

**Shepherd Meadows
Open Space Management Plan**



**for
Thames Basin Heaths
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 importance bird species of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Bracknell Forest 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 SPA Technical Background Document to the Core Strategy (hereafter referred to as SPA TBD) was produced, which identifies measures to avoid and mitigate adverse effects arising from proposed new residential development. The SPA TBD provides an integrated, holistic package of measures which includes both on-site and off-site measures to protect the SPA 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 28 of the Technical Background Document (June 2007). These comprise:

- Bespoke solutions for strategic sites or other large developments
- Enhancements to existing open space, to enable smaller developments to avoid their impacts
- Visitor access management on the SPA
- Restrictions on development within 400m
- Education
- No net loss of supporting habitats
- Restrictions on pet ownership where appropriate.

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 TBD. This Open Space Management Plan is one of a series of plans which solely deal 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 TBD, as set out in the remainder of this document.

1.2 Open Space Management Plans

This report comprises an open space management plan which expands upon the enhancements works identified within the SPA TBD. This will also enable avoidance and mitigation measures to be closely linked to Section 106 contributions from specific developments.

1.3 Identification of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS)

The SPA TBD went through an extensive process to identify areas of open space as suitable alternatives to the SPA. Section 20 and Appendix 8 of the SPA TBD provide a rationale for the identification of areas of open space and Appendix 9 makes an appraisal of the necessary quality enhancements.

Therefore, this report builds upon the information and research presented within the SPA TBD to provide more detailed works and costings on how Shepherd Meadows could be brought up to a suitable standard to provide an alternative to the SPA.

1.4 Shepherd Meadows as an alternative to the SPA

After considering the evidence, the SPA TBD concluded that:

“It is a suitable site as an alternative to the SPA, as visitors also used Wildmoor Heath. Improvements to, and links with, the Blackwater Valley path could extend the effectiveness of the site as an alternative to the SPA.”

Natural England has agreed that Shepherd Meadows can be used as a SANGS stating in their letter dated 12th January 2007, that *“this site appears to have considerable potential to upgrade its attractiveness. It is however a SSSI and any proposed improvements must not conflict with the interest features of the site.”*

The SANGS assessment checklist is used in section 5 to demonstrate how Shepherd Meadows is suitable as an alternative to the SPA and how enhancements will enable its use as such. As this site is designated as part of Blackwater Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), special attention will be given to ensuring that the provision for increased visitor use will include opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the site.

2 Site Management Statement

2.1 Description

2.1.1 Location

Shepherd Meadows is situated to the south of Bracknell adjacent to the east of Sandhurst at the most southern end of Bracknell Forest Borough. Predominantly located in the county of Berkshire, part of the site is within Hampshire and it lies close to the border with Surrey.

OS grid reference: SU845607.

Area: 33.72 hectares

2.1.2 Adjacent land

The site lies between Sandhurst town to the north and west, Blackwater to the south and Camberley to the east. The northern boundary of the site is lined by Marshall Road (A321) whilst the southern side is bordered by the railway line. The residential development of Frogmore to the south is visible from the site. Adjacent to the north is "The Meadows" shopping centre. Shepherd Meadows is linked to Sandhurst Memorial Park to the northwest and these two sites form a continuous public open space. The Blackwater river runs through the site.

2.1.3 Access

The main access to the site is from Marshall Road leading into two small adjacent car parks with height barriers that provide 24 spaces (including 1 disabled space and 1 reserved for parent & child space). Pedestrian access from these car parks is open (i.e. no gates are used). Other pedestrian entrances are located along the public right of way (Sandhurst footpath 1) adjacent to the western car park, at the south end of the site adjacent to London Road, Frogmore in the centre of the southern side and from Sandhurst Memorial Park (see site plan).

Surfaced routes are provided from the western car park to the fishing platforms on the Blackwater river at the north end of the site. The path and platforms were designed to be easy to use for the mobility impaired. In other areas, hoggins and unsurfaced paths are provided, however their useability varies depending on weather conditions as this naturally wet site is prone to waterlogging.

2.1.4 Geology & soils

The Blackwater Valley SSSI citation identifies mainly sandy and loamy drifts of the Swanwick series, overlying alluvium and river gravels. Soils are sandier and drier to the north where the profile is a good sandy loam, but less free draining to the south and a sandy clay in Bottom Meadow.

