permissions</p> <p>SPD includes policies which refer to developments, which have already been proposed and considered the impact of the project on site integrity (with associated mitigation agreed):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concept House (Farnborough Road North area): 250 units (granted March 2007). A financial contribution to the Council from the developers of £232,000 for improvements to Southwood Woodlands for recreational purposes, will offset any impact from new residents of the development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Having regard to the proposed package of open space enhancement measures, both on and off site, together with the provision of an information package and prohibition against the keeping of cats and dogs within the development has already been accepted by NE for other schemes, it is concluded with certainty that the proposed Concept House scheme would not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. ● Redrow Homes scheme (O’Gorman Avenue, Farnborough Business Park): 476 units (including 404 apartments and 78 new houses) with 391 new build and 85 through the conversion of buildings. A financial contribution to the Council from the developers of £459,000 for improvements to Southwood Woodlands for recreational purposes, will offset any impact from new residents of the development on the Thames Basin Heaths. Natural England accepted that the size of space provided by Southwood Woodland, the variety of habitats and its location is appropriate as Suitable Accessible Natural Green space (SANGs). An Appropriate Assessment concluded that the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures combined with the strategic management measures being undertaken by the MoD on the two SSSI areas would prevent any material adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA’s arising from this development. <p>These two projects (combined with the KPI town centre scheme detailed above) mean that approximately 777 units could be implemented under this SPD.</p>

Avoiding effects on site integrity 4

Impact	How will adverse effects on site integrity be avoided or mitigated?
	<p>Of the total potential housing quantum (1662) therefore, a total of 885 new homes will require mitigation measures if proposals come forward under this plan. The avoidance strategy includes the following measures therefore:</p> <p>Project-level assessment</p> <p>The SPD states that any proposals for net residential units would need to accord with the Council's interim strategy and standards for protecting Natura 2000 sites (detailed in section 8 'Emerging avoidance obligations'.)</p> <p>The SPD strongly encourages applicants for residential development in Farnborough to engage in discussions with the Council at the earliest opportunity to identify any mitigation measures that might be required to avoid any potential adverse impact on the sites.</p> <p>The Council's interim approach (subject to representations from Natural England) is that the likelihood of significant impact will be assessed on the basis of zones of 1 km and 5.2 km travel distance from the SPA, and in the light of any currently publicly accessible land in the vicinity which offers informal recreation opportunities.</p> <p>Open space obligations</p> <p>The SPD states new residential development should include the provision of conveniently located and usable amenity space (minimum standard for 1000 people is 2.8ha).</p> <p>Based on the average figure of 2.4 occupancy, it is estimated that approximately 5.9 ha of new recreation space will accompany the 885 new potential new homes under this SPD (includes urban parks and amenity open space; equipped children's play space; and sports ground).</p> <p>Additional open space (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) obligations</p> <p>If circumstances arise where the requirement for SANGS provision is demonstrated, the Council will implement its interim policy on additional open space obligations. The Council's approach currently reflects recommendations of the Assessor appointed by the panel which is considering the South East Plan. Where Natural England suggests applications for development could have a significant impact on the SPA, the Assessor's report is a material consideration in their determination therefore.</p> <p>In February 2007 the South East Plan Assessor's Report was published recommending that developments proposed within 5.2km travel distance from the SPA (outside a 400 metre 'exclusion zone') be required to implement a standard of 8 ha /1000 population as the mitigation standard.</p> <p>In relation to Farnborough town centre, the interim approach (subject to representations from Natural England) means that major schemes involving 50 or more units will be required either to provide their own alternative green space or to contribute to the improvement of open space at Southwood Woodland. Schemes involving 10-50 units will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (8 proposals in the SPD involve 10-50 units (total 210 units)). Section 106 contributions, from developers of major schemes within the town centre, would be sought by the Council therefore.</p> <p>Of the 15 proposals in the SPD which include residential development (not including those with permission), 7 proposals involve 50 or more units (approx. 675 units in total). Based on the average figure of 2.4 occupancy, it is estimated that approximately 13 ha of SANGs may be required to attract new potential users (associated with 'major schemes') away from the SPA.</p>

