



**Englemere Pond
Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Plan
for
Special Protection Area (SPA) Mitigation Works**

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a network of heathland sites designated to protect the habitat of the internationally important bird species of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council is legally obliged to make sure that no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA will arise from new development. As a result, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document (SPA SPD) was approved in 2012. The SPA SPD identifies measures to avoid and mitigate adverse effects arising from proposed new residential development. The SPA SPD provides an integrated, holistic package of measures which includes both on-site and off-site measures to make the SPA less attractive in addition to making other areas of open space more attractive. A summary of the avoidance and mitigation measures, which will ensure that there will be no adverse effect upon the integrity of the SPA, can be found in section 3 of the document. These comprise:

- **Provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)** to attract people away from the SPA and hence reduce pressure on it;
- **Access management and monitoring measures** on, and monitoring of, the SPA to reduce the effect of people who visit the SPA; and
- **Habitat management** on the SPA.

Natural England has agreed that the implementation of this package of measures will ensure that harm to the SPA is avoided. The reasoning behind each of the measures, and their contribution towards avoiding harm to the SPA, is explained within the SPA SPD. This Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Plan (SANG plan) will deal solely with the implementation of one of the specific measures; enhancing an existing area open space.

The package of avoidance and mitigation measures will be funded through the collection of financial contributions from new development. Therefore, a proportion of this contribution will fund the specific works to enhance identified areas of open space in line with the SPA SPD, as set out in the remainder of this document.

1.2 Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Plans

This document comprises a suitable alternative natural greenspace plan (SANG plan) which expands upon the enhancement works required within the SPA SPD. This will also enable avoidance and mitigation measures to be closely linked to Section 106 contributions from specific developments.

1.3 Identification of Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space (SANGS)

The SPA SPD went through an extensive process to identify areas of open space as suitable alternatives to the SPA. Appendix 4 and 5 of the SPA SPD provide a rationale for the identification of areas of open space and Appendix 6 makes an appraisal of the necessary quality enhancements.

This plan builds upon the information and research presented within the SPA SPD to provide more detailed works and costs on how this site could be brought up to a suitable standard to provide an alternative to the SPA.

1.4 Englemere Pond as an alternative to the SPA

After considering the evidence, the SPA TBD concluded that:

“Englemere Pond generally attracts dog walkers who visit quite frequently and arrive by car. The site is suitable avoidance open space due to the varied nature of the habitats, meeting many of the points raised in Natural England’s quality guidelines. It is also deemed a quiet site by current users and capable of taking more visitors as all would continue to use the site if the user numbers doubled. These enhancements could include the path network and parking safety. The amount of visitors the site could take may be restricted due to the nature conservation value.”

Natural England has agreed that Englemere Pond can be used as a SANGS stating in their letter dated 12th January 2007, that *“consideration is needed as to whether increased numbers of visitors would have an adverse effect on the SSSI features of interest....It may however be possible for the improvements to include measures that increase the sites robustness regarding visitor pressure.”*

The SANGs assessment checklist is used in section 5 to demonstrate how Englemere Pond is suitable as an alternative to the SPA and how enhancements will enable its use as such. As this site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), special attention will be given to ensuring that the provision for increased visitor use will include opportunities for the ecological value of the site to be enhanced to favourable status.

2 Site Management Statement

2.1 Site Description

Area: 27.53 hectares

Englemere Pond Nature Reserve consists of a shallow acidic lake surrounded by planted forest and some areas of heathland offering a wide range of habitats that are important for wildlife. The site is popular with dog-walkers, ramblers and nature lovers.

2.1.1 Location

Englemere Pond Local Nature Reserve is situated off Swinley Road on the east side of Bracknell town within the parish of Winkfield.

OS grid reference: SU905685.

2.1.2 Adjacent land

The site is bordered by London road (A329) along the northern boundary, Swinley Road (B3017) which runs along the eastern side and the Reading to Waterloo railway line which runs along the southern boundary. The Lavender Park Golf Range is adjacent to the north-west of the site and Crowthorne Fencing occupies the timber yard found to the north of the site. The site is also bordered by several large residential properties around the perimeter.