2.1.5 Topography

As part of a flood plain, the land is very flat and lies just below the 60m contour line. Any gradient slopes towards the river and from west to east.

2.1.6 Drainage & flooding

Due to the nature of the flood plain, much of the site can flood during the winter or occasionally through heavy thunderstorms in the summer. A network of open ditches and culverts exist to retain water. In the past The Blackwater river was deepened and levees installed at intervals to reduce flooding.

The hydrology is extremely complex and has been investigated as part of the Environment Agency and English Nature's Water Level Management Plan for the Blackwater Valley SSSI through a monitoring programme of dipwells at Shepherd Meadows. Some water is directed from the roof of the Meadows Shopping Centre to the site in order to help increase water levels. This has shown that flows into the site have been affected by adjacent development and that the hydrology is gradually changing. The site does flood during extreme weather as part of a naturally functioning floodplain.

2.1.7 Landscape & views

Views across open meadows are important in the borough and for this reason the site is highly valued. The site forms part of the green gap between Sandhurst and Blackwater.

2.1.8 Wildlife and biodiversity

Shepherd Meadows is designated as part of the Blackwater Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and parts are designated a Wildlife Heritage Site (WHS) due to the presence of species rich grasslands and other wetland habitats (see site plan). It is anticipated that habitats for which the site was designated will not be adversely affected by increased numbers of visitors through the use of enhanced access and habitat management.

The key habitats are the river, grassland, woodland and hedgerows:

The Blackwater River is a lowland river, which is essentially calcareous due to the nature of the soils near its source. Through Shepherd Meadows, the Blackwater River occupies a meandering channel with aquatic plants and good stands of emergent plants in places.

Shepherd Meadows support a number of species rich grasslands of national importance for their plant communities. The meadows range in their water levels and range from neutral to acidic in nature. These are managed by grazing and hay-cutting to encourage species diversity.

Wet woodlands on the site support nationally important populations of rare plants such as the Elongated Sedge *Carex elongata*.

The native hedgerows at Shepherds Meadows can be seen on maps dating back 250 years (as held in the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy museum) and are considered valuable for their historical importance as well as their ecological interest. The hedgerows are composed of hazel, hawthorn, buckthorn, holly and field maple, with standard trees of oak and alder and provide a habitat for many species.

Nine Bracknell Forest BAP species were recorded at the site in 1997: devil's bit scabious, ragged robin, brilliant emerald dragonfly, stag beetle, bullfinch, hobby, kingfisher, water vole and noctule bat.

2.1.9 Archaeology & Heritage

The site was originally owned by the Ministry of Defence through the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst. Due to the wet ground conditions, the R.M.A. used the site little, apart from rough grazing, and as part of the cadets' drawing and map making training. In 1891 a cadet, Crispin, drew a road reconnaissance map and marked the site as grass and hay. Field boundaries were marked as laid out today.

The site was acquired by Bracknell Forest Borough Council in 1990 and it was named after local wildlife artist David Shepherd.

2.1.10 Recreational uses

Shepherd Meadows is used by the local community for informal recreation. The site is currently used by regular local dog walkers, bird watchers and also by people undertaking nature studies. It is occasionally used by the Parks and Countryside Service as a location for public events. Paths from Darby Green to the south of the river are also heavily used as a through route.

A number of recreational facilities are available at the site, including a kick-about area, picnic area, surfaced paths and benches.

Bracknell Forest Council leases the fishing rights along its stretch of the Blackwater River to Hartley Witney Angling Society, who issue day permits and season tickets. Fishing platforms with disabled access have also been recently created.

2.1.11 Recreational routes

The site leaflet and interpretation boards provide information on the main routes around the site. The current approach is for self led walks rather than waymarked trails, although finger posts are located at key locations to connect interesting features of the site. The Blackwater Valley Path is a long-distance route of 23km in 12 sections which passes through the site from the south end of the site (A30) to Sandhurst Memorial Park.

The site is also used as a 'greenway' or transport link for people travelling between Blackwater Station and residential areas or The Meadows opposite.

