

# Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment Bracknell Town Centre Re-development June 2010



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# 1 Introduction

## Appropriate Assessment

**1.1** This report provides an updated Appropriate Assessment<sup>(1)</sup> undertaken by Bracknell Forest Council, as the local planning authority and competent body, in respect of the application (10/00434/EXT). This is an application for a new planning permission for the Bracknell town centre redevelopment with periods for implementation extended from that under the existing planning permission.

**1.2** Natural England considers that the application is likely to have a significant effect on an area of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and, as it is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, an Appropriate Assessment has been deemed necessary.<sup>(2)</sup>

**1.3** Through a pre-application scoping exercise before the current application was submitted, it was established that there was the need to review the Appropriate Assessment of 2006. This is because agreed Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance and Mitigation standards have changed since 2007.<sup>(3)</sup>

**1.4** The competent authority can only agree to extend the timescale of the existing planning permission once it has ascertained that this will not adversely affect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.<sup>(4)</sup>

## Town Centre Redevelopment Proposals

**1.5** Bracknell town is the largest settlement in the borough of Bracknell Forest. It is located at the centre of the Thames Valley, 25 miles west of London and approximately 20 minutes drive from both the M3 and M4 motorways. There are good rail links direct to London and the west.

**1.6** An Outline Planning Application to redevelop the town centre (application number 04/01129/OUT) was submitted to BFC in November 2004 by Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (BRP) in conjunction with the Council. The application area is described as: "*Land within Bracknell Town Centre bounded by Millennium Way (A329) to the north, Church Road to the East (A3095), Bracknell Railway Station to the south and the Peel Centre to the west.*" The centre of the area is National Grid Reference SU867693 and the total area covered by the Outline Planning Application is 39.8 hectares (398,000 sqm). This outline application was approved on 21 December 2006 with an accompanying S106 Agreement dated 19 December 2006.

**1.7** A subsequent application (07/00623/OUT) "*Section 73 to allow demolition of buildings and redevelopment within Bracknell Town Centre for a mix of uses including retail use, food and drink uses, leisure uses, residential accommodation, business uses, police station, magistrates court, British Legion building, civic facilities including library and Council offices,*

1 An update of Bracknell Forest Council Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment: An Assessment of Bracknell Town Centre Re-development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (January 2006)

2 See the letter from Natural England dated 7 January 2005 in Appendix 1.

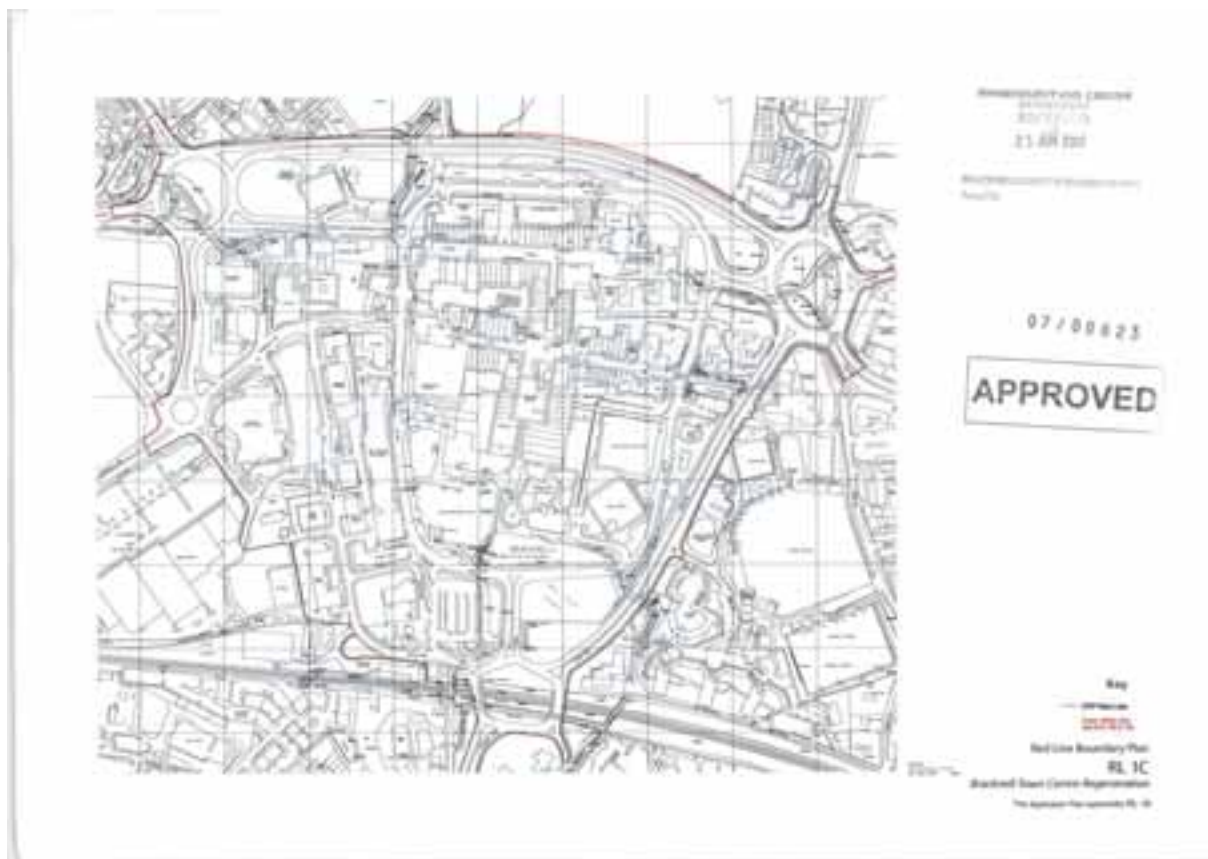
3 See Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Plan (2009).

4 The ODPM / Defra Circular (ODPM 06/2005, Defra 01/2005) relating to Planning Policy Statement 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) (ODPM, August 2005) defines the site integrity as: "*.... the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.*"

community health centre, hotels, education facilities, energy centre, new bus station, car parking spaces, new means of access, public open space, associated servicing, highway works and integrated transport measures, landscaping and improvements to the public realm, without compliance with conditions 1, 2, 6, 9, 13, 19, 27, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 63 and 67 of outline planning permission 04/01129/OUT." was approved 09 November 2007 with a s106 agreement dated 05 November 2007.

**1.8** The application (10/00434/EXT) was submitted on 25 June 2010 as "Demolition of buildings and redevelopment within Bracknell Town Centre for a mix of uses including retail use, food and drink uses, leisure uses, residential accommodation, business uses, police station, magistrates court, British Legion building, civic facilities including library and Council offices, community health centre, hotels, education facilities, energy centre, new bus station, car parking spaces, new means of access, public open space, associated servicing, highway works and integrated transport measures, landscaping and improvements to the public realm without compliance with conditions 1, 2, 6, 9, 13, 19, 27, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 63 and 67 of outline planning permission 04/01129/OUT."

**1.9** The figure below shows the application area in more detail.



**Bracknell Town Centre Boundary Plan**

**1.10** This Appropriate Assessment is part of the consideration of application 10/00434/EXT. The Council approved a Masterplan for the town centre in 2002 and this was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in September 2002. The redevelopment proposal is considered to be compatible with the principles of the approved SPG, after extensive consultation with residents, community and business groups, environmental organisations, surrounding

authorities and government departments. The proposals are also consistent with the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy, produced by the Bracknell Forest Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership). In June 2008, the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) was published and contains the following policy on Bracknell Town Centre:

### **Policy CS3: Bracknell Town Centre**

Development will be permitted which contributes to the vision and function of Bracknell town centre by one or more of the following:

- i. contributing to the comprehensive delivery of the whole of the town centre;
- ii. providing a mix of uses including retail, housing, employment, recreational, leisure, cultural and health facilities;
- iii. serving the comparison and specialist shopping needs of the residential population of the Borough along with a substantial working population within Bracknell Town;
- iv. providing for the convenience shopping needs of the resident population in and adjoining the centre;
- v. contributing to the town centre role as a transport hub for the Borough;
- vi. creating a high quality distinctive well designed environment.

**1.11** The resulting £750 million regeneration scheme represents a comprehensive development of the town centre to provide a vibrant new heart for the borough. The re-development will include new retail areas, bars, cafes, restaurants, entertainment and leisure, new civic buildings (including library, police station etc) a new bus station, significant transport improvements and extensive public space.

**1.12** At this stage of the application the type of tenure is yet to be established although it is anticipated that there will be a mix of private market, key worker and affordable accommodation.

### **Purpose of an Updated Bracknell Town Centre Re-development Appropriate Assessment**

**1.13** Due to the current economic climate, more planning permissions than ever before are failing to be implemented within the time limits imposed. This is a national picture. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has therefore introduced a temporary change to allow developers to apply to extend the time limits. This applies to all permissions (including outline) which were granted on or before 1st October 2009 and, at the time of the application, have not yet commenced. Only one extension of time is allowed.

**1.14** The Bracknell Town Centre Re-development was granted Planning Permissions for 04/01129/OUT on 21 December 2006 and for 07/00623/OUT on 09 November 2007. To date, the development has not commenced.

**1.15** The Bracknell Town Centre Appropriate Assessment that was undertaken in January 2006 concluded (with the agreement of Natural England) that sufficient mitigation measures could be put in place to ensure that there would be no adverse impact on the integrity of the

Thames Basin Heaths SPA.<sup>(5)</sup> Due to the following changes in policy and guidance since 2006, a new Appropriate Assessment is required to ensure that Thames Basin Heaths SPA mitigation and avoidance measures comply with current standards:

BFC Core Strategy DPD (February 2008) Policy CS14: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

The evidence base in support of the former South East Plan (May 2009) Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Plan (February 2009) endorsed by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board.

BFC Thames Basin Heaths Technical Background Document (June 2007).

BFC Limiting the Impact of Development SPD (July 2007).

Other evidence and emerging guidance.