2.1.3 Access

The main site entrance is located from Swinley Road (B3017) and leads to a car park with space for 14 cars. The entrance includes a height barrier and a locked field gate is positioned at the beginning of the trail to prevent vehicles from gaining access to the site.

Pedestrian access can be gained from Swinley Road south of the car park entrance, on London road opposite Fernbank Road and further along the London Road east of the timber yard entrance (see site plan, section 4). Disabled access is currently dependent on ground conditions.

Some areas of the site are prone to waterlogging and access has been improved through use of boardwalks and sleeper bridges.

2.1.4 Geology and soils

Bagshot Beds are the main geological feature at Englemere consisting of sands and clays created approx. 50 million years ago in shallow waters. When exposed, these produce podzol soils which are typically light, sandy and highly acidic. However, the pH does vary within small areas as indicated by the different flora.

2.1.5 Topography

The site is generally level in form with a slight fall of 5m from west to east and some fall to the north.

2.1.6 Drainage and flooding

The pond is fed via natural lateral seepage, although there are several ditches which lead to the pond. Three major inflows have been identified:

- Lavender Park drain, which flows from Whitmoor Bog Area
- Timber yard outlet drain
- Drain entering on southern edge of the pond

The nature of this site makes it susceptible to waterlogging, particularly in winter. An outflow exists at the Blackmoor Stream on the northern edge of the pond.

2.1.7 Landscape and views

The pond and reedbed are prominent features of this site and can be observed at various locations, most notably from the bench beside the pond. The mature trees to the north of the pond act as a formidable backdrop to the view. Previous removal of pine trees has regenerated a corridor of heathland creating a spectacular view down towards the pond from the south.

The woodland is predominately pine of varying age with a largely open canopy, although other areas of the wood include birch, alder and sweet chestnut, all of which add character to the site.

2.1.8 Wildlife / biodiversity

Englemere Pond is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and as a Local Nature Reserve due to the variety of rare species supported by the presence of important wetland plant communities, particularly the reedbed which is the second largest in Berkshire.

The site consists of a large acidic pond fringed by reedbeds and wetland plants such as roundleaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). This habitat supports a variety of rare invertebrates and birds including snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), willow warbler and kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) recorded in 2014.

Around the pond is an area of mixed woodland dominated by pines, some of which continues to be commercially managed by the Crown Estate whilst being sensitive to the ecological value of the site.

Some areas of the site have been cleared of trees to allow the regeneration of heathland which historically covered the site. This provides an important habitat for specialized species of invertebrates, reptiles and birds that are also important in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

2.1.9 Forestry

The Crown Estate operates a sustainable commercial woodland using Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) which uses the natural regeneration of Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) to stock the site as part of the Windsor Forest Plan. The area managed in this way forms three areas totalling 15.5 hectares (see section 4 site plan).

2.1.10 Archaeology and heritage

No archaeological evidence has been found on this site. The following information was supplied by Babbie using information contained on the Sites and Monuments Record:

“This pond was originally located within the central area of heathland. It is depicted on John Norden’s 1607 survey of Windsor Forest and John Rocques 1761 map of Berkshire. No other archaeological or historical information is available of this site without further research”.

However, past records have shown that Englemere Pond was historically important for hunting. In 942 AD, the Saxon King Edmund bestowed the whole of Swinley Forest to the Abbey of Abingdon where Englemere marked the eastern boundary of their lands. Over time, the site fluctuated from heathland to forest as grazing and hunting were subsequently added and removed. More recently in 1814 following the Windsor Forest Enclosure Act 1813, grazing deer were rounded up and the heathland of Swinley Forest was divided up. This meant that Englemere was then “*allotted for the benefit of the local pool*”. At the time, this area was considered at wasteland and described as a “*cold, miserable undrained morass in winter the haunt of the bittern and snipe, and in the summer the home of the frog-a beautiful wilderness of heather and gorse.*”

2.1.11 Recreational uses

The site is currently used by regular local dog walkers, bird watchers and also by people undertaking nature studies. It is regularly used by the Parks and Countryside Service as a location for public events.

2.1.12 Recreational routes

From the car park, a circular trail runs around the site, passing through an interesting variety of habitats and providing the visitor with some views of the pond. The trail measures 1.6km in length.