2.1.12 Interpretation & events

The current site information provision for Shepherd Meadows consists of:

- Two site signs at the car park entrance
- General interpretation board and notice board adjacent to the car park
- Interpretation board at boundary with BBOWT site and Sandhurst Memorial Park and at central bridge over the river.
- Joint webpage on the Bracknell Forest Council website: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parks-and-countryside/parks-visit/shepherd-meadows-and-sandhurst-memorial-park
- Information about the Blackwater Valley on the BVCT's website: <http://www.bvct.org.uk>
- Joint webpage on the Sandhurst Town Council at www.sandhurst.gov.uk.
- Site leaflet combined with Sandhurst Memorial Park

The Parks and Countryside Service uses the site as a location in which to hold public events such as guided nature walks. 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 site is owned by Bracknell Forest Council and adjoins open space owned by Sandhurst Town Council and Blackwater & Hawley Town Council.

2.2.2 Fences & hedges

The majority of boundaries on the site are formed by hedgerows of varying condition which have been supplemented with post and rail fencing where grazing is required. Along the southern side of the site, the railway land is lined by wire fencing owned and maintained by Network Rail.

2.2.3 Site furniture

The following features are located around the site:

- Height barrier at the car park entrances
- Metal benches located at various points along the river
- Litter bins are provided close to site entrances for general and dog waste
- Stiles are present at some points in the south of the site
- 5 large bridges across the river
- 4 small bridges across ditches
- 3 disabled fishing platforms are located on the north side of the river

2.2.4 Byelaws

A range of byelaws are made under sections 12 and 15 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 (and records of which are kept by the Council). These have been made to help address vandalism, protect the river, and control the use of vehicles and livestock.

2.2.5 Designations

Shepherd Meadows is part of the Blackwater SSSI which requires that Natural England is consulted regarding any change in management of the site. Parts of the site are also designated as WHS (see site plan).

Sandhurst footpath 1, a Public Right of Way, enters the site from across Marshall Road at the western car park.

2.3 Resource Evaluation

This site is of high nature conservation importance as reflected by its designations. The generally open nature of the site creates an attractive experience with the river as a key feature enjoyed by visitors. The site provides a range of areas from the accessible surfaced paths and kick-about areas to the wildflower meadows and wet woodland that provide a “wilder” experience.

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

Visitor Usage

- 78% of all visitors surveyed stated this was the open space they regularly visited, with Wildmoor Heath being the other most visited.
- Shepherds Meadows is mainly used for exercising the dog (60%) while the remainder used it for walking (12%), cycling (6%) and relaxing (6%).
- 93% of those surveyed felt safe when visiting.
- Visits were predominantly more than 30 minutes and over a quarter were 1-2 hours.
- 65% rated the site as busy; however, 92% would continue to use the site if visitor numbers doubled.

Visitor Numbers

Total visits per year – 90,000 (existing)

Annual visitors – 540 (using current visitor data)

Potential visitor capacity - 2,250 (rounded down).

Accessibility

- 51% of visitors arrive on foot, 38% by car, 7% by bike and 4% by other means.
- 57% have come from within 1km and only 7% travelled over 5km.
- Average journey time for most visitors was less than 10 minutes.

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

- Shepherd Meadows has 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.
- Waterlogged soils in winter can restrict management activity and options for works.
- Work involving the river may require consent from the Environment Agency.

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 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 Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2014

- Priority 1a – Opportunities for everyone
- Priority 2a – Sustainable development
- Priority 2b - Protecting the environment
- Priority 2c – Travelling around the Borough
- Priority 3b – Enjoying life
- Priority 3c – Being & feeling safer

2.5.3 Site-based Objectives

- To provide a high quality recreation resource.
- To manage and enhance the biodiversity and landscape value of the site.
- To develop the site's strategic importance within the context of the developing BFBC Greenspace Strategy and SPA Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (2007).

2.6 Management Strategies

These strategies include principles previously agreed with Natural England that are set out in the Sandhurst Memorial Park and Shepherd Meadows Management Plan.

A To maintain and improve the nature conservation interest of the site and the intrinsic role it plays in the ecology and hydrology of the River Blackwater and the Blackwater Valley.

- A.1 Maintain and improve the nature conservation interest of the grassland areas.
- A.2 Maintain and improve the structure and species diversity of existing and new hedgerows.
- A.3 Maintain the ecological interest of the woodland.
- A.4 Maintain and improve the value of the site for its associated faunal interest.
- A.5 Monitor the site's hydrological conditions and their impact on the site's floral value.

B To provide a sustainable informal recreation resource.

- B.1 Provide an informal recreation resource through regular site and facilities maintenance.

C To provide an educational resource.

- C.1 Provide an education resource for local schools and colleges.
- C.2 Provide informal information and education

D To manage the landscape so as to provide a visual green wedge between Sandhurst and Darby Green.