4 Avoiding effects on site integrity

Impact	How will adverse effects on site integrity be avoided or mitigated?
	<p>Based on the estimated cost of improvement at £50000 per hectare- (adjusted annually to reflect inflation). This would involve contributions of approximately £960 per unit.</p> <p>There is 33.83ha of land available for use as SANGs at Southwood Woodland (which has a high degree of naturalness). Approximately 29 ha have already been allocated as mitigation land for planned development. Approximately 4.83 ha of capacity could become available for further development projects^(xxi).</p> <p>An additional 8.17 ha of other land identified as suitable for improvement to provide recreation opportunities, would be required to bring forward the remainder of SPD's proposals.</p> <p>It is believed that new mitigation space and improvements to existing space would be successful as SANGs where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● are easily accessible (convenient vehicle access and good parking) ● provide a short and straightforward journey from centres of population ● provide for an attractive peaceful walk (screened where possible from urban surroundings) ● provide for letting dogs off the lead (i.e. free from livestock) ● provide a qualitatively similar experience to the Special Protection Area (i.e. undulating topography, informal paths, and a variety of habitats) ● are open in character and interesting in terms of wildlife where possible <p>The Council is currently exploring capacity at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tongham Pools (Guildford) ● Holybush Hill (4-12 ha) with high degree of naturalness. There is opportunity here to enhance an old landfill area, east of the River Blackwater. ● Ethy Copse (4-12 ha) (Farnborough) <p>Education and access management</p> <p>The Council's interim approach (subject to representations from Natural England) is that all residential redevelopment schemes involving a net gain in units will be required to contribute £140 per unit (adjusted annually to reflect inflation) to an SPA education and access management fund which will provide grants to local and regional access management initiatives designed to protect the SPA.</p> <p>Based on the potential 885 new homes proposed under this SPD, approximately £123900 could be contributed towards the SPA education and access management fund.</p> <p>Other biodiversity improvements</p> <p>The Council recognises scope for improvements to, and maintenance of linear routes throughout the Borough, which could function as interceptors or magnets for potential SPA visitors seeking a pleasing place to walk.</p> <p>The Council will work with the Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council, Natural England and the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, to identify opportunities for schemes in the future, particularly where land crosses borough boundaries and/or ownership is fragmented (such as the Blackwater Valley area and Tongham Pools).</p>

xxi The Council's proposed Programme of Works for Southwood Woodland is shown (see Appendix 1 'Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy')