**1.16** The Appropriate Assessment has been prepared on the basis of information currently available on the nature of the re-development in relation to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Professional judgement has been applied to interpret this information within the context of current guidance.

## Habitats Regulations and Appropriate Assessment

**1.17** The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 2010, referred to as the “Habitats Regulations” implement in Great Britain the requirements of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, referred to as the “Habitats Directive” (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and protect areas classified under the EC Wild Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC). The Regulations aim to protect a network of sites in the UK that have rare or important habitats and species in order to safeguard biodiversity.

**1.18** Under the EC Birds Directive, Member States are required to take special measures to conserve the habitats of certain rare species of birds (listed in Annex I of the Directive) and regularly occurring migratory birds. In particular each Member State is required to classify the most suitable areas of such habitats as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). This is designed to protect wild birds, and to provide sufficient diversity of habitats for all species so as to maintain populations at an ecologically sound level. All Bird Directive SPAs will also be part of the Natura 2000 network under article 3(1) of the Habitats Directive.

**1.19** Under the Habitats Regulations, competent authorities have a duty to ensure that all the activities they regulate have no adverse effect on the integrity of any of the Natura 2000 sites. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires the competent authority to assess the possible effects of the various proposals on, or potentially affecting, any Natura 2000 sites. This includes screening for potential impacts on European sites. If there is a probability or a risk that there will be significant effects (having regard to the site’s conservation objectives) then the plan or project must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment of its implications on the site (Regulation 61(1)). In the light of the conclusions of the assessment the competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned (Regulation 61(5)).

5 According to the Habitats Regulations 2010.

**1.20** It is not for the decision-taker to be satisfied that the proposal would harm the site, to require the application or appeal to be refused. It is for the decision-taker to consider the likely and reasonably foreseeable effects and to ascertain that the proposal **will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the site** before it may grant permission.

**1.21** Extract from The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2010

*Assessment of implications for European sites and European offshore marine sites 61.—(1) A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—*

*(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and*

*(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site,*

*must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.*

*(5) In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 62 (considerations of overriding public interest), the competent authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or the European offshore marine site (as the case may be).*

## Screening

**1.22** Screening is required to examine the likely effects of a project or plan, either alone or in-combination with other projects or plans, upon a Natura 2000 site. The screening considers whether it can be objectively concluded that the effects will not be significant and fulfils the requirements of Regulation 61(1).

**1.23** For this Appropriate Assessment, the screening was based upon correspondence from Natural England<sup>(6)</sup> which represents their response to the outline planning application for the re-development of Bracknell Town Centre. The following key points are made by Natural England:

Within the SPA, the closest receptor site of relevance to this re-development scheme is Broadmoor and Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI. The car park at The Look Out provides the closest vehicle access point to the Broadmoor and Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI and lies approx. 3.2km (straight line distance) from the town centre.

The proposed additional residential dwellings, alone and in-combination with other developments around the SPA, are expected to lead to an increase in recreational pressure. Recreational pressure can have a significant adverse impact on the Annex I birds for which the SPA has been designated. Increases in recreation pressure on heathland have been shown to occur from residential developments over several kilometres distance from a designated site.

The Annex I birds of interest are Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*).

The re-development outlined in the current application is not directly connected with the management of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA for nature conservation.

6 See letter from Natural England dated 7 January 2005 in Appendix 1.



**1.24** Natural England are therefore of the opinion that the significant adverse effects from this development will come from recreation, as they anticipate this will increase as a result of the town centre re-development.

In the light of Natural England’s representations the Council has formed the view that it would be prudent to assume that there is the probability of a risk of likely significant impacts. This has regard to the site’s conservation objectives. Therefore, this screening exercise has identified need for an Appropriate Assessment. This Appropriate Assessment will focus on examining whether the residential component of the town centre development will lead to increased recreation, and how this may in turn significantly impact on the protected Annex I bird species.

### Steps in Appropriate Assessment

**1.25** The following Appropriate Assessment consists of five steps as outlined below:

Steps	Task
1	Collect adequate information to complete the assessment – to include a description of the plan and the baseline conditions of the Natura 2000 site.
2	Predict the likely effects of the plan.
3	Assess whether the predicted effects will have adverse effects on the integrity of the site, as defined by the conservation objectives.
4	Propose and assess impact avoidance measures to cancel or minimise the potential adverse effects, including a timescale and mechanisms through which the measures will be secured, implemented and monitored.
5	Consult the relevant nature conservation bodies and the public.

**Table 1.1 Steps in Appropriate Assessment**

**1.26** This Appropriate Assessment focuses on the effects of the Bracknell Town Centre Re-development on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The assessment does not consider effects on other Natura 2000 sites as they were ‘screened out’ during the screening stage (see above).

## 2 Step 1: Collection of Adequate Information to Identify Adverse Effects

### Characteristics Which May Affect the Site

**2.1** The plan for the re-development of Bracknell town centre could potentially give rise to an adverse impact on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

**2.2** New residential development within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will lead to an increased population surrounding the SPA which could increase the impact of recreation, including fragmentation, disturbance and vandalism on the SPA.

### In Combination Effect

**2.3** The Appropriate Assessment must be considered both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects because a series of individually modest impacts may in-combination result in a significant impact. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive addresses this by requiring AA to take into account the combination of effects from other plans or projects. The intention of this combination provision is to take account of cumulative impacts, and these will often only occur over time.

**2.4** Guidance from the EC<sup>(7)</sup> indicates that the in-combination assessment should only include completed development proposals and development plans if their impacts on the site lead to a continuing loss of integrity.

**2.5** The screening exercise identified that the relevant plans with the potential to affect the SPA are those which provide residential dwellings, which in turn increase the population surrounding the SPA and increase recreation on the heathland. The (proposed) plans, that are considered likely to affect the SPA, are:

- The Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008)
- The Bracknell Forest Site Allocations Development Plan Document (draft)
- The Bracknell Forest Amen Corner Supplementary Planning Document (March 2010)
- The Bracknell Forest Warfield Supplementary Planning Document (draft)
- Other Thames Basin Heaths affected Local Authority's Local Development Frameworks

**2.6** With the revocation of the South East Plan (2009), it is important to note that the evidence base in support of the South East Plan policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths SPA is still relevant and a material consideration in policy development and when considering applications.

**2.7** Bracknell Forest Council is also involved in partnership working through the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership. A Delivery Framework has been produced by the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) to guide planning authorities in the local implementation of avoidance and mitigation measures, and ensure a consistent approach to mitigation across the affected area.

7 European Communities, 2000

## Core Strategy DPD

**2.8** Bracknell Forest Council's adopted Core Strategy DPD includes Policy CS14:Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, which states:

### **Core Policy CS14: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area**

The Council will carry out an assessment of the effects of a development proposal on the conservation objectives of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) where there is a risk of the proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the site, either alone or in-combination with other proposals. Proposals leading to a net increase in residential dwellings within a straight-line distance of 5 kilometres from the SPA boundary are likely to have a significant effect. The Council will not permit development which, either alone or in-combination with other development, has an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SPA.

Development outside of the 400 metre zone will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it can remove any adverse effect by contributing towards avoidance and mitigation measures in line with the SPA Technical Background Document.

The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to the approval of the development.

**2.9** The Thames Basin Heaths Technical Background Document contains both the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy and the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy,<sup>(8)</sup> designed to ensure that residential development between 400 metres and 5 kilometres can go ahead without an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. The consideration of bespoke solutions is also addressed within the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. Natural England has agreed that they will have no cause to object to applications for residential development where they are in conformity with the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.

## Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)

**2.10** The Site Allocations DPD will detail the site allocations for both housing and commercial development. This DPD will be accompanied by its own Appropriate Assessment, ensuring that any potential adverse effects are fully avoided and mitigated. This process has already begun, with the rejection of suggested housing site allocations within 400m of the SPA.

## Amen Corner Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

**2.11** The Amen Corner SPD was adopted in April 2010. An Appropriate Assessment of the SPD was undertaken and consulted on with the result that the SPD now contains the Development Principle AC7: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Avoidance and mitigation measures have been agreed which allows the local authority to conclude that the development will not give rise to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.

8 See also BFC Limiting the Impact of Development Supplementary Planning Document (July 2007).

## **Warfield Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

**2.12** Work on the Warfield SPD has now commenced. Core Strategy Policy CS5: Land North of Whitegrove and Quelm Park (Parish of Warfield), specifically requires measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the SPD will be accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment.

### **Other Thames Basin Heaths affected Local Authority's Local Development Frameworks.**

**2.13** Each of the affected local authorities has or is in the process of producing a Core Strategy DPD, which will be accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment identifying potential adverse impacts and, where possible, avoiding or removing these.

**2.14** If all of the LDF policies and appropriate assessments can conclude no adverse effect, each local authority has addressed its own effects arising from an increased population.

## **Characteristics and Description of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA**

**2.15** The Thames Basin Heaths SPA was proposed in October 2000, and full SPA status was approved on 9 March 2005. It is an example of a heathland landscape based within a highly active economy. It consists of a composite site covering an area of some 8,274 hectares, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Hampshire in the west, to Berkshire in the north, through to Surrey.

**2.16** The habitat consists of both dry and wet heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation.

## **Conservation Objectives**

**2.17** The Directive requires Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken *'in view of the site's nature conservation objectives'* and the European Commission states that the purpose of the Natura 2000 network, which includes the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, is *"to preserve biodiversity by maintaining or restoring natural habitats of Community importance"*.

**2.18** Conservation objectives are a statement of measures which are related to the maintenance or restoration of the individual site, and its contribution towards the favourable conservation status of the natural habitats and/or populations of species of wild fauna and flora for which the site has been selected. The conservation status of a species is defined as favourable when the population range and natural habitats of the species are stable or increasing and population dynamics indicate the species is able to maintain itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitat. Similarly, the conservation status of a habitat is favourable when the range, structure and function, and typical species, thereof, are stable or increasing, i.e. there is sufficient geographical extent of the habitat area to sustain the selected species.