The Bracknell Forest Borough Council Ramblers Route passes through the site from a pedestrian access on London road and exiting at the car park as part of a 26 mile trail around the borough. A regional route, the Three Castles Walk also follows the same path through the site.

2.1.13 Interpretation and events

The current site information provision for Englemere Pond consists of:

- One site sign at the car park entrance
- General interpretation board and notice board adjacent to the car park
- Heathland information board on the circular trail
- Webpage on the Bracknell Forest Borough Council website at:

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parks

The Parks and Countryside Service uses the site as a location in which to hold public events such as guided nature walks and wild craft. Work groups of conservation volunteers are also actively involved in managing the site.

2.2 Legal and Planning Framework

2.2.1 Land ownership

The land is in the ownership of Crown Estates and is leased by Bracknell Forest Borough Council who manage the site. The area of commercial woodland is managed by the Crown Estate as Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF). Objectives for site management BFBC are agreed with the Crown Estates.

2.2.2 Fences and hedges

The site boundary consists of several differing types of fencing including wooden panels and a post and wire fence is located on the north boundary of the site.

2.2.3 Site furniture

The following features are located around the site:

- Height barrier at the car park entrance
- Metal gate at pedestrian entrance to prevent vehicles gaining access to the site.
- Bench located at the pond edge
- Litter bins are provided within the picnic area
- Stile at Swinley Road entrance

2.2.4 Byelaws

Englemere Pond is covered by a range of Byelaws displayed on the site noticeboard and records of which are kept by the Council. These include prohibition of vandalism, advertising, fires, motorized vehicles, bicycles, horses, caravans/camping, sailing and pollution.

2.2.5 Designations

Englemere Pond is designated a SSSI which requires that Natural England is consulted regarding any change in management of the site. It is also statutorily designated a Local Nature Reserve.

2.3 Resource Evaluation

This site is of high importance to nature conservation as reflected by its designations. The open space created by the mixture of habitats on the site provide an attractive place for people to visit for dog walking, bird watching and other similar pursuits.

Visitor surveys carried out as part of the Bracknell Forest SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy in 2006 found the following results:

Visitor Usage

- 75% of visitors usually use this open space, with the remainder visiting other spaces including: Swinley Park, Longhill Park, Lily Hill Park and Jocks Lane.
- 64% of users visit the site more than 4 times a week.
- The main reason given for visiting the site (82%) was to walk their dogs, with 7% for children's play and 7% for a walk.
- Visits were slightly longer than average, with 61% of people staying between 30 minutes and 1 hour.
- 78% of visitors always or usually felt safe when visiting.
- Only 18% of respondents thought this was a busy site and 72% thought it was usually or always quiet. All of the people questioned would continue to use the site, either at the same or a different time if the visitor numbers doubled.

Visitor Numbers

Total visits per year – 10,000 (existing)

Annual visitors – 60 (using 2006 visitor data)

Potential visitor capacity – 3,442

Accessibility

- 79% of visitors arrive by car with the remainder walking to the site. 93% of visitors travelled less than 5 kilometres and nobody travelled more than 10 minutes to get to the site.
- 19% of respondents rate the availability of parking as satisfactory and 14% rate the quality and convenience as satisfactory. 14% of visitors found the safety of the car park to be poor.

Appendix 8 of the SPA TBD provides a full assessment of the baseline data and an assessment of the site's potential to attract people from the SPA. An assessment of the site's capacity to attract visitors away from the SPA was made based upon existing visitor numbers and the SPA open space standards agreed with Natural England. These calculations are described in more detail in Section 20 of the SPA TBD (July 2007), specifically Table 15.

2.4 Constraints and Issues

- Englemere Pond has certain restrictions imposed by the SSSI status which requires consultation with Natural England prior to any management changes. As the site is of high ecological value, sensitive visitor management will be required to protect habitats whilst meeting SANGS criteria.
- The interests of the Crown Estate as landowner and the continuing use of parts of the site for commercial timber production need to be considered and consultation undertaken to obtain permission.
- Waterlogged soils in winter can restrict management activity and options for works.
- Security at the car park may need to be considered in light of previous improper use as a meeting place for anti-social behaviour.
- Dog fouling is a common issue at dog walking sites and will require attention.

