

23 JULY 2019

KEY DECISION: Yes

REPORT NO. EPSH1934

SOUTHWOOD COUNTRY PARK SANG

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order for Phase 1 of the Southwood Country Park SANG¹ to open formally in late August/early September 2019, approval is sought to set a charge for the developer contribution to secure SANG capacity and fund its delivery and management, and for an Interim Management Plan that sets out how it will be delivered and managed over the next 12 to 18 months, pending decisions about enhancement and complimentary uses. In addition, approval is sought to make the eastern side of the former golf course available as SANG in advance of Phase 2 of the conversion.

The recommendation on setting a developer contribution is linked to a separate report on this agenda, on an updated Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy for Rushmoor Borough.

Recommendations:

1. That a developer contribution to secure SANG capacity and fund the delivery and management of the Southwood Country Park is approved;
2. That the Interim (Phase 1) Management Plan for the Southwood Country Park is approved;
3. That approval is given to open the eastern side of the Country Park to create SANG capacity before completion of Phase 2.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Southwood Country Park is a 57 hectare site owned by the Council, which for many years was in use as a golf course until it closed due to the failure of the operating company in October 2018. Prior to the closure, the Council had taken the decision to convert the golf course to SANGs, to support the regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough town centres and other residential development required to meet the Borough's housing needs, as set out in the Local Plan.

¹ Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

- 1.2 Further information about SANGs and their purpose in mitigating the effect of residential development on the environmentally sensitive Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is set out in the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (AMS) 2019 – see separate report on this agenda.
- 1.3 The delivery and management of the Southwood Country Park SANG over its lifetime will be funded from developer contributions payable prior to implementation of planning permission. This report sets out how the proposed developer contribution has been calculated in order to meet the cost of delivering the SANG and managing it over an 80-year period and seeks approval for an Interim Management Plan, pending decisions about the SANG's enhancement and complimentary uses.
- 1.4 In order to enable the SANG to be opened as soon as practicable, the Council agreed to open the country park in phases, with the initial phase focussing on the area to the west of the A327 Ively Road. However, in order to enable use of the site by the public as SANG as soon as possible and in case regeneration proposals come forward which require more SANG capacity than the western area can deliver, this report also seeks approval to open the remainder of the site in advance of decisions to be made on enhancements and complimentary uses. The Interim Management Plan therefore refers to the initial opening of both western and eastern areas as Phase 1, with Phase 2 to follow in due course.
- 1.5 This is a key decision as it has implications for the continuation of the Council's ability to grant planning permission for and ensure delivery of both the regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough Town centres and new housing across the whole of the Borough.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 12 December 2017, following public consultation and detailed consideration of available options, the Council agreed to close the Southwood Golf Course on a date to be agreed, to provide SANG to mitigate the recreational impact of new housing on the Special Protection Area (SPA).
- 2.2 In December 2018, the operators of the golf course went into voluntary liquidation and ceased trading before the contractual period ended. The golf course closed and the site transferred back to the Council.
- 2.3 On 5 February 2019, following discussions with Natural England, the Council agreed to open the new country park in phases with the initial phase focussing on the area to the west of Ively Road, while subsequent phases brought forward the remainder of the site with enhancements and complimentary uses. Approval was given for planning applications to be submitted to bring forward the conversion of the golf course to parkland, including an application for a new car park off Kennels Lane to serve the western side.