**2.19** Favourable Conservation Status is a trend-based assessment based on the population as a whole across Europe and not specifically on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

**2.20** Condition assessment is a concept applied to SSSIs rather than SPAs. A condition assessment is an expert judgement of the condition of a site (that is, a site unit) at a moment in time, based upon available information on defined attributes (which may be biological, chemical or physical), for the notified features on the unit at the date of assessment.

**2.21** This is relevant when carrying out an AA which explores the impact of a plan or project on site integrity. For example, this can conclude that where existing pressures do not have a current, readily-measurable impact on condition, but the appropriate assessment has nevertheless identified the risk of such effects becoming manifest in the future, the existing pressure is threatening the ability of the site to 'maintain' favourable condition in the long term and a conclusion of 'no adverse effect on integrity' cannot be recorded. In these cases, the condition assessment may currently be recorded as favourable.

## Qualifying Species

**2.22** This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive as it is used by 1% or more of the Great Britain population of species of European Importance listed in Annex I of the Directive. During the breeding season this includes:

Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*),  
Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)  
Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)

**2.23** The SPA supports the second largest concentration of Dartford warbler in Great Britain, the third largest number of woodlark, and the fourth largest population of breeding nightjars.

**2.24** The conservation objective for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA is "***Subject to natural change, to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of Annex 1 bird species of European importance, with particular reference to lowland heathland and rotationally managed plantation.***"

**2.25** The above conservation objective can be broken down into its separate components to assist with the Appropriate Assessment and impact prediction:

To maintain, in favourable condition, lowland heathland and rotationally managed plantation to provide habitats for Annex I breeding bird populations of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

To maintain the geographical extent of the habitat area.

To sustain and improve population numbers of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

## Non Qualifying Species of Interest

**2.26** Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) and kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) (all Annex I species) occur in non-breeding numbers of less than 1% of the GB population.

## Seasonality

**2.27** The breeding season of the protected bird species occurs predominantly in April, May, June and July, but an extended season can occur between February and August, therefore this is when the ground-nesting species are most vulnerable to disturbance. The breeding season for nightjar occurs from mid-May through to August, with a peak in June; woodlark nest from March until July, but commence territorial activity from early February; the Dartford warbler generally breeds between April and August. Territorial activity may begin as early as February and, as yet, there is no indication of how climate change might affect the breeding season.

## SSSI Condition

**2.28** The two areas of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA that lie nearest to Bracknell town centre are the Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths SSSI and the Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths (also known as Wildmoor Heath) SSSI. The condition of these SSSIs is shown below.

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	65.61%
Unfavourable recovering	29.78%
Unfavourable no change	0%
Unfavourable declining	4.61%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

**Table 2.1 Condition of Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths SSSI (June 2010)**

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	0%
Unfavourable recovering	100%
Unfavourable no change	0%
Unfavourable declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

**Table 2.2 Condition of Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths (also known as Wildmoor Heath) SSSI (June 2010)**

## Ecological Requirements of the Qualifying Species

**Dartford warbler** - Large unbroken dwarf-shrub layer of heather with scattered gorse; abundance of shrub layer invertebrates; mix of heather trees and gorse amongst heathland vegetation; reduction or displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

**Nightjar** - Abundance of night flying insects; open ground with predominantly low vegetation bare patches and sparse woodland/scrub cover; reduction or displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

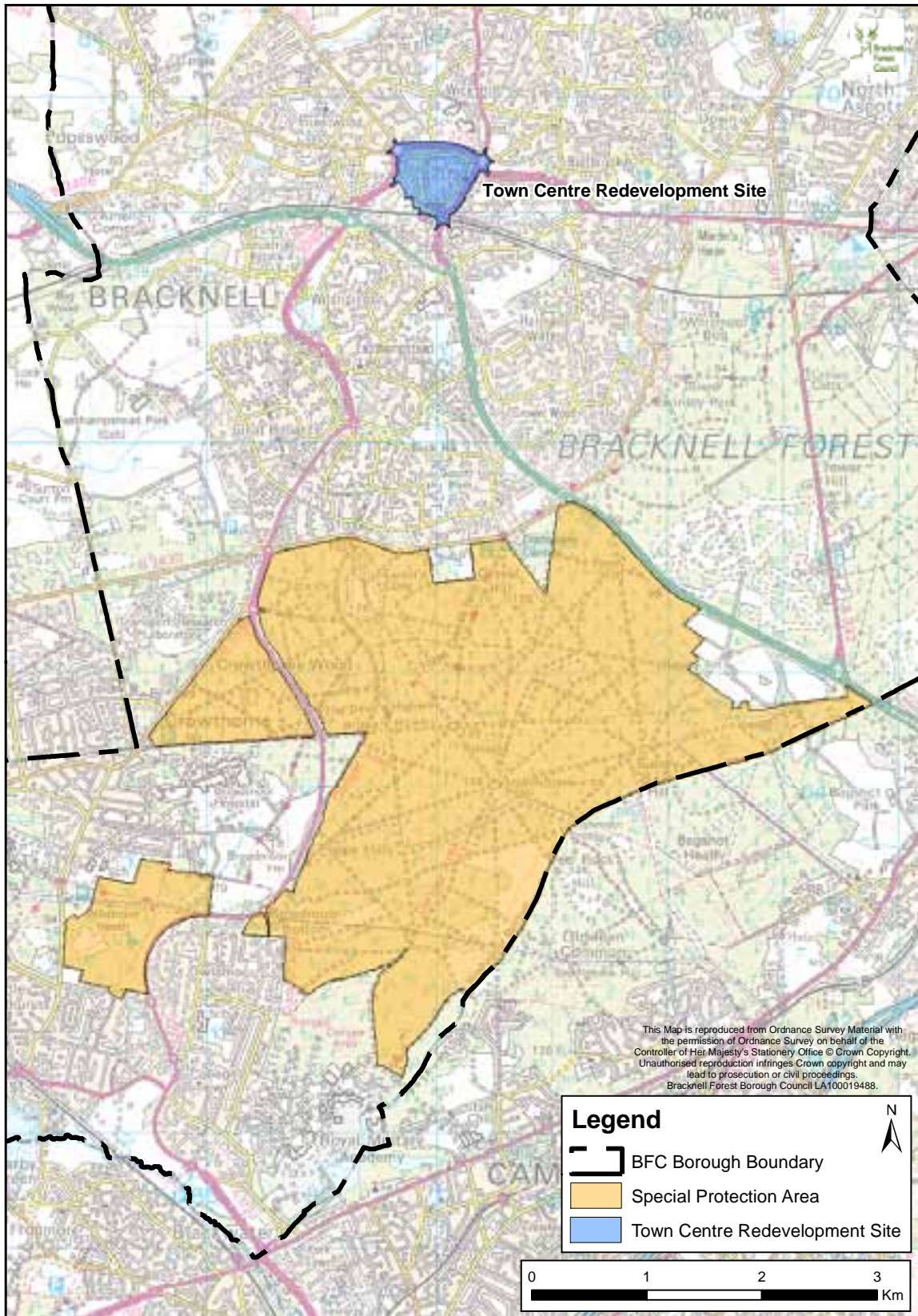
**Woodlark** - Abundance of ground surface invertebrates; mix of shrub/tree cover, short-medium vegetation and bare ground; reduction or displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

**2.29** More detail can be found in Appendix 2.

## Relationship Between Bracknell Town Centre and the SPA

**2.30** The Thames Basin Heaths SPA covers 12.2% of the Borough of Bracknell Forest, a total of 1,333 hectares. This is 15.9% of the entire Thames Basin Heaths SPA and consists of heathland and mixed plantation (1,247 hectares of which lies within Bracknell Forest Borough) and a smaller, unconnected area (86 hectares).

**2.31** The closest access point with parking to the SPA is the Look Out Discovery Centre. The straight line distance from this access point to the town centre is 3.2 kilometres, with a road travel distance of 4 kilometres. The relationship between the two locations is shown on the map below.



**The Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the Bracknell Town Centre Redevelopment**



## 3 Step 2: Predict the Likely Effects of the Town Centre Redevelopment

### Site Integrity

**3.1** Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that: *“In the light of the conclusions of the [appropriate] assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.”*

**3.2** A commonly used definition of site integrity is given in DCLG circular 06/2005 (para. 20) and the European guidance on the provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats Directive’. This defines site integrity as: *“the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.”*

**3.3** European guidance goes on to describe the integrity of a site as involving its ecological functions, and the decision as to whether it is adversely affected should focus on, and be limited to, the site’s conservation objectives<sup>(9)</sup>.

**3.4** As discussed in the previous section, the concept of favourable conservation status and the conservation objectives both provide parameters within which an assessment can be made. It is therefore necessary to use this information to predict or forecast what would happen to the SPA habitats and bird populations if the Bracknell town centre re-development were to go ahead.

### Description of Potential Adverse Effects on Site Integrity

**3.5** A range of potential effects on the SPA have been identified.<sup>(10)</sup> The potential significant effects for this specific plan are found to be the following:

- Fragmentation within heathland
- Predation
- Enrichment
- Disturbance
- Trampling

**3.6** Previous consultation responses from Natural England on Appropriate Assessments undertaken by BFC did not raise any additional potential effects.

### Plan Characteristics Which Could Lead to Adverse Effects

**3.7** Additional residential development within the proximity of the SPA has the potential to increase the population surrounding the site, which could in turn lead to an increase in recreational and urbanisation impacts. Various visitor surveys<sup>(11)</sup> have indicated people will travel relatively long distances to use such sites for recreational purposes. As a result, the impacts from developments up to several kilometres away from the site must also be considered.

9 EC, 2000

10 Underhill-Day (2005)

11 The most relevant being Liley, Jackson & Underhill-Day (2005)

Natural England's advice based upon the results of visitor surveys on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA is there will be a significant impact arising from new residential development which falls within a 5km straight line distance from the boundary of the SPA.

