



**Bracknell Forest**

**Regulation 12 Consultation Statement**

**Draft Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area  
Supplementary Planning Document**

**April 2025**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Regulation 12 of 'The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)' requires Local Authorities to prepare a statement prior to the adoption of a supplementary planning document (SPD) which sets out:
- Who was consulted
  - A summary of the main issues raised
  - How those issues have been addressed in the SPD
- 1.2 This Statement relates to the consultation which took place in relation to the Draft Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area SPD (SPA SPD).
- 1.3 The role of the SPA SPD is to provide guidance on the application of Bracknell Forest Local Plan policies (as adopted in March 2024) in relation to the following matters:
- Policy LP31 – Designated nature conservation and geological sites
  - Policy LP32 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- 1.4 The purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of those living and working in the Borough, and those who submit planning applications on the approach to be taken to planning applications in relation to matters such as:
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)
  - Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)
  - Air quality effects on the SPA
- 1.5 A four-week public consultation on the draft SPD took place between 15<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025, and involved the following:
- Update of the 'Thames Basin Heaths SPA SPD' webpage on the Council's website [Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document | Bracknell Forest Council](#)
  - Publication of the consultation documents on the Council's consultation portal
  - Email (or letters to those without an email address) to those on the Council's planning policy consultation database which included:
    - Local residents
    - Developers
    - Adjoining local authorities
    - Parish/Town Councils
    - Statutory consultees
  - Provision of a hard copy of the draft SPD during the consultation period at libraries and Parish/Town Councils within the borough
  - Press release at the start of the consultation on the Council's web page
  - Information on the Council's Facebook page
  - Item in the 'Town and Country extra' (a Borough newsletter)

- 1.6 Eleven individuals/organisations responded to the consultation. **Appendix A** provides a summary of the main issues raised and how they have been addressed in the final version of the SPD.

## **Appendix A – Summary of representations and Council's response**

Please note that all document references relate to the consultation draft SPD, and these may differ from the adopted version.

New text added to the SPD is shown in **bold and underlined**.

A ~~strike through~~ has been applied to text that is deleted from the SPD.

<b>Representer</b>	<b>Relevant section in draft SPA SPD</b>	<b>Summary of comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>
Statutory consultees (5 responses)			
004 Natural England (NE)	Section 4, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)	Para 4.1.8. Helpful to have statement stating prospective SANGs will be required to be visited by a Natural England officer (via DAS service) in order to assess their suitability.	Agree. Para. 4.1.8 has been updated as follows:  4.1.8 All SANGs must comply with the NE SANG Quality Guidance which can be found on the Council's website at <a href="http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spa">http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spa</a> <b><u>Prospective SANGs will be required to be visited by a NE officer, via NE's Discretionary Advice Service (DAS), to assess their suitability.</u></b>
	Section 5, Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)	Suggest adding wording to Section 5.2 to allow flexibility for any changes to the SAMM tariff that might be agreed with JSPB and Natural England.	Agree. A new paragraph has been added as follows:  <b><u>5.2.5 Bracknell Forest Council will continue to work collaboratively as part of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB). This includes agreeing and, where required, updating the SAMM tariff.</u></b>
		In para. 5.2.2, it states that 'Bracknell Forest Council <i>may</i> apply the new level of developer contributions to planning applications'. Clarify whether this is a definite commitment.	Agree. Para. 5.2.2 has been amended as follows:  <b><u>5.2.2</u></b> The JSPB has agreed that SAMM contributions should increase annually in line with inflation. Each year Bracknell Forest Council <del>may</del> <b><u>will</u></b> apply the new level of

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			developer contributions to planning applications validated from 1 April of that year and publish these on its website.
006 Surrey County Council		No comment	Noted
007 Sports England	Section 4, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)	SANG sites should not interfere or impact with designated sports sites such as playing fields.	Agree. Sport is a function of active open space and SANGs are for an entirely different purpose. We do not include sport pitches in our SANGs and vice versa. No changes necessary.
008 National Highways		No comment	Noted
010 Historic England		No comment	Noted
Non-statutory consultees (1 response)			
009 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Section 3, SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy	Para 3.3.6 - Whilst we think it is appropriate for Care Homes to be considered on a case-by-case basis within the 400m exclusion zone it is considered that the impacts from domestic cats on ground nesting birds are not able to be mitigated.	In the early days of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area mitigation strategy NE required pet restrictions on new care homes within 400m of the SPA. However, this was found to be very difficult to enforce and NE removed this requirement. Bracknell Forest Council therefore no longer places such restrictions on new care homes. No changes necessary.
		Para 3.3.9 For other use categories that constitute a net increase in residential development it must be clear that the 400m exclusion zone applies.	Agree. Para. 3.3.9 has been updated as follows:  <b>3.3.9 Mobile Homes:</b> Where the mobile home is a person's permanent address then avoidance and mitigation measures will be required. <b><u>This includes a</u></b>