3 Site Proposals for SPA Mitigation

The measures within this plan were identified by using the Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) assessment checklist set out in section 5 of this plan. This sets out criteria which are both essential and desirable in achieving the primary aim of providing alternative green space to divert visitors from using the SPA. The intention of these SANGS is to avoid and mitigate the impacts of recreation arising from new residential development, by preventing an increase in visitor pressure on the SPA.

As a result, the proposed works are in addition to existing management and general upgrading of the site. The enhancements to these alternative areas of open space aim to replicate features which have been found to draw visitors to the SPA and improve access alongside enhancement of the site's natural qualities.

The attached spreadsheet in section 6 lists these works and provides a breakdown of the costs of each element. A selection of the main works is also shown on the annotated site map. The proposed works are as follows:

3.1 Information and Interpretation

- **Site noticeboard and interpretive panels:** these will provide information on the site and its background, commencing with an information point at the car park to introduce the site and enable people to see where they are and how they can move around the site using the circular route and various other paths. Further boards will explain the site's wildlife importance with panels possibly linked to grassland, woodland and river areas. Regularly updated posters and leaflets will also be displayed on noticeboards in order to inform visitors of events and seasonal site information.
- **Fingerposts and waymarkers** at strategic points (primarily site entrances and path junctions) and on the principal paths around the site will enable visitors to navigate around the site with ease. They will also help link the site to adjoining public rights of way, long distance paths (such as the Blackwater Valley Path) and adjoining sites such as Sandhurst Memorial Park, providing a greater greenspace and path network.
- **Site leaflet:** a glossy, colour leaflet which will include site and access information, background details of the different areas, nature conservation information as well as a map to help visitors find their way around. The existence of a leaflet, distributed via the Borough Council offices, website, libraries and information points such as The Look Out Discovery Centre will also help inform potential visitors of the site's presence and its use as an alternative recreational resource to the SPA. Marketing will also include targeting new residents; including providing information at locations such as Estate Agents.

3.2 Access

- **Main entrance**
 - Vegetation either side of the main entrance will be managed to provide a more welcoming site entrance.
 - Interpretation will be provided at entrances from both car parks including a map of the suggested circular route.
- **Existing pedestrian entrances** will be enhanced through the cutting back of vegetation, installation of site signs and new furniture. In particular, existing stiles and gates will be replaced with accessible wooden kissing gates to allow improved access for mobility impaired users.
- **Paths:** existing paths around the site will be improved as follows:
 - A main circular route will be promoted around the site to provide a principal route of approximately 2.6km and guide the majority of users around the site. The first section along the north side of the river will be upgraded to a resin bound surface, the southern side of the river will be upgraded to hoggin where appropriate. A small section of boardwalk will be installed for more adventurous users through the woodland where surfacing is not suitable.
 - Secondary paths will be cleared and formalised to provide further links throughout the site for those users who wish to walk further. The reinstatement of a path linking to the neighbouring business park will be investigated.
 - Works will repair the river bank at sections where erosion has occurred using natural materials where possible.

3.3 Furniture

New site furniture will enhance visitors' use of the site as well as providing a more welcoming and attractive appearance to the area. Where feasible, bespoke furniture will be used for the site, as at other SANGS (e.g. Lily Hill Park).

- New and additional **picnic benches** will be provided adjacent to the car park to enhance the kick-about area.
- New **seating** will be provided at strategic points around the site focusing on the river, to allow visitors to enjoy the visual amenity of the site and also where rest points may be required.
- New **bins** will be installed around the site at strategic locations such as the main and secondary entrances and adjacent to the car park and kick-about area. These will be combined litter and dog-waste bins in line with Bracknell Forest Council practice of using combined bins. Designs will be chosen so as to be in-keeping with the natural feel of the site.

- **Waymarkers and/or finger posts** will be used to guide visitors around the site and link with adjacent areas.
- **New bridges** where crossings and ground conditions are difficult particularly in grazing areas and re-grading of approach slopes to improve access for disabled users.

3.4 Habitat Management

Vegetation works will be carried out in order to enhance the nature conservation interest of the site by creating a variety of vegetated areas and habitats for different species. This will enable the maintenance of favourable condition of the SSSI. Vegetation clearance and management will also increase the safety and security of the site for users.