Avoiding effects on site integrity 4

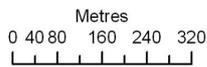
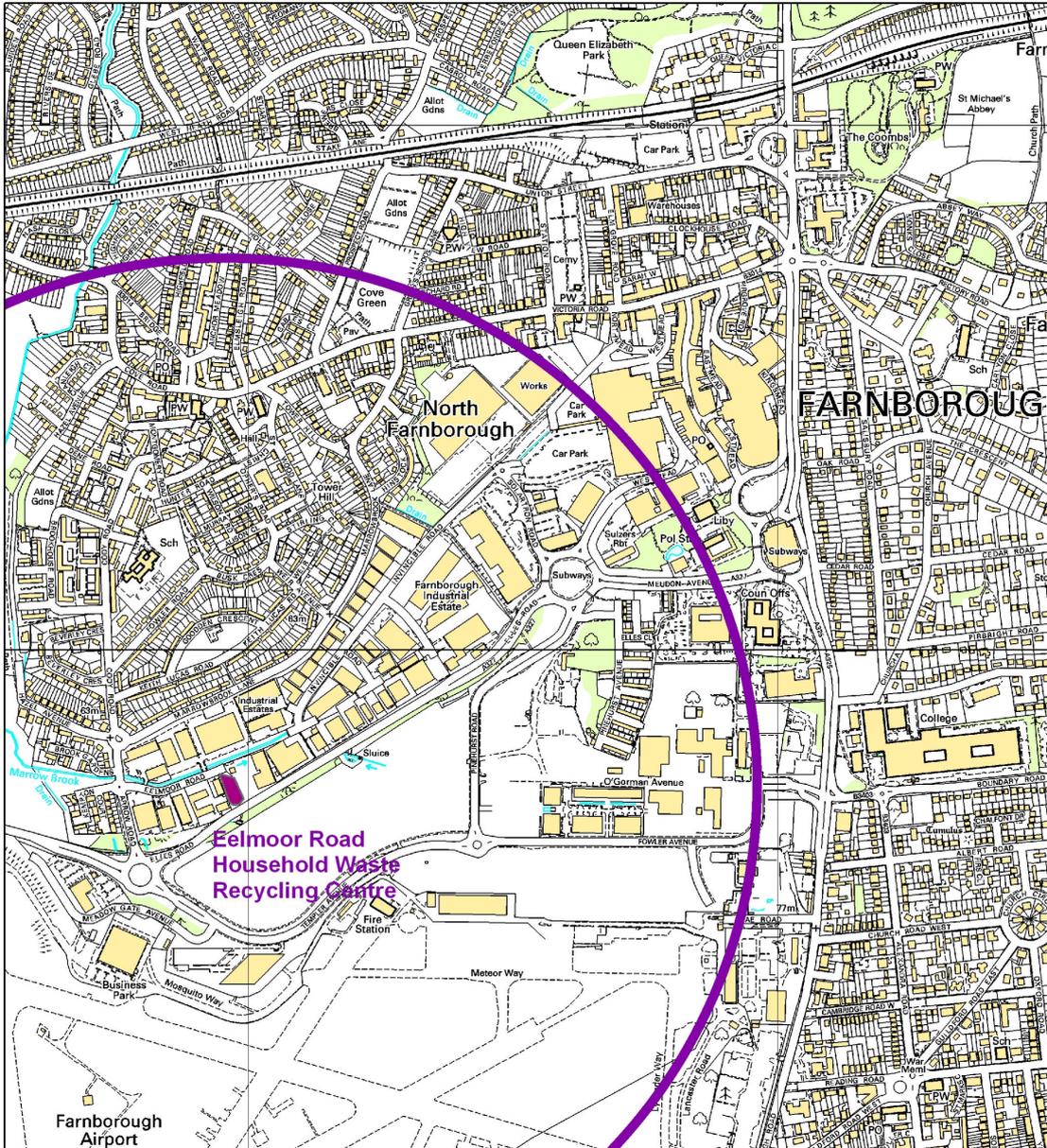
Impact	How will adverse effects on site integrity be avoided or mitigated?
	<p>SPD proposes a Public Realm Principle to encourage mature tree planting along main routes. This is likely to have a positive effect on biodiversity and provide opportunities for an improved 'green route' for walking (potential alternative recreational space).</p> <p>The Council will also consider alternative, complementary avoidance measures where these have been demonstrated to successfully prevent increased recreational impacts on the SPA associated with net additional dwellings. An example might include flatted development where pet ownership can be controlled.</p>
Traffic noise	<p>SPD proposes an Urban Design Principle that requires that new development should enhance pedestrian and cycle access. The SPD proposes accessibility improvements and encourages means of transport other than the car. It places significant emphasis on providing new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes. The SPD's sustainability appraisal found that overall the SPD results in clear strong positive impacts to pedestrian and cycle accessibility. This reduces the potential to increase traffic noise in the area from new development.</p> <p>Adverse effects from construction (i.e. highway work) would be unlikely due to proximity of town centre to the SPA.</p>
Atmospheric pollution	<p>SPD proposes an Urban Design Principle that requires that new development should enhance pedestrian and cycle access. SPD proposes accessibility improvements and encourages means of transport other than the car. It places significant emphasis on providing new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes. The SPD's sustainability appraisal found that overall the SPD results in clear strong positive impacts to pedestrian and cycle accessibility. This reduces the potential to increase atmospheric pollution in the area from new development.</p> <p>SPD proposes an Urban Design Principle that requires that the design of developments should seek to be sustainable in terms of energy use and construction. Atmospheric pollution from associated construction projects is controllable by other mechanisms.</p>
Fly tipping	<p>A civic amenity site is approximately 1km from the town centre, and it is unlikely that new residents would drive to dump rubbish on the heathlands (see Map 4.1 'Location of Eelmoor Road Household Waste Recycling Centre, Farnborough, Hampshire').</p>
Fire risk	<p>Natural England's draft Delivery Plan (2006) states that the formal playspace through the standard PPG17 open space requirements, may have some mitigating effect through the provision of alternative play areas. As stated above, it is estimated that approximately 5.9 ha of new recreation space will accompany the 885 new potential new homes under this SPD (includes equipped children's play space). Further, a large majority of these homes would be high density housing (1-2 bed flats) rather than family homes, meaning a relatively lower demand for recreational space for children.</p> <p>Any increased fire risk issue could also be addressed through the education programme and access management improvements discussed above.</p>
Pressure on water resources	<p>SPD proposes an Urban Design Principle which would have positive effects on biodiversity (relates to materials and design). The SPD's sustainability appraisal, found the SPD encourages sustainable design (mitigate against any increase pressure on water resources and air quality). The Sustainability Appraisal proposed mitigation is to refer to the protection of ground water in the SPD.</p>