2.5 Management Objectives

The following provide the overarching, existing management objectives for the site. These are in addition to the primary objective of this Open Space Management Plan, which is to enhance alternative green space to divert visitors from using the SPA.

2.5.1 Bracknell Forest Borough Council medium term objectives

2) To keep our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities accessible and attractive

Linking to:

4) To keep Bracknell clean and green

5) To improve health and well-being within the Borough

2.5.2 Bracknell Forest Borough Council Community Plan policies

- Priority 2 – Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Priority 3 – Improving health and well-being

Linking to:

- Priority 5 – A town fit for the 21st Century
- Priority 6 – Improving travel and transport
- Priority 7 – Promoting community safety
- Priority 8 – Improving community engagement

2.5.3 Site-based Objectives

- A. To provide a high quality recreation resource.
- B. To manage and enhance the biodiversity and landscape value of the site.
- C. To develop the site's strategic importance within the context of the developing

2.6 Management Strategies

These strategies include principles previously agreed with the Crown Estate and Natural England to ensure the best management of Englemere Pond.

2.6.1 Site maintenance

- To undertake regular inspections and surveys.
- To maintain all paths, car parks, site furniture, interpretation and notice boards.
- To address any anti-social behaviour that occurs at car park and elsewhere.
- To maintain the picnic area as an open, clean and inviting site.

2.6.2 Biodiversity

- To maintain and enhance the nature conservation value as a SSSI.
- To manage heathland for high biodiversity value and increase its area.
- To manage the woodland for biodiversity to provide a variety of ages and control invasive species.
- To maintain and enhance the lake and its wetland habitats for high biodiversity.
- For the Crown Estate to manage a proportion of the site as commercial timber in a sensitive manner.

2.6.3 Visitor Management

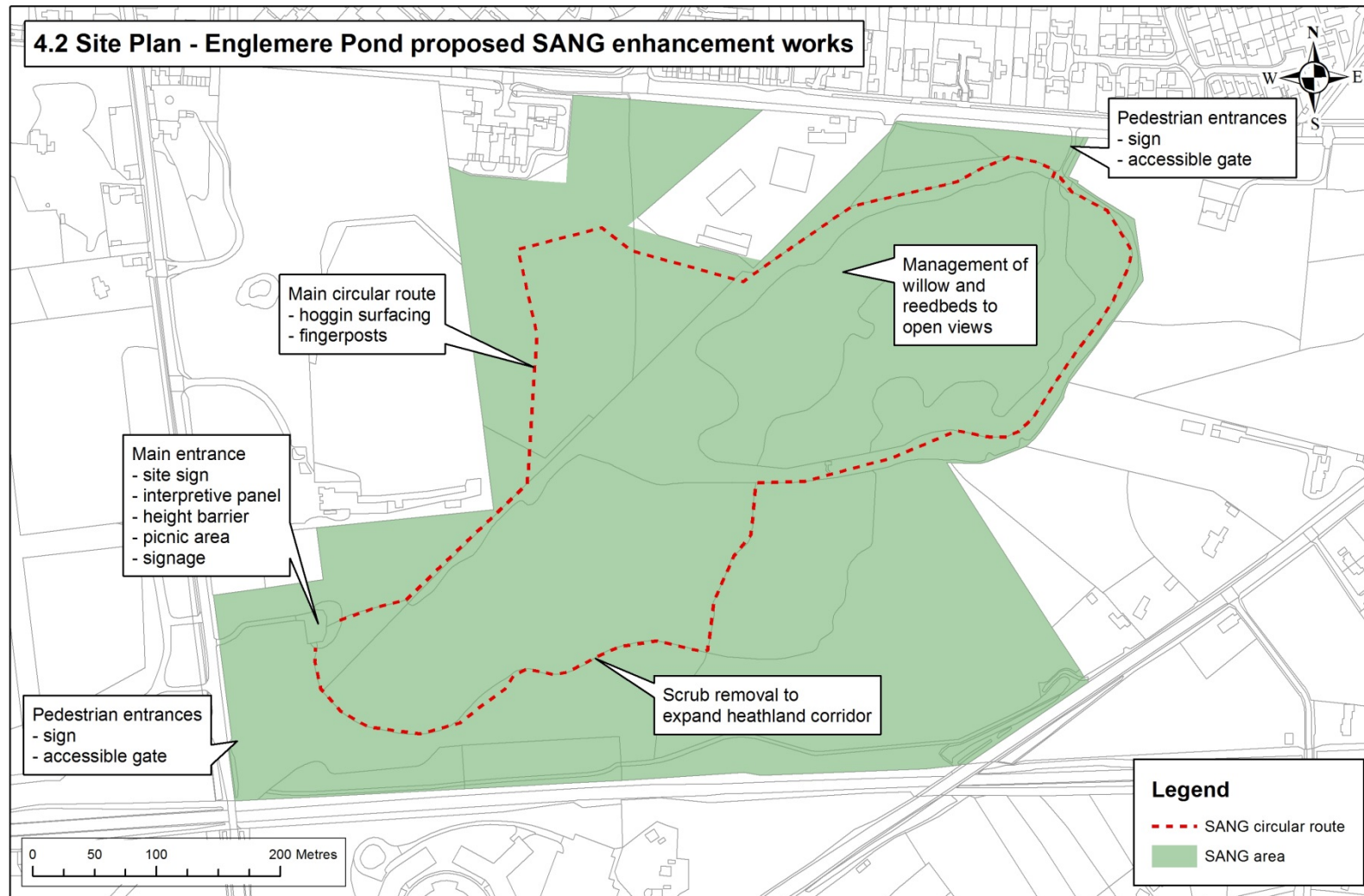
- Provide an area open to the public for informal recreation ensuring quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