- **Grassland enhancements** such as raking and additional seeding using on site sources where possible within the non-SSSI areas.
- **Tree management** - to ensure safety of users on principal and secondary paths and to manage trees on the river bank.
- **Pond restoration** to excavate a boggy area that previously formed a pond supporting wetland flora within the non-SSSI area.
- **Hedgelaying** and planting to improve habitat value and maintain boundaries.
- **Wildlife features** such as bat boxes and bird boxes to be installed within different areas of the site to improve opportunities for biodiversity.

3.5 Implementation

3.5.1 Funding

Funding for the proposed works as costed in section 6 will come from new residential development within the Borough which is likely to have an adverse effect on the SPA, as set out in Chapter 11 of Limiting the Impact of Development Supplementary Planning Document, July 2007 (LID). This states that legal obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act will be entered into before a planning application is determined. A proportion of the total amount payable under this agreement will go towards open space enhancement measures and ongoing management associated with these measures as detailed within this plan. These measures will ensure the site is suitable as an alternative to the SPA and will attract new residents away from the SPA.

3.5.2 Prioritising Works

Implementation of the proposed works will be prioritised in the following order (unless deemed inappropriate due to other site works going on at that time):

1. Site entrance and visual works
2. Path and access improvements
3. Information and interpretation provision

4. Other works (including habitat management)

The timing of works will relate to planning approvals and the availability of SPA related Section 106 funding.

3.5.3 Monitoring

ODPM Circular 05/2005 on Planning Obligations requires that planning obligations are implemented or enforced in an efficient and transparent way, in order to ensure that contributions are spent on their intended purpose and that the associated development contributes to the sustainability of the area. This will require monitoring by local planning authorities through the use of standardised systems to ensure that information on the implementation of planning obligations is readily available to the local authority, developer and members of the public. Regular reports on the monitoring information will also be provided to Natural England.

To meet the requirements of the Circular, monitoring will demonstrate how the spending of contributions on enhancements to an open space site link to specific developments within its catchment area. This will also ensure the capacity of the open space, as calculated in the SPA TBD, is not exceeded and the enhancement works are effective in attracting new visitors from the SPA.

A proportion of the funding obtained through the S106 agreement will provide additional staffing and long term maintenance of the SANGS (see chapter 11 of LID). In addition, resources will be provided to ensure the full package of avoidance and mitigation measures are monitored to ensure their continued effectiveness. Details of the monitoring and review of the SPA TBD are outlined in Section 29 of the document.

3.6 Consultation

This plan has been developed in consultation with Natural England, Sandhurst Town Council, Blackwater & Hawley Town Council and the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership. Work has been led by the Bracknell Forest Council Parks & Countryside Service including the Biodiversity Officer and site Rangers.

3.7 Conclusion

The measures within this plan were identified by using the SANGS assessment checklist (see section 5) as being necessary to attract existing users from the SPA and encourage new residents to visit the enhanced area of open space in preference to the SPA. These works are in addition to existing management objectives and general upgrading of the site.

The works will significantly enhance Shepherd Meadows and provide a more attractive, welcoming, user-friendly and accessible site. New interpretive material will provide the means to raise awareness and encourage an increase in visitor numbers. Targeted marketing will ensure that the site is well publicised.

Alongside the capital programme, day to day management is needed to sustain these improvements and ensure that any increased use of the site continues to be attractive to visitors.