**3.8** The Bracknell Town Centre re-development is estimated to bring forward an estimated 1000 new dwellings and a mix of employment, retail, health and leisure facilities. This development will come forward in accordance with the Core Strategy DPD Policy CS3 which proposes redevelopment of the urban area. The main impact resulting from the implementation of the redevelopment is

An increase in population leading to an increase in recreational activity.

### **Projected Population Arising from the Town Centre Redevelopment**

**3.9** The outline proposals in the parameter plans provide a minimum of 78,500 square metres and a maximum of 87,500 square metres for residential floorspace. There will be 6,000 sq m of residential development lost by change of use / demolition which gives net additional residential floor-space of 72,500-81,500 square metres assuming the permission is implemented in full.

**3.10** This footprint translates to **an estimated 1000 net additional dwellings** within the redevelopment.

**3.11** The new dwellings are likely to be apartments specifically designed for urban living. A significant proportion of these homes will be affordable housing. Existing town centre homes in Ferriby Court will be retained while the application shows Enid Wood House will be redeveloped.

**3.12** According to the General Household Survey carried out in 2003 by the Office for National Statistics, the average number of residents per room is 0.45.<sup>(12)</sup> For this purpose, the definition of rooms includes habitable rooms such as living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, utility rooms and studies but excludes those not normally used for living purposes such as toilets, bathrooms, cloakrooms, store rooms, pantries, cellars and garages, and also excludes rooms used solely for business purposes and those not usable throughout the year (eg conservatories).

**3.13** Due to the size and characteristics of the residential provision in the town centre this is deemed to be a more appropriate measure of occupancy rates than the national average occupancy rates. To illustrate, the average number of rooms per household for England is 5.33.<sup>(13)</sup>

**3.14** According to national planning policy the town centre is identified as a location suitable for high density housing of 1 and 2 bedrooms. Local policy will not allow a homogenous development of one size of housing, and the allocation of housing size will be according to the local Housing Needs Survey. For affordable housing this ratio is 60% 2 bedroomed properties and 40% 1 bedroomed properties.

**3.15** Therefore the average number of rooms per household within the re-development will be:

- 60% 2-bedroomed properties with 4 rooms (two bedrooms, living room, and kitchen)
- 40% 1-bedroomed properties with 3 rooms (one bedroom, living room, and kitchen)

12 Table 4.14. 'Persons per room 1971 to 2003'. General Household Survey, 2003.

13 Census 2001, National Statistics.

**3.16** The levels will not exceed this proportion, therefore the Precautionary Approach has been implemented under this scenario.

**3.17** This leads to an average room size of 3.6 within the re-development with 0.45 residents per room. Calculations based on these figures show there will be **an average 1.62 residents per unit. This extrapolates to an estimated 1620 residents within the town centre re-development.**

**3.18** However, it is highly unlikely all of this estimated population will be new borough residents because the affordable housing element will, to some extent, provide housing for existing residents. Therefore the actual increase in population is likely to be lower than this figure. However, as there is no evidence to support this assumption, it has not been relied upon when drawing conclusions.

**3.19** Due to the nature of the dwellings, it is assumed that recreational pressures exerted by these additional residents are most likely to be from visitors walking and cycling and that, as the new dwellings are likely to be apartments, only a very small percentage will be dog walkers.

### **Calculation of Additional Visitors Resulting from this Increased Population**

**3.20** As a general rule, the number of walkers, riders, cyclists and motor cyclists using a heathland will increase with an increase in local population, which would indicate a relationship between housing development and recreational disturbance.

**3.21** In reality this is not likely to be a linear relationship due to the effect of other complex factors, such as the accessibility of the SPA, education, information available and access to other areas of open space. However, it is necessary to quantify the impact arising from the new residents; therefore a linear correlation has been assumed for the purposes of this assessment.

**3.22** The Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy calculated that, on average each resident of Bracknell Forest visits the SPA 7.81 times a year. If this is extrapolated forward, and it is assumed this rate of visits will remain the same or decline because no plans or projects are currently being approved which would increase this level, the number of visits arising from the new population can be calculated. This amount of new visits per annum, arising from the re-development of Bracknell Town Centre, works out to **an estimated 12,652 visits**. To give a degree of scale to this number, this impact is 0.2% of the total number of current visits to the SPA.<sup>(14)</sup>

### **Conclusions**

**3.23** The above information has led the Council to conclude that, in order to remove the adverse impact arising from the re-development of Bracknell Town Centre, avoidance and mitigation measures are required.

14 An estimated scale of use of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA has been calculated at 5.3655 million visits per annum (Liley, Jackson & Underhill-Day 2005).

## 4 Step 3: Assessment of Site Integrity

### Impacts Arising from the Town Centre Redevelopment

**4.1** Once the effects of the Bracknell town centre redevelopment have been identified and predicted, it is necessary to assess whether any of these will lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the site as defined by the conservation objectives.

**4.2** Therefore the impacts arising from the Bracknell town centre redevelopment, shown in the table below have been viewed in the context of their impacts on the conservation objectives of the site, as described above. A precautionary approach has been taken, and adverse effects must be assumed where it cannot be objectively demonstrated, with supporting evidence, that the integrity of the site would not be compromised.

Potential Adverse effects	Impact on conservation objectives
<b>RE-DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTIC: Increased recreational activity</b>	
<b>Fragmentation within heathland</b> – the proliferation of footpaths and widening of existing tracks may cause isolation of plants and animals.	The paths within the areas of the SPA most visited by residents of the borough are wide and well-defined and the surrounding habitat is often dense, containing gorse, in many places. Research by Clarke <i>et al</i> (2005) in Dorset found that the majority of people (82%) visiting the SPA stayed on the paths. Therefore, fragmentation within the heathland is not likely to have a significant impact affecting the condition of the heathland or plantations, and is for that reason, unlikely to impact on the populations of protected birds.
<b>Predation</b> – dogs could potentially have an effect on predation. There may be a direct effect arising from dogs preying on the birds, their eggs or chicks, but also an indirect effect as the dogs scare ground nesting birds from their nests, leaving the eggs and chicks vulnerable to other types of predation.	<p>Predation of chicks or eggs by either domestic dogs or cats, or other wild animals as a result of the nests being temporarily abandoned can result in a reduction in species density.</p> <p>A survey of dog owners on the heaths suggested however that people in flats are much less likely to own a dog and this is supported by anecdotal evidence.</p>
<b>Enrichment</b> – dogs could potentially contribute to enrichment of the soil.	<p>Enrichment can cause nutrient-loving plant species to out-compete heathland species, changing the birds' habitat.</p> <p>A survey of dog owners on the heaths suggested however that people in flats are much less likely to own a dog and this is supported by anecdotal evidence.</p>

Potential Adverse effects	Impact on conservation objectives
<p><b>Disturbance</b> – car-borne visitors, dog walkers and cyclists travel over 5km to visit the site. These activities have been shown to cause disturbance of the protected bird species, for example dogs, particularly off lead and off the paths, can scare birds off the nests which leaves the eggs or chicks vulnerable to chilling or predation from other sources.</p>	<p>Increased nest predation by natural predators when adult birds are flushed from the nest or deterred from returning to it by the presence of people or dogs, resulting in a reduction in species density.</p> <p>Chicks or eggs dying of exposure because adults are kept away from the nest, resulting in a reduction in species density.</p> <p>Reduced nest/territory density, delayed territory establishment and/or delayed egg laying (i.e. fewer broods in a season).</p> <p>Increasing stress levels in adult birds resulting in an associated reduction in breeding success and therefore population density.</p> <p>These factors can all lead to adverse effect on population and less resilience of population to natural factors, such as climatic variations.</p>
<p><b>Trampling</b> - an increase in track use and proliferation of tracks could cause habitat erosion and trampling of eggs. The tracks at the part of the SPA most used by residents of Bracknell Forest (the two relevant SSSI components) are very well defined and maintained, with clear way-marking. Also, research has shown (Clarke <i>et al</i> 2005) that visitors stick mainly to the defined routes, so erosion off track is unlikely. However, research at Bourley and Long Valley SSSI (part of the SPA) indicated that 42% of visitors left the main track.</p>	<p>Accidental trampling of eggs by people, given that the woodlark and nightjar are ground nesting, will affect bird populations. This is not likely to affect the site to a great degree due to the small numbers, but could not be said to have a <i>de minimus</i> impact. Some parts of the SPA may be more sensitive and prone to trampling.</p>

**Table 4.1 Potential Impacts arising from the Bracknell Town Centre Re-development**

**4.3** The outcome of this stage of the Appropriate Assessment was to identify those aspects of the redevelopment of Bracknell town centre where a likely effect on the SPA is confirmed or uncertain. This will therefore be carried forward to the next stage of the assessment process to determine whether the effects can be avoided by avoidance and mitigation measures provided for by Core Strategy, or by the use of additional conditional requirements governing the way in which the policy is implemented.

# 5 Step 4: Propose and Assess Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

## Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy

**5.1** The table above identifies ways in which the redevelopment of Bracknell town centre could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. Therefore it is necessary to devise measures to avoid and mitigate, where possible, the identified adverse effects. Avoidance measures need to specifically relate to the adverse effects the application is likely to cause. It is for the competent authority to determine what level of avoidance measures are required, taking into account suggestions from the relevant nature conservation bodies.

**5.2** It is widely recognised that avoidance and mitigation measures are required to safeguard the SPA from recreational impacts arising from new housing development. In the Delivery Framework<sup>(15)</sup> a three part approach to avoiding and mitigating recreational impacts is recommended:

- On-site habitat management to bring the SPA into favourable condition ensuring the habitat across the site is suitable for the Annex I species.
- On-site access management to avoid the impacts of current and predicted future users of the SPA.
- Off-site avoidance measures, for example in the form of alternative greenspace for recreation (commonly known as SANGs - Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces).

## Measures to be Introduced and how they will Avoid or Reduce the Adverse Impact on the SPA

**5.3** The table below shows the measures necessary to avoid each adverse effect arising from the redevelopment of Bracknell town centre.