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			<b><u>presumption against a net increase in residential development within 400m of the SPA.</u></b>
	Section 4, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)	Para 4.1.9 The main purpose of a SANG is for dog walking/recreation, BNG should be secondary benefit and not compromise the primary function of the SANG as an attractive recreational space.	Agree. Para. 4.1.9 updated as follows:  <b>4.1.9</b> The Council will expect wildfire issues to be addressed where relevant in terms of design and planting and seek some biodiversity enhancements on sites which are to be SANGs. <b><u>Although the main purpose of a SANG is for recreation and dog walking,</u></b> there may be the potential to bring forward biodiversity units for biodiversity net gain (BNG) on SANGs. However, only habitat creation or enhancement that is demonstrably additional, over and above the minimum requirements of the SANG can be attributed to BNG. All SANGs must comply with the NE SANG Quality Guidance which can be found on the Council's website at <a href="http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spa">http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spa</a> This also provides advice about BNG on SANGs and Defra has also produced guidance on this. Should the developer wish to explore or meet BNG requirements on SANG land, it is advised that they have early engagement with NE and BFC. Further advice should be sought from biodiversity guidance on the Council's website.
		Section 4.3 It is assumed that the SANG contribution will increase with inflation. Therefore, this needs to be included, and costs stated as per 2025.	Disagree. The SANG contributions set out in the draft SPA SPD are those that are intended to be published in the final SPD. Para. 4.3.9 explains that SANG contributions are index-linked to relevant inflationary increases to ensure the value of the contribution continues to reflect the costs of inflation. No changes necessary.

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	Section 6, Other Avoidance and Mitigation Measures	Para 6.2 It is important that assessment of functionally linked land is also applied to potential SANGs as well as development sites.	Agree. The Council already considers this issue, for example, an assessment of functionally linked land was recently applied to the proposed SANG and development site at Beaufort Park. No changes necessary.
Other organisations (1 response)			
002 Binfield Environment Group	Section 3, SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy	Need to publish information on habitat extent, quality and key species trends for SPA and SSSIs. Without this information you cannot know whether this strategy is working.	Agree, however this is a strategic responsibility of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project under the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership. The partnership is funded by developer contributions towards the SAMM project. The partnership carries out regular monitoring of the SPA and all the reports can be found at <a href="#">Published reports - Thames Basin Heaths</a> . These reports are discussed approximately twice yearly by the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) that oversees the work on the TBH SPA. This board is made up of one Councillor from each SPA-affected local authority. No changes necessary.

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	Section 4, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)	<p>Two significant problems with SANGs need to be addressed:</p> <p>a) Slow or stalled handovers from developers to BFC or third party resulting in the loss of feature or habitat quality.</p> <p>b) The trend towards green-spaces designed around the dog and hence particular habitat types that are of limited biodiversity benefit. SANGs should better reflect the relevant priorities in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the underlying soil type, water flow etc of the site.</p>	<p>a) For the majority of SANGs across the borough the handover from developers has been timely. However, the Council is working hard to progress the transfers of two SANGs in the Binfield area which have taken much longer than originally planned. Indeed, Blue Mountain SANG is in the process of being handed over by the developer to a third party who will take on the long-term management of this SANG. No changes necessary.</p> <p>b) Disagree that SANGs have limited biodiversity benefit. There have been significant biodiversity improvements on all our SANGs over the years. For example, Bucklers Park SANG has been recently recognised as 'Nature Space of the Year' by the Land Trust. As set out in para. 4.1.9 some SANGs may also be suitable for biodiversity net gain (further biodiversity enhancement) and in this case NE would be consulted to achieve the best for the site in terms of recreation and biodiversity. No changes necessary.</p>



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002 Binfield Environment Group	Section 7, Implementation and Monitoring	Publish information on habitat extent and quality and/or key species trends for the SPA and SSSIs. What steps you are going to take to gather it. Without this information you cannot know whether this strategy is working.	Agree, however this is a strategic responsibility of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project under the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership. The partnership is funded by developer contributions towards the SAMM project. The partnership carries out regular monitoring of the SPA and all the reports can be found at <a href="#">Published reports - Thames Basin Heaths</a> . These reports are discussed approximately twice yearly by the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) that oversees the work on the TBH SPA. This board is made up of one Councillor from each SPA-affected local authority. No changes necessary.
		There is a problem with slow handovers of SANGs from developers to BFC or other third parties resulting in reduction in the quality of the sites.	For the majority of SANGs across the borough the handover from developers has been timely. However, the Council is working hard to progress the transfers of two SANGs in the Binfield area which have taken much longer than originally planned. Indeed, Blue Mountain SANG is in the process of being handed over by the developer to a third party who will take on the long-term management of this SANG. No changes necessary.
		The trend towards green-spaces designed around the dog and hence particular habitat types that are of limited biodiversity benefit. In future SANGs should better reflect the relevant priorities in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the underlying soil type, water flow etc of the site.	Disagree that SANGs have limited biodiversity benefit. There have been significant biodiversity improvements on all our SANGs over the years. For example, Bucklers Park SANG has been recently recognised as 'Nature Space of the Year' by the Land Trust. As set out in para. 4.1.9 some SANGs may also be suitable for biodiversity net gain (further biodiversity enhancement) and in this case NE would be consulted to achieve the best for the site in terms of recreation and biodiversity. No changes necessary.