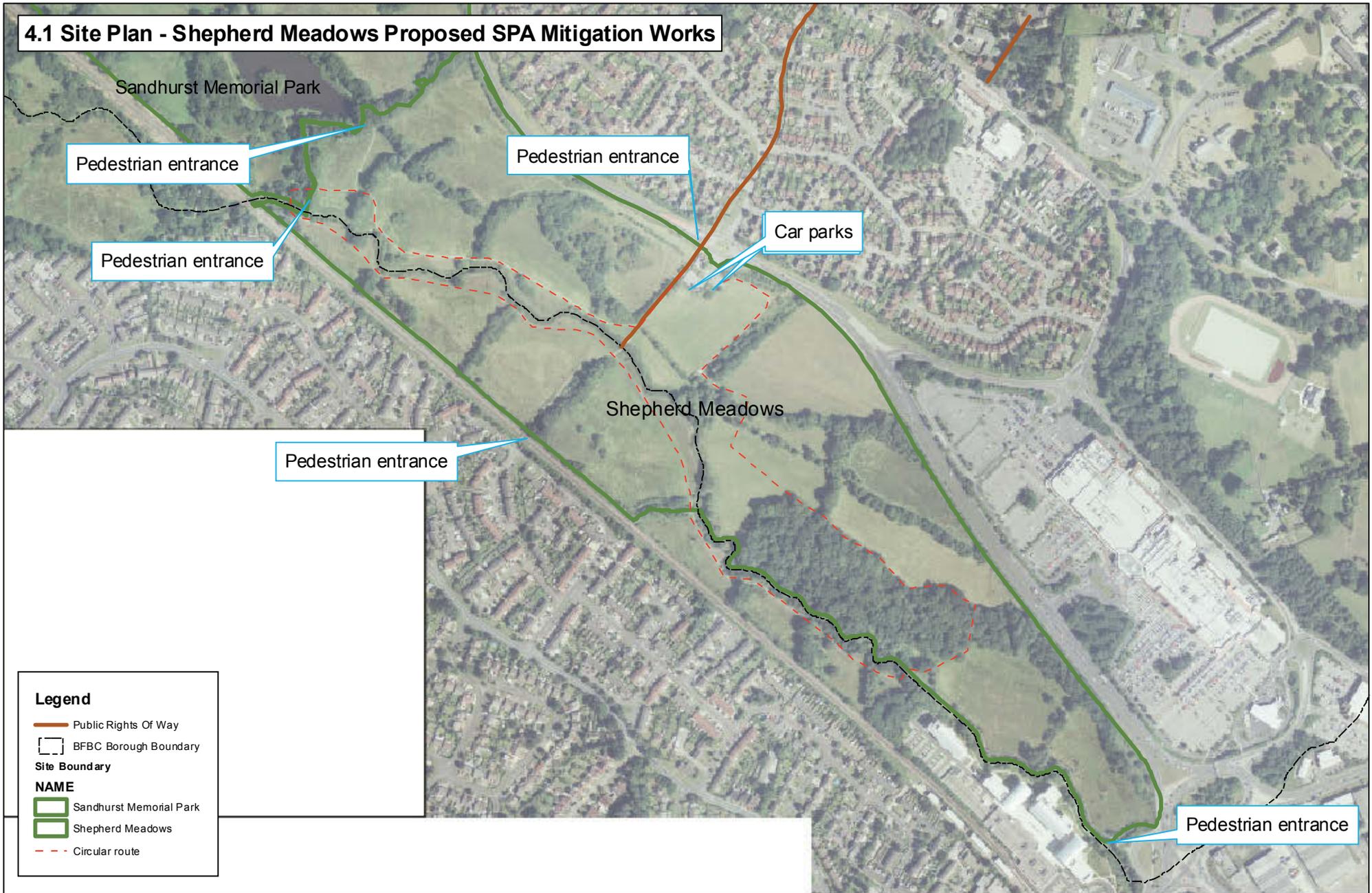
As a component of a wider package of measures the works detailed within this plan will avoid the adverse impacts of recreation arising from new residential development on the SPA and enable sustainable development within the Borough.

4 Site Plan

4.1 Site Plan – Shepherd Meadows (aerial)

4.2 Site Plan – Shepherd Meadows Proposed SPA Mitigation Works

4.1 Site Plan - Shepherd Meadows Proposed SPA Mitigation Works



Legend

- Public Rights Of Way
- BFBC Borough Boundary
- Site Boundary**
- NAME**
- Sandhurst Memorial Park
- Shepherd Meadows
- Circular route