- 2.4 On 21 February 2019, the Council agreed a capital budget of £422,000 and a revenue budget of £58,000 for the financial year 2019/20, to provide for the initial set-up of the SANG pending recoupment from future developer contributions.
- 2.5 On 5 March 2019, the Council agreed to enter into a collaborative agreement with the Environment Agency to carry out a feasibility study into, and implement as necessary, the creation of a natural wetland habitat on part of the SANG. A capital budget of £40,000 for the feasibility study in the financial year 2019/20 was agreed, to be funded on a 50/50 basis by contributions from the Environment Agency and developer contributions.
- 2.6 On 29 May 2019, planning permission was granted for a new car park surfaced with natural materials, to provide 29 spaces plus 2 additional accessible spaces and cycle provision, off Kennels Lane. Works to construct the new car park are underway and, subject to weather conditions, are expected to be completed by the end of August.
- 2.7 In the meantime, the Council has taken over the compound to the south of the former golf course buildings for grounds maintenance purposes, and this area has been fenced off for security.
- 2.8 In addition to the new car park, the following works have been completed or are underway to meet the requirements set by Natural England to enable the formal opening of the area to the west of Ively Road by end August/early September 2019:
- construction of dog-proof fencing along the eastern boundary with the A327 Ively Road and a survey of the southern boundary to establish the need for additional fencing to make it completely dog-proof;
 - creation of over 5km of paths by linking existing and newly mown paths (together with an additional 4km of paths on the eastern side);
 - temporary signage at all site entrances providing information on walks, biodiversity and the purpose of SANGs;
 - other infrastructure including kissing gates and combined dog waste and litter bins;
 - an Interim Management Plan to guide the continued implementation of the SANG, pending approval of a long-term Management Plan that will include Phase 2.
- 2.9 The Council has also carried out ecological and tree surveys to inform the management plan and has appointed JBA Consulting to carry out the feasibility study into the creation of a natural wetland habitat. The results of the study are expected early next year.
- 2.10 This report focusses on the decisions required to open Phase 1 of the Southwood Country Park in early August/late September 2019. Further decisions will be required in due course, following the receipt of the wetland habitat feasibility study in early 2020. These will include the design and implementation of the habitat enhancements, the future uses of the former

golf club buildings and the long term Management Plan. However, certain assumptions have had to be made in order to calculate the developer contribution and these are set out below.

3. DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTION

- 3.1 The developer contribution is set as a charge per person which developers must pay to the Council in advance of implementing planning permission for residential development. The charge must be justifiable and robust in order to avoid challenge by both developers and Natural England.
- 3.2 The Southwood Country Park has a total available SANG capacity of 57 hectares, assuming that the majority of the former golf course site is available for recreational use at all times throughout the year. This equates to a capacity of 5,875 people or approximately 2,450 homes, assuming an average of 2.4 persons per dwelling.

Quality considerations

- 3.3 The Council made a commitment in 2017 to convert the golf course to major new parkland to deliver SANG. The developer contribution must take account of the costs of delivering the Council's aspirations as well as the requirements of Natural England for provision of a SANG.
- 3.4 Natural England's requirements are set out in detail in the Interim Management Plan but, in essence, they are intended to ensure that the new SANG fulfils its purpose of alleviating recreational pressure on the SPA by offering an attractive alternative for those living nearby. This includes ensuring that the SANG is easily accessible and provides a variety of habitats for users to experience.

Charges elsewhere

- 3.5 Moreover, in setting the developer contribution for the delivery and maintenance of the Southwood Country Park SANG, the Council should be mindful of the amounts charged for other SANGs in the vicinity. The developer contribution for existing SANGs in Rushmoor is £2,600 per person but these are significantly smaller, have few visitor facilities and rely heavily on the services of volunteers. Under the Council's agreement with Hart District Council to make available SANG capacity at Bramshot Farm for development in Rushmoor, developer contributions for new Rushmoor SANGs must be 'broadly compatible' with the current £3,334 per person charged for Bramshot Farm.
- 3.6 Further SANG capacity is expected to be provided at Blandford Woodlands as part of the Blandford House development proposal by Grainger plc. The developer contribution has not yet been published but the SANG is significantly smaller than Southwood Country Park.

Visitor facilities

- 3.7 It is assumed that the Council will wish to refurbish or replace the existing golf club buildings as part of the SANG offer. Whilst Natural England fully supports the provision of a visitor centre that includes a café, the café element is not necessary to mitigate the impact on the SPA and therefore cannot be funded from developer contributions. If the Council decides in the longer term to provide a café, the cost of this would need to be funded from elsewhere, although it could be offset by the income generated. Therefore, the estimated cost of refurbishing or replacing the existing buildings has been divided into that which is chargeable to the SANG (e.g. toilets, visitor centre, rangers office, education space) and that which is not (e.g. café and any other complimentary uses). Only the SANG-chargeable element has been included in the developer contribution.