4 Avoiding effects on site integrity

Impact	How will adverse effects on site integrity be avoided or mitigated?
	SPD states that developers should seek to consult the Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity to ensure Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems can be accommodated in new development wherever possible.
Impacts on heathland management	<p>SPD includes policies which have positive biodiversity impacts (related to landscape conservation and tree planting).</p> <p>Natural England's Area Based Delivery Project for the Thames Basin Heaths includes SSSI management and access Management. An access management review is forthcoming.</p>

Table 4.1 Avoidance and mitigation measures

Avoiding effects on site integrity 4



Farnborough Town Centre and Eelmoor Road Household Waste Recycling Centre



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 Rushmoor Borough Council
 100024264

Map 4.1 Location of Eelmoor Road Household Waste Recycling Centre, Farnborough, Hampshire

5 Report outcome

Report outcome

Box 2

Report summary:

The Farnborough Town Centre SPD provides for:

- Approximately 1662 dwellings between 2006-2016
- Achieving a vision of Farnborough town centre as a lively and vibrant shopping and leisure destination, with a high quality public realm
- Significant focus on town centre and brownfield regeneration

Possible impacts of The Farnborough Town Centre SPD:

- The SPD context area (town centre) lies within 5km of the boundary of the Thames Basin heaths (TBH) Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Urbanisation generally: more development, more activity etc
- Increased visits to Natura 2000 sites, possibly with associated disturbance of fauna and impacts on the habitats (esp. dog walking)
- Increased traffic, leading to increased air pollution, which could affect habitats/ species sensitive to air quality
- Increased water use which could affect water levels of water quality within the Natura 2000 sites

Planned avoidance mechanisms:

- 47% (777 net units) provided for by the SPD's proposed schemes have agreed measures in place to avoid an impact on the Natura 2000 sites
- 53% (885 net units) provided for by the SPD's proposed schemes require measures to avoid any adverse impact on site integrity.
- The Council will screen all applications for proposed developments made in accordance with the SPD (i.e. project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment).
- Farnborough Town Centre SPD states that any proposals for net residential units would need to accord with the Council's interim strategy and standards for protecting Natura 2000 sites
- Open space obligations mean approximately **5.9 ha** of new recreation space will accompany the 885 new potential new homes under this SPD
- The Council will also seek Section 106 contributions, from developers of major schemes within the town centre (either to provide their own alternative green space or to contribute to the improvement of open space at Southwood Woodland).
- Approximately **13 ha** of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space may be required for the 7 schemes (involving 50 or more units) potentially proposed under the SPD.
- There is potential capacity at Southwood Woodland, Tongham Pools, Holybush Hill, and Ethy Copse for these schemes.
- All residential redevelopment schemes involving a net gain in units will be required to contribute to an SPA education and access management fund.

- The Council is satisfied that impacts as a result of human disturbance, and the urbanisation effects of residential developments in the town centre, can be controlled by the avoidance measures identified (and other mechanisms agreed at the project stage).

Box 3

Report outcome:

This report assesses the likely significance of the impacts from the proposals in the proposed Farnborough Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (Rushmoor Borough Council, 2007) on two European designated sites of nature conservation importance (Natura 2000 sites):

- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), designated for woodlark, Dartford warbler and nightjar.
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for internationally important plant communities.

The crude screening assessment (see Chapter 2 'Likely significant effects') considered that the Farnborough Town Centre SPD is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site in Great Britain (in combination with other plans and projects), and therefore that an Appropriate Assessment was required.

Most of the SPD's policies relate to design standards and do not provide for development. The Key Development Area policies however provide for new residential development in the town centre (within 5km of the Natura 2000 sites).

Mitigation measures were designed in conjunction with the SPD's Sustainability Appraisal. It is proposed that these measures will cancel or minimise any adverse impacts of the development projects proposed in the SPD (due to mitigation at the project level) (see Chapter 4 'Avoiding effects on site integrity').

The relevant nature conservation agencies were consulted on the adequacy of this report, before a final decision could be made as to whether, for this SPD, "it can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects on the Natura 2000 site(s)".

5 Report outcome

Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy 1

PART 1: SOUTHWOOD WOODLAND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

CABINET 29 May 2007

DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT NO. PLN0724

Draft Guidance note on SPA Mitigation Land funding in relation to Planning Applications including those at: Westgate Aldershot; O’Gorman Avenue, Farnborough Business Park; Concept House, Farnborough; and Queensgate, Farnborough.