Effects	Proposed Measure
Increased Recreational Pressure	
Predation	On-site visitor access management can avoid impacts arising from predation from dogs belonging to current and future dog-walkers. This could include the implementation of a policy of keeping dogs on leads during the breeding season and enforcing this, using wardens. Education can encourage visitors to act in a more responsible, less harmful way.
Enrichment	On-site visitor access management measures, such as wardens enforcing the requirements of the CRoW Act and the Clean Neighbourhood Act, in addition to the provision of additional dog-fouling

15 Joint Strategic Partnership Board (2009)

Effects	Proposed Measure
	bins, can reduce enrichment by encouraging and enforcing responsible dog ownership. Education can encourage visitors to act in a more responsible, less harmful way.
Disturbance	Natural England believes that the provision of a significant quantity of new or enhanced semi-natural alternative green space, for new residents to visit for recreational purposes, will keep the levels of visitors to the SPA at the current baseline level. For the town centre re-development, a SANG is proposed at Lily Hill Park.
Trampling	The provision of clear way-marked routes will encourage users to keep to the paths. This should therefore be considered as part of the strategic access management.

**Table 5.1 How Mitigation Measures will Avoid or Reduce Adverse Impacts on the SPA.**

## Habitat Management

**5.4** Habitat management of lowland heathland and young plantations is an effective measure benefiting the populations of the protected bird species.<sup>(16)</sup> Appropriate habitat management will be secured by Natural England working with the landowners across the SPA to improve any areas of unfavourable or declining condition. This is action which is required under the Habitats Regulations and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

**5.5** Natural England notes that whilst habitat management is essential to ensure the robustness of the SPA and maximise its ability to support the Annex I birds, habitat management alone cannot avoid negative impacts from recreation. Natural England advises that in the short term habitat management cannot be considered an avoidance measure. This is because the legal duty for SPA landowners and managers to manage the SPA such that it achieves favourable conservation status is a separate duty to those required for plans and projects (Article 3(1) and 6(2) of the Habitats Directive as opposed to Article 6(3) and 6(4)).

**5.6** The Council owns and manages a small proportion of the SPA, therefore, in the long-term; there may be some potential for additional management measures to be a relevant avoidance and mitigation measure.

## On-Site Access Management

**5.7** 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. In Bracknell Forest, £291.84 per net additional dwelling of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Avoidance and Mitigation contribution is applied to access management and education for this purpose.<sup>(17)</sup>

16 UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

17 The Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Partnership (made up of landowners and managers of the SPA) with support from Natural England and Hampshire County Council, has put forward a programme of strategic visitor access management measures for the purpose of mitigating the impacts of new development on the SPA, to be funded by developer contributions. It is envisaged that the SAMM Project will commence shortly.

## Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs)

### Introduction

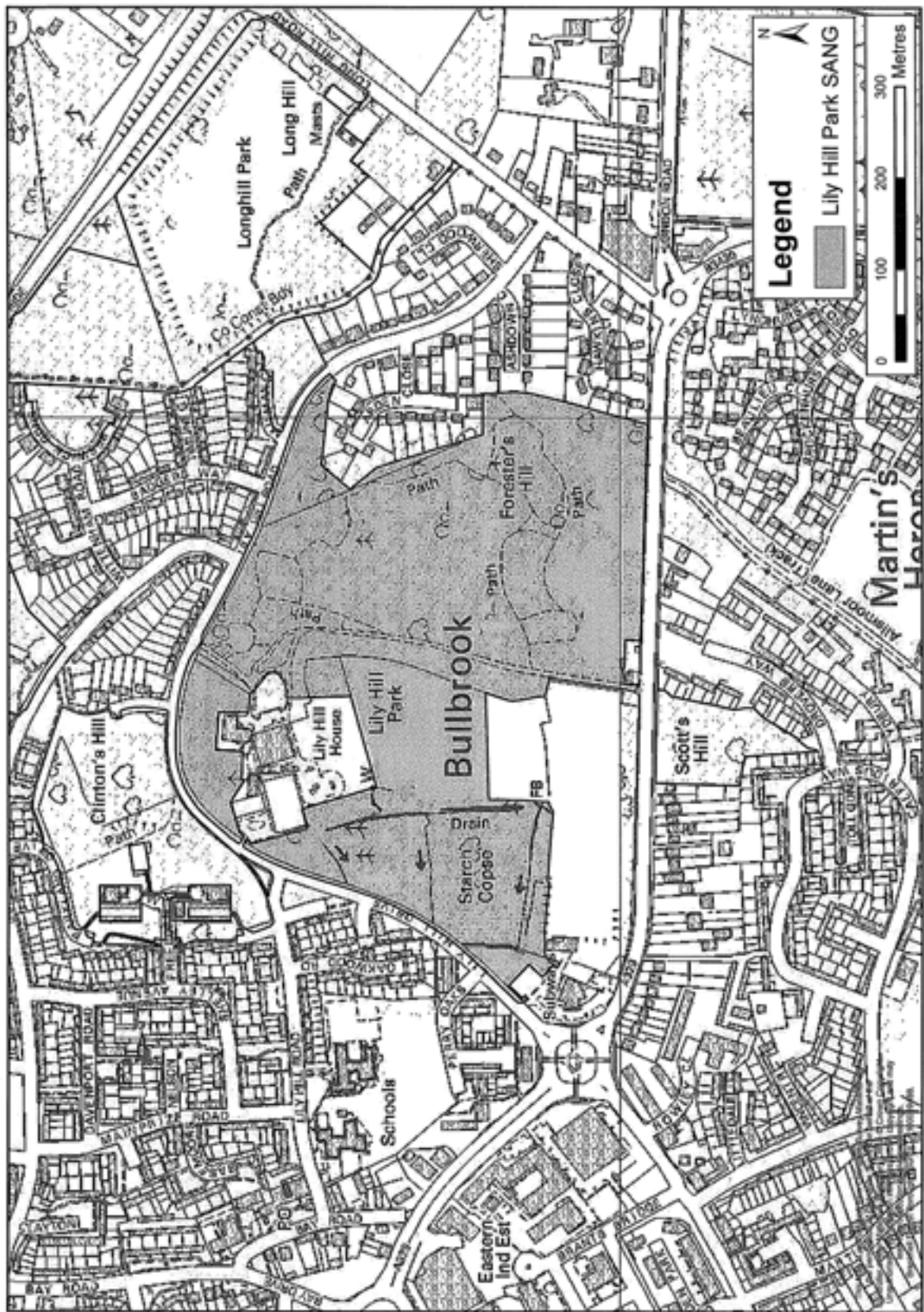
**5.8** Where SANGs are provided, this must be at a minimum of at least 8ha per 1000 new residents, as set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework (2009). This standard of SANGs provision is necessary, in addition to normal open space requirements,<sup>(18)</sup> in order that the Council can have certainty that the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy will prevent an adverse impact on the integrity of the SPA.

**5.9** It has been shown in Step 2 that the Bracknell town centre redevelopment, will increase the local population by approximately 1620. This means that the area of SANG required to provide a viable alternative to the SPA is **12.96ha** (see 5.15 below)

**5.10** One open space at Lily Hill Park (approximately 22.74 hectares) has been enhanced to provide SANGs. Lily Hill Park is shown on the map below and is described more fully in appendix 3.

18 See Thames Basin Heaths SPA Technical Background Document to the Core Strategy DPD. Bracknell Forest Council (June 2007)





Lily Hill Park

**5.11** The potential for Lily Hill Park to provide an alternative area of open space to the SPA has been accepted via a project level Appropriate Assessment for Bracknell Town Centre redevelopment.<sup>(19)(20)</sup>

**5.12** Lily Hill Park is a semi-natural park, which attracts visitors which also regularly visit the SPA. The site is generally deemed as not busy by visitors, therefore has the potential to increase capacity. Although this is acceptable on its own merits, when viewed alongside adjacent areas of Longhill Park and Clintons Hill, this becomes a considerably sized area of alternative open space.

**5.13** Two other open spaces at Bill Hill and South Hill Park were included as a part of the bespoke SANG's solution in the previous Appropriate Assessment (2006). However, it is not proposed to include South Hill Park and Bill Hill in this Appropriate Assessment due to the change in mitigation standards from 12ha/1000 population<sup>(21)</sup> to 8ha/1000 population.<sup>(22)</sup>

### Capacity at Lily Hill Park

**5.14** The capacity of Lily Hill Park for use as SANGs can be calculated by taking the area of potential SANGs after removing the rugby club and discounting the existing usage of the park as follows:

The park has an estimated 86,000 total visitors per annum / 168 (average visits per person per annum). This equates to 511.9 people.<sup>(23)</sup>

Discounting SANG capacity of the existing usage can be calculated as follows: 511.9 people / 1000 \* 8 = 4.0952 hectares (ha) of SANG capacity already taken up.

The total area of Lily Hill Park (excluding the rugby club and pitches) = 22.74ha.

Therefore the residual SANG capacity of Lily Hill Park after discounting the existing usage is 22.74 ha – 4.0952 ha = **18.65 ha**.

Using the same assumptions from the previous Appropriate Assessment then new population from town centre = 1620 people.

Required SANG is 1620 / 1000 \* 8 = 12.96 ha.

Residual capacity: 18.65 ha – 12.96 ha = 5.69 ha.

**5.15** The residual SANG capacity can also be tested taking a more precautionary approach. By assessing the population increase for the town centre development against the general assumption for the number of people a dwelling generates as detailed in the current Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy of 2.31 persons per dwelling, the results are as follows:

SANG requirement: 1000 dwellings \* 2.31 / 1000 \* 8 = 18.48 ha

**5.16** Therefore it is demonstrated that by using the assumptions based on the increased population from the new dwellings in accordance with the current Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy, the Bracknell town centre redevelopment can be mitigated by the residual SANG capacity at Lily Hill Park.

19 Bracknell Forest Borough Council Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment: An Assessment of the Impacts of the Bracknell town centre re-development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (2006).