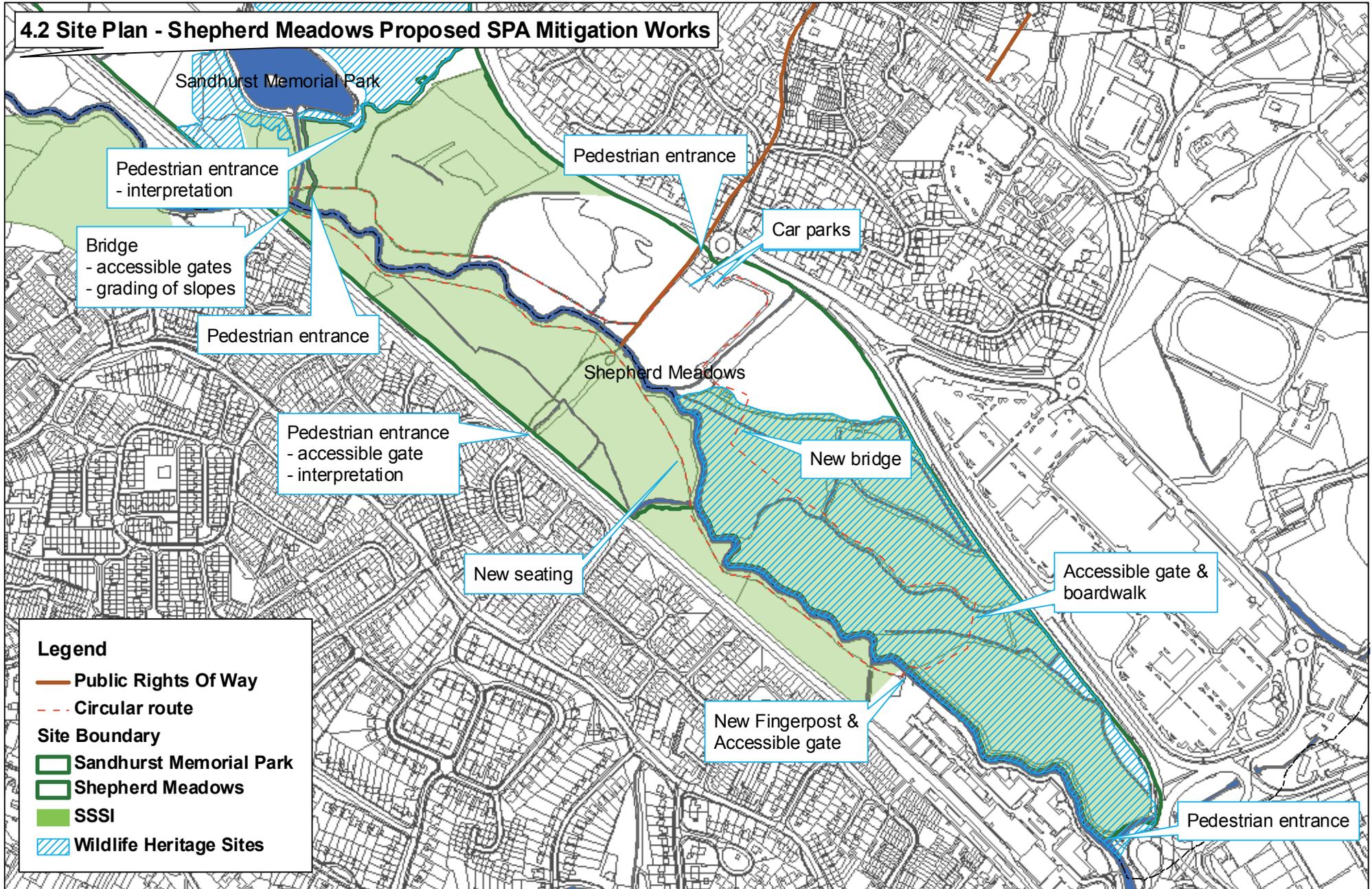


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 Bracknell Forest Borough Council LA100019488.

4.2 Site Plan - Shepherd Meadows Proposed SPA Mitigation Works



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



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5 SANGS Criteria Assessment

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.

| | Criteria | Must, Should, Desirable | Current | Future |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | For all the sites larger than 4Ha 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 | 2 formal car parks. 24 car spaces | Improved site signage at car park and links from car park into and around site. Anticipated usage still allows for 24 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) | 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 signs. | Site entrance signs shall be improved and maintained. |
| 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 four formal pedestrian entrance points. | All entrance points to be upgraded to enhance attractiveness and accessibility where applicable. Stiles to be replaced with accessible kissing gates. |
| 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 the centre of site allowing choice of routes around site. | Improved links, signage and information on routes from car park into and around site. New circular route starts and finishes at car park. |
| 8 | SANGS larger than 12Ha must be designed to supply a choice of routes, from 0.5Km to more than 3.5Km in length. | M | Choice of routes around site. | Improved signage around and site, with the new circular walk (2.6km) and further secondary paths and links to 23km route along Blackwater Valley. |
| 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. | Scrub clearance to enhance views to car park, at entrances and provision of seating nearby. Enhanced safety and security for users. |
| 10 | SANGS should have tree and scrub cover along parts of the walking route. | S | Areas of woodland and hedgerows around site. | Circular route takes in a variety of habitats including tree cover. |
| 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. | Circular route to provide surfacing on most used areas and include works to improve drainage. |
| 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 does not provide a suggested circular route. | New interpretive panels and directional fingerposts and waymarkers around site. |
| 14 | It is desirable that SANGS provide the naturalistic space with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside | D | Mix of large areas of open space, hedgerows and | Habitat enhancement works to improve wildlife and landscape |

| | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|
| | and areas of dense and scattered trees and shrubs. The provision of open water on part, but not the majority, of sites is desirable. | | woodland. The river provides a site focus. | value. |
| 15 | All SANGS larger than 12Ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience. | M | Large areas of grassland, hedgerows, trees and woodland. The river forms a key feature. | Experiences will be enhanced through interpretive material and habitat enhancements. |
| 16 | Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS. | D | Some undulating topography. | Some undulating topography. |
| 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 | Most paths are largely unhindered, kick about area provides a good area of dogs off lead. | All stiles replaced with accessible kissing gates. Alternative routes around the site if seeking to avoid cattle. |
| 18 | Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a view point, monument etc. within SANGS. | D | The river provides a central focus for the site leading walks around it. | Some clearance to enhance views around the river. |
| 19 | SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works, smells etc.). | M | No unpleasant intrusions. | No unpleasant intrusions. |
| 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 (joint with Sandhurst Memorial Park). | Webpage updated with site information and news. New site leaflet printed and distributed. |

6. Costings - Shepherd Meadows proposed SPA mitigation works

| Works | Location | Unit Cost | Quantity | Total Cost |
|---|--|--------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Information & Interpretation | | | | |
| Direction site sign | A30 Marshall Road | £1,000 | 2 | £2,000 |
| Site sign | South entrance | £250 | 1 | £250 |
| Site noticeboard with combined interpretive panel | Main entrances, Frogmore entrance | £2,500 | 3 | £7,500 |
| Interpretation panels | Around site - grassland, river, woodland | £1,500 | 3 | £4,500 |
| Fingerposts | Around site | £200 | 8 | £1,600 |
| Site Leaflet | n/a | allowance | 20,000 | £2,500 |
| Installation costs | (as above) | allowance | allowance | £5,000 |
| | | | | £23,350 |
| Access | | | | |
| | | | (m) | |
| Path clearance | All entrances, paths | £300/day | 3 | £900 |
| Boardwalk | Woodland section | £50 / m | 60 | £3,000 |
| Path surfacing | Resin bound - extend to balancing pond | £9 / m | 400 | £3,600 |
| Path surfacing (hoggin) | Southern side of river | £30 / m | 1000 | £30,000 |
| Installation costs | | allowance | allowance | £5,000 |
| | | | | £42,500 |
| Furniture | | | | |
| Bins (incl. installation) | Site entrances | £300 | 4 | £1,200 |
| Accessible gates (incl. installation) | Pedestrian entrances | £180 | 9 | £1,620 |
| Seating - benches (incl. installation) | Around site | £300 | 12 | £3,600 |
| Picnic benches | Adjacent to car park | £500 | 4 | £2,000 |
| Bridges | Across ditches | £5,000 | 2 | £10,000 |
| | | | | £18,420 |
| Habitat Management | | | | |
| Hedgelaying & planting | Adj. to roadside, meadow boundaries | £300/day | 10 | £3,000 |
| Wildflower seeding/planting | Adj. to main entrance path (non-SSSI) | allowance | allowance | £2,000 |
| Pond restoration (clearance, excavation) | Adj. to main entrance path (non-SSSI) | allowance | allowance | £2,000 |
| Bank erosion | Along river bank | allowance | 8 | £8,000 |
| Wildlife features (bird boxes, bat boxes, etc) | Across site | allowance | allowance | £500 |
| Tree management | Adjacent to paths, river bank | £300 per day | 8 | £2,400 |
| | | | | £17,900 |
| TOTAL COST | | | | £102,170 |

N.B. All costs based on a combination of published catalogue prices, actual current costs & recent estimates.

7 Glossary

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|--------------------------|--|
| Core Strategy DPD | Document within the Local Development Framework which sets out strategic development proposals until 2026. |
| LID | Limiting the Impact of Development, a Supplementary Planning Document relating to planning obligations. |
| SANGS | Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space. |
| SPA | Special Protection Area. Designated under the EU Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds. |
| SPA TBD | SPA Technical Background Document to the Core Strategy. |
| SSSI | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| WHS | Wildlife Heritage Site |

8 References

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