Introduction

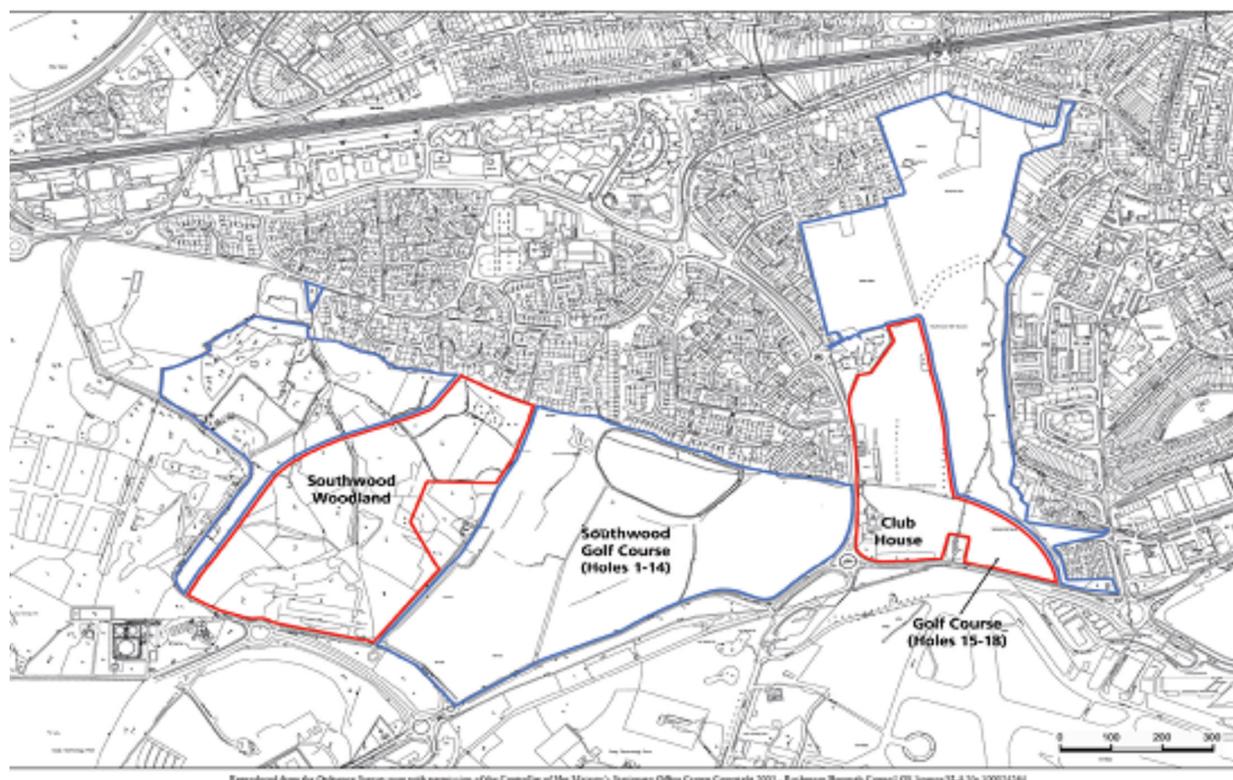
- 1.1 The improvement and refurbishment of land at Southwood Woodland to provide an accessible public recreation area is a project identified and planned by the Head of Community and endorsed by Cabinet of 5 September 2006. A part-time woodland officer has been appointed to oversee the project (approved by Cabinet 17 October 2006).
- 1.2 The Borough is located close to areas of lowland heath designated as component parts of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. These heaths are mainly military training areas owned by the MoD, nevertheless significant areas are open to the public for informal recreation and, in particular, dog-walking.
- 1.3 Natural England continues to raise objections to all proposals for residential development involving an increase in the number of dwelling units within 5km of the boundary of any part of the SPA : an area that encompasses all of Rushmoor Borough. This is on the basis that additional population being accommodated in this surrounding zone is considered likely to generate additional visitor numbers to the SPA, thereby increasing disturbance to the protected nature conservation interest of the SPA: namely ground-nesting birds – Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark. In order to overcome Natural England’s objections, they require that developers fund the provision of new public open space to provide an alternative to people visiting the SPA commensurate with the potential impact on the SPA of the proposed development. In this way, Natural England considers that the impact of the proposed development on the SPA would be mitigated.
- 1.4 On 19th February 2007 the report of the Assessor appointed to consider the implications of the TBHSPA and Natural England’s Draft Delivery Plan for future housing development in the region in the context of the South East Plan was published. This was discussed at a session of the South East Plan Examination in Public on 22nd March. The document represents to date the only comprehensive and impartial attempt to consider all the available evidence relating to the implications of the SPA for the region. It draws balanced and pragmatic conclusions regarding the manner in which the planning system can proceed to deliver housing through the offices of the competent authorities in compliance with the spirit and letter of the Habitats Directive. As such it represents a significant material consideration in the approach to planning applications and the NE position in the interim. It is therefore considered appropriate to reflect its recommendations in the approach taken by the Council.
- 1.5 In view of the current approach to residential planning applications taken by Natural England, the opportunity has arisen to fund the Southwood Woodland project by seeking Section 106 contributions from the developers of four major sites within the Borough. Natural England accepted,