20 See the letter from NE dated 5 July 2007 in appendix 1.

21 According to the BFC Thames Basin Heaths SPA Technical Background Document to the Core Strategy DPD (June 2007)

22 According to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework. Endorsed by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) (12 February 2009).

23 See Draft BFC Thames Basin Heaths SPA Avoidance and Mitigation SPD (November 2009).

## Improvement works

**5.17** Due to the time lapsed since the initial granting of planning permission for the Bracknell town centre redevelopment, the improvement works to upgrade Lily Hill Park to SANGs quality<sup>(24)</sup> have already been undertaken. This was funded by BFC and a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is therefore proposed that the developer pay back the contribution the Council made towards this SANGs work.

**5.18** The result of the programme of phased improvement works which brought Lily Hill Park up to SANG quality is demonstrated below. It must be noted that the primary aim of enhancement is to encourage further visitor access. Works should facilitate this by providing management for, for example, all weather access, stiles where necessary, site safety in terms of crossing between units and allowing dogs to run off the lead, plus interpretation, route marking and promotion.

	Natural England SANGs Quality Criteria	Must, Should, Desirable	Before Improvement Works	After Improvement Works
1	For all the sites larger than 4 ha there must be adequate parking for visitors. The amount of car parking space being determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflecting the visitor catchments of both SANGS and the SPA.	M	One car park with 58 spaces and one unmarked car park.	Two car parks (one expanded) with combined capacity of 104 spaces.
2	SANGS must be clearly signposted or advertised in some way.	S	Site entrance signs.	Bespoke site entrance signs at car parks and pedestrian entrances. New heritage and site leaflets widely distributed.  New web page.
3	Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly signposted.	S	Site entrance signs.	Bespoke site entrance signs at car parks - highway brown signs.
4	The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGS intend to absorb.	M	Two vehicular access points, one of low quality.	Two vehicular access points, well signed. All seven pedestrian entrances signed and surfaced. Improved links to adjacent green spaces.

24 As defined by Natural England SANGs Quality Guidance.

	Natural England SANGs Quality Criteria	Must, Should, Desirable	Before Improvement Works	After Improvement Works
5	The SANGS must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath/s.	M	Safe choice of routes from the car parks and main entrance points.	Improved links using surfaced paths and cleared areas from car parks to main footpaths.
6	It would be desirable for an owner to be able to take dogs from the car park to SANGS safely off the lead.	D	Car parks adjacent to pedestrian access points.	Improved links using surfaced paths and cleared areas from car parks to main footpaths.
7	All SANGS with car parks must have a circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park.	M	One car park located at centre of the site allowing a choice of routes.	Both car parks linked to a network of well maintained paths allowing a choice of circular routes of varying lengths.
8	SANGS larger than 12 ha must be designed to supply a choice of routes, from 0.5Km to more than 3.5Km in length.	M	Choice of routes around the site. Tree trail of 1.5km little used.	A network of well maintained paths allowing circular routes of up to 1.7km. An accessible route is also marked around the site.
9	SANGS must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by the users.	M	Stands of invasive rhododendron and scrub block views.	Open plan car park and removal of invasive plants across the site has created a more open site with views across, increasing perceived safety.
10	SANGS should have tree and scrub cover along parts of the walking route.	S	Mainly a woodland site with large areas of scrub and thick rhododendron.	Areas of woodland interspersed with glades and meadows.
11	Paths must be easily used and well maintained, but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.	M	Some paths overgrown.	Well maintained network of paths using natural materials and maintaining a natural feel to the site.

	Natural England SANGs Quality Criteria	Must, Should, Desirable	Before Improvement Works	After Improvement Works
12	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.	M	A woodland site with a mixture of differing furniture types.	Bespoke themed wood furniture (from wood sourced on site) and signs in keeping with the woodland environment enhance visitor experience.
13	It is desirable that access points make clear the layout of the SANGS, and the routes available to visitors, by means of interpretation panels or other means.	D	Three out dated interpretation boards.	Three interpretation boards at main entrance points showing maps of the site. The site leaflet also shows routes.
14	It is desirable that SANGS provide the 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.	D	Mainly a woodland site with large areas of scrub and thick rhododendron.	Areas of woodland interspersed with glades and meadows. A new pond has been created as a feature.
15	All SANGS larger than 12 ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience.	M	Mainly a woodland site with large areas of scrub and thick rhododendron.	Broadleaved and mixed woodland areas, wildflower meadows and wetland areas.
16	Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS.	D	The highest point of the hill is 110m in the southeast corner of the site and the land slopes gently down towards the northwest.	Views of the landscape have been opened for visitors and improved paths allow further exploration of the topography of the site.
17	Access within the SANGS must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely.	M	Access is unrestricted.	Access is unrestricted and more space is available for exercise of dogs.

	Natural England SANGs Quality Criteria	Must, Should, Desirable	Before Improvement Works	After Improvement Works
18	Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a view point, monument etc. within SANGS.	D	Lily Hill House was visible in some areas as a focal point.	Lily Hill House provides a main focal point of the site supplemented by the meadows and pond.
19	SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works, smells etc.).	M	Surrounding roads are well screening by the woodland.	The woodland provides screening from surrounding areas and no other intrusions are present.
20	SANGS should have leaflets or/and websites advertising their location to potential users. It would be desirable for leaflets to be distributed to new homes in the area and at entrance points and car parks.	S	No leaflets or web pages.	New heritage and site leaflets widely distributed. New web pages including the history, restoration and visiting Lily Hill with leaflets available online.

**Table 5.2 Improvement works carried out to upgrade Lily Hill Park to SANGs quality**

**5.19** The Lily Hill Park Management Plan (2009) gives details on how this site will continue to be maintained and enhanced.

**5.20** As the work to bring Lily Hill Park up to SANGs standard has already been completed, there will be no need for the usual occupation restrictions.

## 6 Step 5: Consultation

**6.1** Natural England has been consulted on this Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment and agreed that, if the proposed mitigation is put in place, the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will not be adversely affected by the Bracknell town centre redevelopment.

# 7 Conclusions

## Conclusion

**7.1** Step 3 identifies likely adverse impacts upon the SPA which the Town Centre re-development would lead to in the absence of any avoidance and mitigation measures. Step 4 identifies possible avoidance and mitigation measures and assesses their effectiveness. The outcome is that if the proposed avoidance and mitigation measures are implemented there will be no significant adverse impacts upon the integrity of the SPA.

**7.2** The Council will continue to work with Natural England and other stakeholders to ensure that a package of measures is secured which ensures no adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

## Implementation

**7.3** These mitigation measures will be implemented through:

The determination and monitoring of planning applications.

Conditions, Section 106 Agreements or other agreements unless other legal measures to secure contributions or works are put in place.



## 8 Glossary

Term	Description
Appropriate Assessment	An assessment, required under the Habitats Directive, if a plan or project is judged as likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.
Biodiversity	Biological Diversity - the variation and total number of all biological life.
Competent Authority	The decision maker under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (see Regulation 6): 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 Document	A Local Development Document which forms part of the statutory development plan, examples include the Core Strategy, Proposals Map and Area Action Plans.
Local Development Framework	The portfolio of Local Development Documents which sets out the planning policy framework for the Borough.
Natura 2000 sites	An ecological network of sites (SPAs and SACs) established under the Habitats Directive to provide a strong protection for Europe's wildlife areas.
Precautionary Principle	Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. (Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development)
Significant Effect	Any reasonably predictable effect of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of the designated site features but excluding de minimis or inconsequential effects.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	A nature conservation site designated for its bird interest under the Birds Directive, but subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Directive.
Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project (SAMM)	Overseen by Natural England and Hampshire County Council, implements standard messages and additional wardening and education across the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
Supplementary Planning Document	An LDD which does not form part of the statutory development plan, but is part of the LDF. SPDs elaborate upon policies and proposals in a DPD.

Term	Description
Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace	Open space, meeting guidelines on quantity and quality, for the purpose of providing recreational alternatives to the SPA.
Technical Background Document	Accompanied the Core Strategy to examination and includes the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy and the original Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.
Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership	Partnership of Thames Basin Heaths-affected Local Authorities, South East England Partnership Board and key stakeholders, which form and oversee the implementation of sub-regional guidance, for example the Delivery Framework.
UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)	A nationwide Action Plan to conserve and enhance the UK's biodiversity, following the Biodiversity Convention of 1992.

**Table 8.1 Glossary**

## 9 Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AA	Appropriate Assessment
BBOWT	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
BFC	Bracknell Forest Council
CE	Crown Estate
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DPD	Development Plan Document
FC	Forestry Commission
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
JSP	Joint Strategic Partnership
LDD	Local Development Document
LDF	Local Development Framework
NE	Natural England
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAMM	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring
SANGs	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document

**Table 9.1 Abbreviations**

# Appendix 1 Correspondence from Natural England

**Natural England's Response to Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment (2005)**

# Environment & Leisure

Director : Vincent Policzka



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5002 NWP 0 Your ref: 04/01129/OUT/005  
RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT  
ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

Dear Ms Lord,

### Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods & Heaths SSSI & pSPA Outline application EIA for the re-development of Bracknell Town Centre

Thank you for consulting English Nature.

This letter may be taken to be English Nature's formal consultation representation under Regulation 48 (3) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 and under Section 281(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as incorporated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

English Nature *objects* to the above development pending further assessment of the in-combination and indirect impacts it may have on the pSPA.

#### Consultation under Regulation 48 (3) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994.

The development outlined in the current application *is not* directly connected with the management of the above site for nature conservation.

However, it is the opinion of English Nature that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the European site, *alone and in combination* with other plans or projects. Since the Scoping study for this development in 2002 research has demonstrated that recreational pressure can have a significant adverse impact on the Annex 1 birds for which the SPA is proposed. Adverse increases in recreation pressure on heathland have been shown to occur from residential developments over several kilometres distance from a designated site.