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		How to make sure that the quality of a SANG is maintained over time, especially where that SANG is not being managed by BFC?	The Council has accrued significant funding to ensure its SANGs are maintained in perpetuity. The Council also has a role to monitor the quality of SANG over time which will be secured in a legal agreement. No changes necessary.
Local residents (3 responses)			
Resident 1	General comment	Too much information provided and too detailed.	Apologise that the initial social media post contained errors so accept this was confusing. This was corrected on the first day of the consultation. No changes necessary.
		On the area next to Big Wood wild animals are at risk due to dog attacks.	The Council has limited resources to control dogs however the Parks and Countryside rangers work with dog owners to promote a code of conduct for responsible dog ownership and make sure it is followed. See <a href="#">Dog walking   Bracknell Forest Council</a>  The SANG status of Big Wood has allowed the Council to restore a major proportion of coniferous woodland to broadleaf and scrubland. Invasive bracken has started to be controlled throughout the site, several wildlife ponds have been created, and wildlife continues to be monitored. Peacock North meadow was created from the previous turf farm and converted to wildflower meadow to form the SANG. The rangers also witnessed two roe deer fawns last June within the meadow. No changes necessary.
		Wrote to Council previously and asked for the speed limit on Peacock Lane to be dropped to	This is a Highways issue and not a matter for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Supplementary Planning Document. No changes necessary.

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		30mph to protect deer, foxes, hedgehogs and resident cats.	
Resident 2	General comment	Query. Is 'available green space' also intended to be used for 'housing quota'?	Suitable alternative natural greenspace or SANG is provided by developers as mitigation for residential development to provide local green space and divert recreational visits from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. SANG must be provided for 125 years. More information can be found on the Council's website <a href="#">Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document   Bracknell Forest Council</a> No changes necessary.
		Concerns over air quality, avoiding disturbing wildlife and recreational spaces for mental and physical wellbeing, dense housing does not achieve these goals?	The Government sets the housing requirement for the borough and the Council is required to meet this. The purpose of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Supplementary Planning Document is to reduce the impact on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA from new housing and other development. No changes necessary.
		When planning new development, is existing road capacity, medical services, water treatment and infrastructure considered?	Yes, all these matters are considered. However, these matters are outside the scope of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Supplementary Planning Document. No changes necessary.
Resident 3	Section 4, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)	Para 4.5.4 reference to strong measures but no effective enforcement. Management and maintenance are fundamental – sites not being maintained.	Para. 4.5.4 refers to the time when SANGs are open but not yet transferred to the Council or another body for long term management. For the majority of SANGs across the borough the handover from developers has been timely. However, the Council is working hard to progress the transfers of several SANGs which have taken much longer than originally planned. Indeed, Blue Mountain SANG has recently been handed over by the

Representer	Relevant section in draft SPA SPD	Summary of comment	Council response
			<p>developer to a third party who will take on the long-term management of this SANG.</p> <p>The Council has accrued significant funding to ensure our SANGs are maintained in perpetuity. The Council also has a role to monitor the quality of the SANG over time which will be secured in a legal agreement. No changes necessary.</p>
	General comment	How much funding is placed with the Council for developments? Specifically, is SANG/SAMM funding was an either/or? Are funds ring-fenced?	<p>Para. 3.1.3 explains that both SANG and SAMM must be secured from developments.</p> <p>Section 4.3 explains that where a development uses Council owned SANG (strategic SANG) as mitigation, a SANG contribution is paid to Bracknell Forest Council and this is used to manage the SANG for 125 years.</p> <p>Para. 5.2.1 sets out that SAMM contributions are not spent by Bracknell Forest Council but passed to Hampshire County Council who administer the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring project.</p> <p>Developer contributions towards strategic SANGs are set to ensure that sufficient funds are available to the Council to manage the SANGs for 125 years. SANG budgets are set up specifically for this and closely managed to ensure that the funding lasts.</p> <p>All funds are secured by planning obligation in legal agreements meaning they must by contract and by law be used for the purposes they are secured for. They are ringfenced for their purposes.</p>

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			No changes necessary.
		Suggest that there is a limit on the number of dogs that professional dog walkers can have on SANGs (as the Crown Estate have done).	Disagree. The SAMM project run <a href="#">Heathland Hounds</a> to raise awareness of the impact of dogs on the sensitive ground nesting birds on the SPA. SANGs are specifically designed to divert recreational visits (including dog walkers) from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA to local greenspaces. It would be difficult to place restrictions on dogs on SANGs and without encouraging professional dog walkers to use the SPA instead. No changes necessary.
Developers (1 response)			
003 Persimmon Homes	Appendices	Inclusion of land under private ownership within the Warfield Park SANG – needs to be removed.	Agree. This is a mapping error. Figures 24 and 25 have been updated.