1 Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy

prior to publication of the Assessor's report referred to at 1.4 above, that works at Southwood funded from these four developments will, in principle, result in them raising no objection to the envisaged levels of residential development on the sites. The four major development schemes in the Borough identified by the Council (as approved by Cabinet 26 September 2006) are: Westgate in Aldershot; and O'Gorman Avenue, Farnborough Business Park; and Concept House and Queensgate in Farnborough.

- 1.6** This document provides guidance in relation to the programme of works, the phases that can be completed on receipt of each tranche of funding, and the expected funding input related to numbers of proposed residential units on the four major residential sites.
- 1.7** In addition to the public recreation area, part of the land is earmarked to accommodate an extension to Southwood Golf Course that, in combination with the construction of a driving range, would release other land which could also be incorporated into the public access scheme. A planning application in respect of the Golf Course extension was submitted in January 2007 (ref.07/00059/FULPP).

The Southwood Woodland Land



Map 1.1 Map showing Woodland and Golf-Course area (not to scale)

- 1.8** The total land area at Southwood Woodland comprises 32.53ha all of which, when improved, will provide informal recreation space for walkers and their dogs. This is with the exception of the provision of four new golf holes/greens and fairway links to be threaded through the Woodland

Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy 1

the subject of the golf-course application. If implemented as proposed the golf-holes and fairways would cover 4.55ha, reducing the net accessible area of Southwood Woodland to 27.98ha (32.53-4.55ha). However, a further area of 5.85ha of land to the east of the existing golf-course adjoining Cove Brook would be released to provide additional publicly-accessible informal recreation space through the re-location of golf holes from the east side of Ively Road. The total new publicly accessible recreation land available for SPA mitigation purposes as a result of the improvements to Southwood Woodland and the golf course proposals combined would therefore be 33.83ha (27.98+5.85ha).

- 1.9** The golf course extension project is under review. If it does not proceed the potential available recreational space area will alter accordingly.

Project Summary

- 1.10** The programme of works will be in three phases and will be progressed subject to available funds.
- 1.11** The Woodland Officer has been appointed and funds of £380k will be set aside by the Council to cover the costs for the next 20 years.

Phase One – Make Safe (Jan 07 to Dec 07)	Total Estimated Funds req.
Tree survey and maintenance works	£220k
Removal of hazardous concrete structures	
Clearance of drainage ditches and water courses	
Clearance of litter and rubbish	
Removal of barbed wire and corrugated metal sheets	
(1 st year salary of Woodland Officer).	

Phase Two - Groundworks (Jan 08 to Dec 08)	Total Estimated Funds req.
Develop boundary with improved fencing, vegetation and bunds to prevent unwanted vehicles and direct public access to reduce possible annoyance to local residents	£220k
Install new paths and boardwalks for both cycling and walking	
(2 nd year salary of Woodland Officer)	
Clearance of regenerated secondary storey (predominantly birch) to provide woodland glade and encourage heath areas	£220k
Provide additional car parking points	

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Phase Three- Improve amenities (Jan 09 to July 09)	Total Estimated Funds req.
Install information boards	£270k
Develop adventure play areas and BMX track	
Nature conservation/environmental works (bird/bat boxes etc)	
Tree planting to regenerate native species	
(Third year salary of Woodland Officer)	

On-Going Cost

Remaining salary for 17 years of Woodland Officer £320k

Total Cost £1.25million

Contributions from the four designated sites.