It is therefore necessary for your organisation, as the relevant competent authority, to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications for the SPA, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

The proposed development lies approximately 3 km from the Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths SSSI, which forms part of the Thames Basin Heaths pSPA. The site is designated for

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**The Borough of Opportunity**

 **Beacon Council** 2001-2002 Maintaining a Quality Environment

## Environment & Leisure

Director: Vincent Poliszka



breeding birds, namely nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. These species are vulnerable to disturbance and relevant impacts include:

- o Disturbance - from dog-walkers, walkers, mountain bikes and motorbikes the use of kites and model aircraft;
- o Predation - of eggs due to the flushing of the parent bird from the nest when disturbed by human activity;
- o Loss of habitat - due to path encroachment, fly-tipping and the increased likelihood of heathland fires;
- o Damage to habitat - from surface pollution such as eutrophication of the heathland caused by dog faeces.

It is the opinion of English Nature that the EIA does not consider these indirect and combination impacts of the proposed 1000 (approx.) dwellings, that can be expected from increased recreational pressure. In this regard we would like to draw your attention to the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Plan which is currently being produced in partnership with ODFM, the regional bodies and the 11 Thames Basin Heaths local planning authorities. This Plan aims to provide a strategic assessment of the impact of delivering the current housing allocations on the Thames Basin Heaths proposed Special Protection Area, and provide standards for mitigation to safeguard the European site.

The Plan aims to ensure the provision of alternative green space for recreation to protect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths from intensive use and we strongly recommend that such a mitigative measure is included in this development. Simon Cridland has been our contact for Bracknell regarding the Plan.

Please note that whilst the idea of green roofs is supported as a positive contribution to attractive open space, allowing visual relief from the built environment and contributing to the quality of life of the residents, it is not anticipated that this will fully mitigate for the possible impacts of recreational walking and cycling that may be undertaken on the heaths.

Various studies have highlighted benefits derived from access to green space including those relating to health, both psychologically and physiologically; quality of life as well and the provision of more attractive places to live. Further details can be found in our 'Revealing the Value of Nature' publication.

### Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as incorporated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

The conservation features under consideration are the same as those being considered for the European site. English Nature's advice on this site also applies in relation to the SSSI.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Burley  
Assistant Conservation Officer  
[Vanessa.Burley@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:Vanessa.Burley@english-nature.org.uk)

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2001-2002  
Maintaining a Quality  
Environment

**Natural England's Response to Section 73 Amendments (2007)**

Date: 05/07/07  
Counref:   
Yourref: 07/05623/001



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Dear Natalie

**BROADMOOR TO BAGSHOT WOODS AND HEATHS SS&I  
THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPA**

**Section 73 amendments to the development at Bracknell Town Centre**

Thank you for your letter of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007 requesting Natural England's comments on the above proposal.

**Assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994  
Advice under S261 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by  
the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000)**

Based on the information provided, **Natural England has no objection to the proposed development.**

Following consultation with Bracknell Forest Borough Council it was confirmed that this development is an amendment to the outline planning permission 04/01129/001. This application was not objected against by Natural England originally in January 2006 due to the mitigation measures agreed. We will assume that the proposals are meeting the requirements of that plan and that the legislation around protected species has also been addressed. If an applicant is not complying with this mitigation plan, then please do contact myself in order that we can address how to proceed.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Marc Turner  
Government Team  
South East Region, Western Area Team

Email: [marc.turner@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:marc.turner@naturalengland.org.uk)



## Natural England's Response to Appropriate Assessment (July 2010)

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010  
Our ref: SEG.43.03  
Your ref:



Mrs Julie Gil  
Bracknell Forest Council

By e-mail only

Block A, Room 107  
Coley Park  
Coley Avenue  
Reading  
RG1 6DT

T 03000 604921  
F 01189 392346

Dear Mrs Gil,

### **Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment - Bracknell Town Centre Re-development June 2010**

Thank you for your e-mail of 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010, consulting Natural England concerning the above document. We have now had chance to look at it.

Natural England are very pleased with the progress made on this document. Bracknell Forest Council as competent authority will make the final decision on whether this development satisfies the Habitats Regulations. However it is Natural England's advice that this development is unlikely to have a significant effect upon the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). This is due to the extensive mitigation measures outlined within this document.

The comments we have made in this response are based on the information provided by you, and for the avoidance of doubt does not affect our obligation to advise on, and potentially object to any specific development proposal which may subsequently arise from this or later versions of the plan or programme which is the subject of this consultation, and which may have adverse effects on the environment.

I hope that this information is helpful to you. If you have any queries relating to this response, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Marc Turner  
Government Team

*Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings*

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# Appendix 2 Ecological Status of the Annex 1 Species

The following outlines the current status of the three Annex I birds, Species Action Plan objectives taken from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and current factors which contribute to population size.

## **Nightjar**

### **Ecology**

The nightjar is a summer migrant, arriving in Britain in late April to mid-May and returning in August or September to sub-Saharan Africa.

The bird is nocturnal and roosts in the day either on the ground or in the low branches of shrubs and trees.

Nightjars feed on seasonally available suitable prey consisting of flying insects (such as moths, beetles and flies). They hunt mainly at dawn and dusk and in some circumstances well into the night, across a wide range of habitats/land use types. Preferred feeding habitats are heathland, deciduous or mixed woodland, orchards, riparian habitats, freshwater wetlands and gardens, though plantations are used where there is structural diversity within the woodland. The birds will travel an average 3 km from the nest site to locate suitable feeding areas, although can range further.

Their nests are usually located in patches of bare or sparsely vegetated ground, mainly on free-draining sandy soils within areas of mature dry heathland, young forestry plantations, or in woodland clearings of over 1.5 hectares. Nightjars often rear two broods a season. Normally two eggs are laid from mid May to mid July. Chicks hatch after about 19 days and fly at about 17 days old, then are reliant on the parents for about four weeks.

### **Current Status**

This species has been declining in numbers and range for much of this century, reaching a low point of 2,100 males in 1981, with a decline in range of 52% between 1968-72 and 1992. There has since been a partial recovery in the size of the population which had reached 3,400 males in 1992. The species now breeds mainly in southern England, but there are scattered populations as far north as central Scotland. Lowland heathland and young forestry plantations are now the most important habitats. An increase in forestry clear-fells as a result of major storms and forest management have assisted recent increases, with over 50% of the total population found in this habitat in the 1992 survey.

## Results of 2004 Nightjar survey (British Trust for Ornithology)

Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI

Year	No. Of Churring Birds	Count Comparison with 1992
2004	37	Up
1999	16	Up

## Results of 2004 Nightjar Survey (BTO)

The British Trust for Ornithology state on their website:

*“The Berkshire results, compared with the last survey of 1992, were remarkable..... Very few sites have reduced their Nightjar count since 1992 and only one seems to have lost them totally, which is excellent news. To put this in perspective, part of this apparent increase may have been due to less complete site coverage during the previous survey but there have undoubtedly been substantial increases in many places particularly in the southeast of the county, where the Berkshire BTO region overlaps parts of Surrey and Hampshire. The heathlands between Crowthorne, Bracknell and Camberley and those around Pamber Heath, Padworth and Wokefield Common now hold good numbers of breeding pairs. Nationally, a total of 4,132 individual males were detected in 2004, which constitutes a 34% increase since 1992 (3,093 males). It would appear from the foregoing that Berkshire has done even better but, given the relatively small sample size and the aforementioned difference in surveyor effort, this may not necessarily be true. However it is probably safe to say that Berkshire numbers have increased by at least a third since 1992.”*

## Action Plan Objectives and Targets

Maintain a population of at least 3400 churring males.

Halt the decline in range of the nightjar (there were 268 occupied ten km squares in 1992).

In the long term (next 20 years), restore nightjar to parts of its former range in, for example, south-west England, west Midlands, north-west England, south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## Conditions required to achieve a favourable condition

Abundance of night flying insects; open ground with predominantly low vegetation, bare patches and sparse woodland/scrub cover; reduction or displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

## Current Adverse Factors

The area of heathland in the UK has undergone a dramatic reduction during the course of this century due to agricultural land claim, afforestation and built development. For example, it is estimated that 40% of England's lowland heathland has been lost since the 1950s. Threats continue from housing and infra-structure developments and where heathland lacks appropriate management, it will become unsuitable as nesting habitat due to invasion by bushes and trees. Nightjars require extensive areas of suitable feeding habitat, especially uncultivated land, therefore the loss of such habitats within a few kilometres of the nesting area may result in a decline in the number of birds. It is possible that a decline in the availability of large insects

caused by changes in agriculture (such as the indirect effects of pesticides) and/or climatic change, may have affected nightjar populations. In commercial forests, nightjars nest in the young stages of plantations, while there is still bare ground between the trees. If no other suitable habitat becomes available in other new or young stands, local population declines could occur as the recently planted blocks mature.<sup>(25)</sup>

## **Woodlark**

### **Ecology**

The woodlark is a bird primarily of lowland heathland, acidic grassland and recently clear-felled plantations on sandy soils that support pioneer heathland vegetation. They are found breeding mainly in eastern and southern England, the New Forest, Surrey and Berkshire heaths, Breckland and some Suffolk heaths. The southern populations tend to be more sedentary, whilst the populations in East Anglia are generally summer migrants.

Woodlarks feed in areas with a high proportion of short vegetation and/or bare ground on well-drained (usually acid) soils with sparse tree cover. They feed on invertebrates during the summer and switch to seeds in the winter. Despite their name, they do not require large wooded areas, but do need some trees (for singing) and some longer vegetation (for nesting). Woodlarks utilise areas that are subject to regular ground disturbance (e.g. firebreaks), but avoid stony ground as they are unable to dig shallow nest scrapes.

They nest in areas of grazed heathland, recently cleared forestry plantations and open woodland, where areas of bare ground or short vegetation are mixed with patches of longer grass or heather.

Little is known of the woodlark's winter requirements and distribution, although there appears to be some movement southwards within England and to the continent.