- Improve access to the site including all major and secondary site entrances and links to the wider countryside.
- Upgrade all paths across the site to allow reasonable all year round access.
- Ensure public safety

4 Site Plan

4.1 Site Plan – Englemere Pond proposed SANG enhancement works

4.2 Site Plan – Englemere Pond (aerial)



Please note this site plan shows only a selection of proposed works, refer to section 3 Site Proposals for full details.

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5 Quality - SANGs Criteria Checklist

It must be noted that the primary aim of enhancement is to encourage further visitor access. Works should facilitate this by providing management for 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, promotion etc. All enhancements must be undertaken prior to inhabitants moving into the dwellings to ensure that people do not develop a habit of visiting other sites, such as the SPA.

The following provides a list of relevant factors in considering a site's suitability to meet SANGS criteria based on Natural England guidance.

	Criteria	Must Should Desirable	Before	After
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	Formal car park with 14 spaces.	Improved site signage at car park and links from car park into and around site. Anticipated usage still allows for 14 spaces.
2	SANGS must be clearly signposted or advertised in some way.	S	Site entrance signs. Site webpage. Site leaflet online (over 10 years old)	New site entrance signs; interpretive panels; directional fingerposts around site; new site leaflet.
3	Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly signposted.	S	Site entrance sign.	Road sign & new site entrance signs.
4	The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGS intend to absorb.	M	Main vehicular entrance point and three formal pedestrian entrance points.	All entrance points to be upgraded to enhance attractiveness and accessibility where applicable. All main paths to be surfaced.
5	The SANGS must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath/s.	M	Wide choice of routes around site from car park and entrance points.	Improved links and signage from car park into site.

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 park adjacent to links around site.	Improved links and signage from car park into site.
7	All SANGS with car parks must have a circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park.	M	Car park located at western edge of site allowing choice of routes around site. Existing circular route starts and finishes at car park.	Improved links, signage and information on routes from car park into and around site. New extended circular route starts and finishes at car park.
8	SANGS larger than 12 ha must be designed to supply a choice of routes, from 0.5 km to more than 3.5 km in length.	M	Choice of routes around site, existing circular route is 1.6 km.	Improved signage around and site, with the extended circular walk (2 km) and further secondary paths.
9	SANGS must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by the users.	M	Open plan car park and views through site and pond.	Scrub clearance to enhance views to car park, at entrances, across heathland and pond. Enhanced safety and security for users.
10	SANGS should have tree and scrub cover along parts of the walking route.	S	Large areas of tree and shrub cover around site.	Heathland regeneration encouraged.
11	Paths must be easily used and well maintained, but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.	M	Mix of surfaced and unsurfaced paths.	Principal paths to be surfaced with local hoggins to retain natural feel. Secondary paths are unsurfaced.
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	Minimal way-marking and site furniture.	Some benches and signage to be added to enhance visitor experience but remain in-keeping with environment.