- 1.12** Natural England's draft Delivery Plan standards suggest, as a precautionary starting position to be reviewed, the provision of alternative green space for public access based on figures of 16ha per 1000 head of occupants of new developments lying within 2km of the nearest SPA boundary ('Zone B') and 8ha per 1000 head of occupants of new developments lying between 2 and 5 km of the nearest SPA boundary ('Zone C'). The initial approach to assessing the number of occupants of any proposed development by Natural England has been an assumption across the board that the occupancy of all residential units will average 2.4 persons.
- 1.13** The Assessor's Report concludes that "... the DDP is unsound in its present form, due to its misapplication of the requirements of European and UK legislation, its weak evidential base, its disproportionate blanket inclusion of all housing development within 5 kilometres of the SPA, its excessive requirement for SANGs and its failure to give weight to other avoidance and mitigation measures, particularly access management."
- 1.14** The Assessor accepts the principle of contribution of SANGs to the avoidance of adverse impact on the SPA. He recommends it should form part of the avoidance measures in respect of all residential developments between 400m and 1km of the SPA and those of 10 or more dwellings between 1km and 5km travel distance of the SPA; and should be provided at a scale of 8ha per 1000 population.

Westgate

- 1.15** Planning permission for the redevelopment of the Westgate site in central Aldershot was granted on 22nd December 2006. A financial contribution of £145,956 was offered by way of a Section 106 obligation towards the Southwood Woodland works and accepted by Natural England as appropriate. The scheme incorporates 445 residential units consisting entirely of flats (149 X 1-bed and 296 X 2-bed units). Based on the 2.4 persons per unit estimate, this would equate to a total occupancy of 1068 people for the scheme. Set against the Assessor's recommended standard this would imply improvement to 8.54ha of the Southwood land.

Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy 1

O’Gorman Avenue : Farnborough Business Park

- 1.16** An application by Redrow Homes to redevelop this site to the north of Farnborough Aerodrome is currently before the Council, but has yet to be determined. The application relates to a residential scheme of 478 units, comprising 404 apartments and 74 small houses. Based on the 2.4 persons per unit estimate, this would equate to a total occupancy of 1147 people for the scheme. Set against the Assessor’s recommended standard this would imply improvement to 9.18ha of the Southwood land.
- 1.17** A financial contribution of £459,000 by way of a s106 obligation was offered in respect of works to the Southwood land and on this basis Natural England have raised no objection to the proposal. The lower contribution secured in respect of the Westgate scheme reflects the fact that the Council are the joint landowners of the Westgate site; that the Council are contributing the land at Southwood Woodland to provide the new publicly accessible green space; and have already done much preparatory work on the masterplanning of the Southwood Project.

Concept House

- 1.18** A proposal by Fairview Homes to redevelop this vacant office site on the edge of Farnborough Town Centre has now received planning permission. The application relates to a residential scheme of 253 units comprising 231 flats (56 X 1-bed and 175 X 2-bed units) and 22 houses. Based on the 2.4 persons per unit estimate, this would equate to a total occupancy of 607 people for the scheme. Set against the Assessor’s recommended standard this would imply improvement to 4.86ha of the Southwood land.
- 1.19** A financial contribution of £231,956 by way of a s106 obligation has been offered in respect of works to the Southwood land.

Queen’s Gate Site

- 1.20** The Queen’s Gate site (H6 in the Local Plan) is allocated for a mix of residential and employment use. It is not currently the subject of a planning application. The Council’s Planning Brief for the site (published October 2003) indicates that the residential development potential would be 200 dwelling units as a result of a number of clearly identified site-specific constraints. Potential developers are preparing a master plan in the context of short and medium term plans for existing buildings within the site. A 200 unit scheme set against the Assessor’s recommendation would contribute in the region of £200,000 towards improvement of 3.84ha of Southwood land. Given the specifics of any proposal for this site have yet to take shape this estimate may be subject to revision.

Conclusions

- 1.21** Based on the above analysis, the three major development sites which are already being brought forward could together contribute to the improvement of 22.58ha of Southwood land for public access purposes. This can be accommodated within the 33.83ha of land that is available to address the aspirations of NE as qualified by the Assessor’s report. The remaining 11.25ha has the potential to attract contributions in relation to a further 586 residential units, in excess of 200 of which may come forward on the Queen’s Gate site. Early discussions with regard to the Queen’s Gate site indicate that a first phase development proposal for in the region of 270 units may be the subject

1 Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy

of a planning application. Should this be the case it is considered prudent to set aside sufficient of the Southwood land to attract a contribution in respect of up to 286 units for Queen's Gate with the capacity for a further 200 being held in reserve for later phases on this site or other development proposals which may come forward and require SANGs provision. This arrangement would of course be subject to consultation with NE.