### **Current Status**

The woodlark was formerly found across Britain, south from Yorkshire, and in Northern Ireland, but is now largely restricted to five core areas. The number of ten km squares occupied in the breeding season decreased by 62% (from 198 to 73 ten km squares) between 1968-72 and 1988-91. However, since 1986 (when the population was estimated to be around 250 pairs) the population has increased with up to 620 pairs breeding in 1993, and the 1997 survey has recorded around 1,500 pairs. Results from the 1997 survey suggest that around 50% of breeding pairs across the country are now nesting on set-aside and other weedy fields.

The population increase is believed to have resulted from a succession of milder winters and storm damage which felled trees, creating additional suitable habitat areas. This is in addition to the provision of new plantation habitats within the current core areas. In Europe the woodlark is declining in both numbers and range.

### **Action Plan Objectives and Targets**

- Maintain a population of at least 1,500 breeding pairs of woodlark.
- Maintain the existing range of at least 90 ten km squares.

25 Source: UK Biodiversity Action Plan

Increase the range of the woodlark from 90 to 120 ten km squares, including the recolonisation of Wales and south-west England, by 2008.  
Increase the population size by 2008.

### **Conditions required to achieve a favourable condition**

Abundance of ground surface invertebrates; mix of shrub/ tree cover, short-medium vegetation and bare ground; reduction or displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

### **Current Adverse Factors**

An estimated 40% of England's lowland heathland has been lost since the 1950s. This has led to a loss of feeding and nesting habitats for woodlarks. Whilst losses to afforestation and agriculture have declined, threats from roads and housing developments continue. Woodlarks require a mosaic of bare ground or short vegetation for feeding, and tussocks of vegetation with disturbed ground for nest sites.

Lack of appropriate management can lead to sites becoming unsuitable for the species. Rabbits play a key role in creating bare ground and short grass at many sites, and their decline following myxomatosis in the 1950s may have played a significant part in the decline of the woodlark. In addition severe winter weather and, in particular, snow cover has had an adverse impact on winter survival. The hard winters of 1962/63 and 1981/82 had considerable impact on woodlark populations on the southern heathlands.

## **Dartford Warbler**

### **Ecology**

The Dartford warbler is resident on the lowland heathlands of southern Britain, where it favours mature heather dominated dry heathland with dense bushes of gorse where it feeds on invertebrates. Gorse provides the predominant feeding habitat for Dartford warbler, as it is richer in invertebrate food than heather, therefore management is primarily aimed at maintaining gorse of various age and structure amongst a mainly heathland habitat. Invasive scrub and bracken need to be controlled.

Dartford warblers hold territories of between 2 - 6 ha in size (depending on habitat quality) and nests are located in either dense gorse or deep heather. Scattered European and/or Western gorse (*Ulex europaeus* and *Ulex gallii*) cover of 5% is optimal, and should be of a range of ages to provide a continuum of suitable bushes, i.e. dense (6-12 years old) and up to 1.5 m high. Larger blocks of dense gorse have been shown to be especially important during periods of snow, when the birds retreat to them.

### **Current Status**

In Bracknell Forest, the Dartford warbler is rare – but increasing after a run of mild winters; a few pairs now breed in East Anglia for instance. The last Dartford warbler survey, undertaken in 1994, recorded a national population of 1,800 pairs.

### **Action Plan Objectives and Targets**

The Berkshire Heathland and the Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plans include the following objectives and targets for this species in the County:

Continue to manage currently known breeding sites, paying particular attention to the long-term provision of suitable stands of gorse.

Integrate Dartford Warbler management into the management of forestry and MOD areas south of Bracknell town with a view to encouraging further breeding sites.

Establish the current extent of Dartford Warbler in the area south of Bracknell town.

### **Conditions required to achieve a favourable condition**

Large unbroken dwarf-shrub layer of heather with scattered gorse; abundance of shrub layer invertebrates; mix of heather, trees and gorse amongst heathland vegetation; reduction or displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

### **Current Adverse Factors**

The species is on the edge of its European range in England, and in particular in Berkshire as it is marginally cooler than coastal populations in the New Forest and Dorset. Warm winters may therefore be a contributing factor in the increase in their population in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Conversely it can be severely affected by hard winters unless adequate cover is available. However, although it is vulnerable to severe winters which can result in local extinctions of the species, populations can recover rapidly and are capable of doubling every two years.

# Appendix 3 Lily Hill Park

## Introduction

The main area of open space within walking distance (2 km) of the town centre is Lily Hill Park, which consists of 22.74 ha of informal open space to the north east of Bracknell. The park forms part of the estate originally belonging to Lily Hill House and consists of parkland, woodland, and formal gardens. The land is owned by Bracknell Forest Council and is managed as a public open space for informal, quiet relaxation. Recently the site has been enhanced and made more accessible. This has provided a much upgraded large area of semi-natural open space within walking distance of the town centre. Lily Hill Park is a place for quiet, informal recreation, meeting friends, walking the dog and enjoying nature.

Lily Hill Park is off Lily Hill Road on the north side of the A329 London Road near its junction with the B3430 (Nine Mile Ride). It is about half a mile north of Martin's Heron railway station. There is a network of footpaths which are able to provide a circular walk of several kilometres. A historic access link through the park is now part of a strategic pedestrian and cycleway system throughout the borough; this will considerably increase the accessibility of the site by means other than the car. The extended car parking area off Lily Hill Road now provides access to the site for the anticipated increase in visitors who arrive by vehicle. Provision has been made for disabled parking and cycle racks. The park is promoted by means of leaflets.

## Ecology

In 1997 the following Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species were recorded: Cowslips, Ragged Robin, Stag Beetle, Bullfinch, Hobby and Noctule Bat. The site was then surveyed by BBOWT on 1 September 1998 and 142 different species were identified. An ecological survey undertaken by Scott Wilson Consultancy Group (2002) has identified 5 elements in the park:

- Semi natural plantation broadleaf woodland (this is the predominant habitat).
- Scattered ruderals/bracken.
- Semi-improved rural grassland.
- Cultivated grassland.
- Marshy grassland.

Approximately 8 hectares of the site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site<sup>(26)</sup> because it provides a large area of open space comprising a mosaic of habitats (including semi-natural grassland) in an otherwise urban area. The mix of tree cover and grass meadows creates a haven for a wide variety of other wildlife, including birds such as the bullfinch, jay, woodpecker, nuthatch, wren, dunnock and the spotted flycatcher. The meadows are rich in wild flowers, which provide colour throughout the summer months. Cowslips, ladies' smock, ragged robin and even the common spotted orchid help make part of Lily Hill Park one of the more diverse Local Wildlife Sites in the borough.

The Scott Wilson survey identified that the plant communities found in the survey are all common within England, although semi-natural grassland is relatively uncommon in this area. The mosaic of habitats, with grassland, woodland and rush-pasture in proximity, enhances the value of the site. The woodlands have suffered from lack of management and are dominated in many areas by rhododendron. The large number of over mature trees provides opportunities for specialist

<sup>26</sup> Previously known as Wildlife Heritage Sites

invertebrates such as deadwood beetles, as well as offering holes and cracks for roosting bats and nesting birds such as woodpeckers. A full list of species can be found in the Heritage Lottery Funding Application (July 2002).

## **Mitigation to the SPA**

Before the spring of 2003, Lily Hill Park was well-used locally by dog walkers. It had been neglected therefore was relatively inaccessible due to the large proportion of scrub and overgrown, muddy paths. A large-scale scheme of works costing over £1 million has been carried out over the past few years and this has: quadrupled the publicly accessible area of the site by clearance and drainage; trebled the size of the car park and greatly improved its quality; nearly doubled the length of accessible paths and made the paths usable throughout the year; raised the profile of the site using an Education Strategy aimed at children and adults, improved signage to the site and signage on the site; organised dozens of successful community events and produced 3 leaflets giving information on the site.

As a result of the above works, Lily Hill Park has the following characteristics, therefore will provide suitable mitigation against the use of the SPA. The Park is a sufficiently large site to provide a varied path network, including a range of circular walks which could vary in length of over 3 km. In the TBH visitor survey (English Nature, 2005) it was found that walkers and dog walkers walked an average of 2.3 km and 2.5 km respectively, penetrating a mean of 722m and 760m onto the heath. This suggests the size of Lily Hill Park is more than adequate to meet the needs of these user groups.

Lily Hill Park is closer and more accessible by car than the SPA.

It has a higher quality of parking facilities than the SPA.

There are 5 main different habitats, providing a variety, with the predominant habitat being woodland.

There are good facilities for dog walkers.

There is the ability for dogs to be off the lead and a feeling of seclusion and isolation.

There are all-weather paths which are not grassy.

There is an undulating topography with several viewpoints.





Copies of this booklet may be obtained in large print, Braille, on audio cassette or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format please telephone 01344 352000

### **Nepali**

यस प्रचारको सक्षेपं वा सार निचोड चाहिं दिइने छ ठूलो अक्षरमा, ब्रेल वा क्यासेट सून्नको लागी । अरु भाषाको नक्कल पनि हासिल गर्न सकिने छ । कृपया सम्पर्क गनुहोला ०१३४४ ३५२००० ।

### **Tagalog**

Mga buod/ mga hango ng dokumentong ito ay makukuha sa malaking letra, limbag ng mga bulag o audio kasette. Mga kopya sa ibat-ibang wika ay inyo ring makakamtan. Makipag-alam sa 01344 352000

### **Urdu**

اس دستاویز کے خلاصے یا مختصر متن جلی حروف، بریل لکھائی یا پھر آڈیو کیسٹ پر ریکارڈ شدہ صورت میں فراہم کئے جا سکتے ہیں۔ دیگر زبانوں میں اس کی کاپی بھی حاصل کی جا سکتی ہے۔ اس کے لیے براہ مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 01344 352000 پر رابطہ کریں۔

### **Polish**

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### **Portuguese**

Podemos disponibilizar resumos ou extractos deste documento em impressão grande, em Braille ou em audiocassete. Podem também ser obtidas cópias em outros idiomas. Por favor ligue para o 01344 352000.

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