Viability of regeneration schemes

- 3.8 It is anticipated that the majority of the capacity of the new SANG will be taken up by regeneration schemes for Aldershot and Farnborough being promoted by the Council and its development partners. The SANG charge is a significant development cost for these schemes and has implications for the viability of the individual projects. In recognition of this, funding towards the cost of the SANG charge for the Galleries and Union Street East schemes has been secured from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). However, the HIF funding does not cover the entirety of the development cost of the SANG charge and therefore setting a high charge still has the potential to impact on viability.

Land value

- 3.9 As a golf course, the 57 hectare site had value as a Council asset, albeit that this is reduced by the fact that it made a financial loss. In signing over the site for SANG in perpetuity, the Council will lose the value of this asset. Therefore, the overall costs of the SANG include a capital receipt for the land based on the purpose for which it is intended to be used. The comparable use is agricultural but, as it is not productive land, this has been set at £1m, based on the lower end of the range. This has the added advantage of further reducing the impact on viability of development.

Inflation and interest rates

- 3.10 The developer contribution is required to deliver and maintain the SANG 'in perpetuity' which, for the purposes of calculating the charge, has been accepted by Natural England as over a period of 80 years. The regeneration schemes currently being developed for the Galleries, Union Street East and the Civic Quarter have the potential to deliver a significantly higher number of new homes than that set out in the Local Plan. When added to the number of homes expected to be delivered through the recently updated Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, there is potential for the Southwood Country Park SANG capacity to be used up

within the next 3-5 years. This means that there could be a significant capital receipt in the early part of the SANG lifespan.

- 3.11 The calculation of the developer contribution takes account of this and makes assumptions based on interest rates and inflation in line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, the proposed charge has been sensitivity tested to ensure that it is robust.
- 3.12 Some local authorities have chosen to index link the SANG charge to inflation but, in this case, it is likely that all of the capacity of the Southwood Country Park will be used up within 3-5 years. In the event that capacity at Southwood Country Park SANG is not used up after 3 years, it is proposed that index linking will take place on an annual basis to offset any loss in interest from capital receipts. Further details are set out in the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.

Recommended developer contribution

- 3.13 The recommended developer contribution for the Southwood Country Park SANG is **£3,167 per person**. The charge has been calculated to include one-off costs (e.g. new pedestrian crossing on Ively Rd), phased costs (e.g. replacement fencing every 10 years) and annual costs (e.g. staffing). This would enable the delivery of the following programme of works over Phases 1 and 2 of the development of the SANG:

Works to be delivered for a charge of £3,167	Detail of works to be delivered
Conversion of golf course to country park	Decommissioning, land-forming/naturalising, reforming ditches, linking watercourses, making pond safe, tree planting;
Grounds maintenance and health & safety	Grass cutting, tree care, ditch & channel maintenance, bin emptying & litter picking, mechanical cleansing, health & safety inspections
Car park & pedestrian crossing	Car parks at Kennels Lane & former clubhouse plus pedestrian crossing across Ively Road
Footpaths, boardwalks & bridges	Over 9km of paths, boardwalks & bridges including 2.4km circular walks on both sides
Site furniture	Information boards, signage, bins, benches, picnic areas, dog-proof perimeter fencing, gates
Playground made of natural materials	Play equipment near car park on Ively Rd and annual maintenance
Cycle paths & racks	Provision and maintenance of cycle paths and racks to encourage use of SANG by recreational cyclists
Adventure structures and/or focal points	Creation and maintenance of one adventure structure/focal point on each side
New habitat creation	Creation of new wetland and/or other habitats and associated environmental improvements and educational aids e.g. pond dipping platform
Habitat management & wildlife features	Bat & bird boxes, scrub clearance, SINC management, creation of hedgerows

Visitor facilities	c3,000 sq ft visitor centre including ranger office, education and/or exhibition space (also café - not SANG chargeable) on footprint of existing clubhouse plus annual maintenance costs
CCTV	CCTV around buildings for security
Dog walking facilities	Fenced dog exercise area and washdown facilities
Staffing	1.6 FTE staff plus electric quad bike & trailer

4. INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 4.1 The draft Interim Management Plan sets out how the new Southwood Country Park SANG will be delivered and managed by the Council during Phase 1 and is required to be agreed prior to its opening as SANG. Phase 1 is intended to meet the immediate requirements of Natural England to enable the SANG to open by end August/early September 2019, when the first regeneration schemes for Aldershot town centre are expected to be submitted for planning permission. The draft Plan has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England - a copy is attached at Appendix XX.
- 4.2 The Plan provides a baseline description of the existing site and its biodiversity, including the results of recent ecological surveys relating to bats, badgers, birds, reptiles and other species. The site already contains three Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs), identified as of county importance for their wet habitats, and several rare species of terrestrial invertebrates have been identified. The surveys also identified some invasive non-indigenous species (e.g. Himalayan Balsam) which will need to be managed.
- 4.3 The Plan goes on to explain how Natural England's Phase 1 requirements for car parking and access, circular walks, signage and information, fencing and gates and other infrastructure have been met. An appendix sets these out in more detail.
- 4.4 The Plan then sets out the Council's aspirations for Phase 2 of the delivery of the Country Park, including reference to the feasibility study to create a wetland habitat which has been entered into in partnership with the Environment Agency.
- 4.5 Section 13 of the Plan sets out how the Country Park will be managed by the Council in the short term and a schedule of annual works is included as an appendix. Management includes regular safety inspections of infrastructure, grass mowing of pathways and rougher areas, buffer zones to encourage biodiversity around the SINCs, waterways and woodlands, scrub clearance and tree safety. Habitat maintenance includes measures to encourage bats, badgers, birds, reptiles, amphibians and aquatic macroinvertebrates as well as measures to control invasive species.
- 4.6 The Plan then sets out how Phase 1 will be implemented, explaining that the funding for the Country Park will come from developer contributions for new residential development. This section summarises the information set out in paragraph 3.9 above, and the Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy

elsewhere on this agenda, which are all based on the recommended SANG charge of £3,167 per person.

- 4.7 Finally, the Plan makes reference to public consultation on the design for Phase 2 and to the long-term Management Plan which will replace the Interim Plan, expected to be approved by the Council and partners in 2020 as part of Phase 2.
- 4.8 Cabinet is invited to approve the Interim Management Plan as the basis for the delivery and management of the new Southwood Country Park SANG over the next 12 to 18 months, until a long term Management Plan has been formally agreed as part of Phase 2.

5 Opening of the eastern side

- 5.1 Both the western and eastern sides of the Country Park are already being used for recreation and dog-walking and it is in the public interest to undertake works to ensure public safety and open the eastern side as soon as is practicable. Natural England has confirmed that an early opening of the eastern side is possible, subject to provision of the same minimum requirements as have been applied to the western side. These relate to car parking and access, circular walks, signage and information, fencing and gates and other infrastructure.
- 5.2 An early opening has the added advantage of maximising available SANG capacity, in the event that the Civic Quarter proposals come forward with higher than expected residential provision before decisions are made about Phase 2. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the opening of the eastern side of the Country Park as SANG, which it is hoped could be by the end of the year.
- 5.3 It is expected that there will be sufficient funding left in the 2019/20 capital and revenue budgets already approved by Full Council in February, to fund the provision of the necessary infrastructure to open the eastern side early.

6. Alternative proposals

- 6.1 The Council is required to set a SANG charge and approve an Interim Management Plan before the new Southwood Country Park SANG capacity can be formally offered to developers. Therefore, there is no alternative to setting a charge and approving the Plan. However, the detail can be subject to variation and officers and members have considered a range of options in developing the proposed charge of £3,167 per person, to fit with the Council's aspirations. The risks of setting a higher or lower SANG charge, leading to changes in levels of delivery and management, are set out below.