- 1.22** The four identified proposed major residential developments in the Borough as currently envisaged would contribute the majority of the estimated costs of the Southwood Woodland improvement project. The approved Westgate scheme and the Redrow Homes and Concept House schemes currently being considered by the Council would make available £836,912, which would provide funds exceeding the costs of both Phases 1 and 2 of the Southwood project and ensure the opening of the informal recreation land to the public to a timetable commensurate with the likely occupation of the residential units to be created by these developments. Depending upon the scale of residential development sought for the Queen's Gate site (and any others which might come forward seeking to contribute towards 'spare' potential improvement land) additional funds of between £192,000 and £562,500 could then become available. This would cover the remainder of the cost of improving the amenities of the Southwood land (Phase 3).
- 1.23** The capacity for improvement of the Southwood land has been re-assessed on the basis of the 8ha space standards suggested by the Assessor's report. NE have acknowledged that their DDP standards, together with the approach of seeking provision of new public informal recreational open space to provide an alternative to the recreational use of the SPA, are a precautionary response. The EiP panel will consider the Assessor's report and the extent to which his recommendations should inform the Policies of the South East Plan. Accordingly, the matter should be reviewed regularly both to assess how effective the measures are in alleviating recreational pressure on the SPA and to reflect further developments in the EiP process.
- 1.24** An implication of the Assessor's report is that the Southwood land may have surplus capacity over and above that required in relation to the four identified major development sites. There will of course be on-going maintenance requirements and the need for further enhancements to maintain the attractiveness of the Southwood land to users. Monitoring of the use of the Southwood land would also be an important task requiring funding, since it would help provide information on whether or not the land was effective in diverting visitors who would otherwise use the SPA for recreational purposes.

Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy 1

PART 2: SOUTHWOOD WOODLAND- USE FOR MITIGATION

CABINET

DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNITY

26 SEPTEMBER 2006

AND ENVIRONMENT

PLANNING REPORT NO. PLN 0649

SOUTHWOOD WOODLAND – USE FOR MITIGATING RESIDENTIAL IMPACT ON SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.25 This report identifies four residential development sites that might use Southwood Woodland to mitigate their impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

2. BACKGROUND

1.26 In February this year, Cabinet considered a report on the SPA. Whilst taking issue with English Nature's blanket approach, that **all** residential development in the borough will have an adverse impact on the SPA, the Council has always recognised that large schemes are likely to have an impact and therefore some form of mitigation would be required.

1.27 The opportunities for mitigation in a borough as compact as Rushmoor are limited. According to current criteria, Southwood Woodland is the only significant practical opportunity. At its last meeting, Cabinet agreed a programme of works for the improvement, management and maintenance of the woodland. It also agreed that this work should be part funded by contributions from those developers using the woodland for mitigation.

3. SUGGESTED SITES

1.28 The sites being assigned to use Southwood Woodland for mitigation are considered to have significant regenerative benefit to the borough as a whole. It is important to note that their inclusion in this list does not prejudice the proper consideration of planning applications when submitted. It does not guarantee permission, rather it recognises the principle of residential development on these sites.

1.29 The sites suggested are:

- Westgate, Wellington Avenue, Aldershot
- Former Concept House Site, Farnborough Road, Farnborough
- Queensgate, Farnborough Road, Farnborough (former MoD land close by the Queens Roundabout), and
- Part of former Factory Site, Farnborough Aerodrome.

1.30 This is seen as an initial list and will be kept under review if it is found that proposals are unacceptable or considerably delayed.

1 Southwood Woodland Mitigation Strategy

- 1.31** The Aldershot Urban Extension has not been included because Defence Estates is looking to bring forward suitable MoD land to mitigate against this proposal.
- 1.32** Contributions have already been agreed on the WestGate development and the cost of the remaining improvement works at Southwood will be apportioned across the other three sites depending on the size of the development site.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.33** It is recommended that the four sites identified in this report are assigned to provide contributions towards improvements to Southwood Woodland as mitigation for their potential impact on the SPA.

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Background Papers

- *Cabinet report no. PLN0610*
- *Cabinet report no. COMM0611*