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	Minimal site interpretation. Site leaflet no longer printed.	New interpretive panels and directional fingerposts and way-markers around site.
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	Mix of large areas of open space, scrub and woodland. Site focused around large lake.	Heathland regeneration encouraged. Pond works to restrict succession of lake and to open up views.
15	All SANGS larger than 12 ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience.	M	Large areas of open space, scrub and trees. Site focused around large lake.	Site includes open spaces, scrub, heathland, woodland and large lake.
16	Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS.	D	Some undulating topography.	No change.
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	No internal fencing.	Boundary fencing improved. No internal fencing.
18	Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a view point, monument etc. within SANGS.	D	Lake provides central focus and viewpoint for site.	Scrub and willow clearance to enhance views across lake and site.
19	SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works, smells etc.).	M	No unpleasant intrusions.	No change.

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	Site webpage and leaflet available to download online.	Webpage updated with site information and news. New site leaflet printed and distributed.
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6 Costs

Works	Location	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Information & Interpretation				
Site signs				
- Main entrance	Swinley Road	250	1	£250
- Secondary entrances	London Road (opposite fernbank)	400	1	£400
	London Road	150	1	£150
	Swinley Road	150	1	£150
Roadside directional signs	Swinley Road	£1,000	2	£2,000
Site noticeboard with combined interpretive panel	Car park; London road entrance	£2,500	2	£5,000
Interpretation features	Around site	£1,500	2	£6,000
Fingerposts	Around site	£200	8	£1,600
Site Leaflet	n/a	n/a	20,000	£2,500
Installation costs	(as above)	n/a	n/a	£10,000
				£28,050
Access				
			(m)	
Car park - install formal edging (knee rail)	Car park	15/m	250	£3,750
Boardwalk / raised path from car park	Car park	£50 / m	160	£8,000
Path surfacing (hoggin)	Main circular route	£30 / m	1940	£58,200
Ditch clearance to main track		30 / m	400	£12,000
Lake bank repair works by bench	Pond edge	n/a	n/a	£3,000
Height barrier		n/a	n/a	£2,000
Installation costs		n/a	n/a	£5,000
				£91,950
Furniture				
Bins (incl. installation)	Site entrances	£300	1	£300
Accessible gates (incl. installation)	Pedestrian entrances	£180	4	£720
Seating - benches (incl. installation)	Around site	£300	4	£1,200
Picnic benches	Adjacent to car park	£500	4	£2,000
Ditch crossings	Across site	£250	5	£1,250
				£5,470
Habitat Management				
Ecological surveys (birds, invertebrates, plants, etc)	Across the site	n/a	n/a	£1,000
Scrub control	Adjacent to car park	£300 / day	5	£1,500
	Other areas	£300 / day	5	£1,500
	Heathland corridor	£300 / day	5	£1,500
Bracken management	Heathland corridor	£1020 / ha	1.4	£1,428
	Scots pine regeneration	£1020 / ha	15.5	£15,810
Heathland management (scrapes)	Heathland corridor	£300 / day	21	£6,300
Pond management				£68,000
Wildlife features (bird boxes, bat boxes, etc)	Across site	n/a	n/a	£200
Tree management	Adjacent to paths	£300 per day	7	£2,100
				£99,338
TOTAL COST				£224,808
<i>N.B. All costs based on a combination of published catalogue prices, actual current costs & recent estimates.</i>				

7 Glossary

Core Strategy DPD	Document within the Local Development Framework which sets out strategic development proposals until 2026.
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPA SPD	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Supplementary Planning Document (SPA SPD). Available to download from www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

8 References

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