7. Options for use of buildings

- 7.1 The former golf club buildings comprise a bungalow and a clubhouse, which includes changing rooms, a function room, kitchen and bar and pro-shop. The clubhouse and pro-shop are around 3,300 sqft in total floor area and

the bungalow is just under 1,000 sqft. In addition, there is a patio area and open hard standing which together make up about 8,000 sqft. Initial inspection of the clubhouse has found that it would require substantial refurbishment, including a new roof, to bring it back into use.

- 7.2 The Council has taken over the compound to the south of the buildings for grounds maintenance purposes, and this area has been fenced off for security.
- 7.3 Options for the future of the buildings include refurbishment and/or a new build on the current footprint, which incorporates the patio and hard standing. Future uses would need to be complimentary to the SANG but could include visitor facilities and a café. The SANG charge includes a one-off contribution of £200,000 for provision of SANG-related visitor facilities, which represents around a third of the cost of refurbishment or rebuild on the footprint of the existing clubhouse and pro-shop. This leaves the bungalow and remaining footprint the potential to take on one or more complimentary uses which would not be chargeable to SANG.
- 7.4 The cost of carrying out a detailed survey of the buildings and generating options for their future use and design is estimated to be in the region of £15,000. While a proportion will be recoupable from the developer contribution there will be an element that will need to be met from the Council's resources. The exact split will depend on the respective proportions used for SANG and non-SANG related uses. Any resources required from the Council's own resources will be dealt with through the normal budget processes.

Consultation

- 7.5 The draft Interim Management Plan has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England. Full public consultation on the design for Phase 2 of the Country Park, incorporating decisions about habitat enhancements, visitor facilities and complimentary uses, will follow early next year, once the feasibility and buildings options work is complete.

8. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

- 8.1 There are not considered to be any risks associated with the implementation of the recommendations of this report. However, should a higher or lower level of SANG charge be approved, the following risks would need to be managed:
- Significantly **higher** SANG charge – this could have a negative impact on the viability of proposed town centre regeneration projects, leading to an inability to deliver regeneration, particularly in Aldershot where alternative SANG provision is currently limited;

- Significantly **lower** SANG charge - this could have a negative impact on the Council's ability to fund the delivery and management of the Southwood Country Park SANG, leading to significant cost to Council taxpayers or a failure to fulfil Natural England's requirements for a SANG;
- Potential for challenge by developers or Natural England;
- Failure to be 'broadly comparable' with Hart may result in the withdrawal of Bramshot Farm as available SANG, which could impact on the delivery of new homes through the Local Plan.

Legal Implications

- 8.2 There are not considered to be any legal implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations of this report. However, if the charge that is set cannot be justified, it could be subject to challenge.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.3 The financial implications are set out in the report and relate to the setting of a SANG charge and works required to open the eastern side early and generate options for the former golf club buildings.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 8.4 There are not considered to be any significant Equalities Impact Implications arising from the decision, other than the creation of a Country Park that is accessible to all. Natural England's SANG criteria requirements for access will be met in Phase 1, as set out in the Interim Management Plan - detailed consideration of access will be undertaken as part of the Phase 2 design.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The proposals set out in the report will enable the Council to deliver and manage Phase 1 of the new Southwood Country Park SANG, funded through developer contributions, and will enable the provision of new homes and the regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough town centres.
- 9.2 Further decisions will be required in due course, following the receipt of the wetland habitat feasibility study in early 2020. These will include the design and implementation of the habitat enhancements, the future uses of the former golf course buildings and the long term Management Plan.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix A – Southwood Country Park SANG Interim Management Plan

Cabinet Report No. COMM 1721 (12 December 2017) – Southwood Golf Course – Consultation on the option to create a major new parkland and deliver Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The report can be accessed from the following link:

<https://democracy.rushmoor.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=414>

Cabinet Report No. ED1901 (5 February 2019) – Southwood SANG. The report can be accessed from the following link:

<https://democracy.rushmoor.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=617&Ver=4>

Cabinet Report No. EPSH1914 (5 March 2019) – Southwood SANG. The report can be accessed from the following link:

<https://democracy.rushmoor.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=617&Ver=4>

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Southwood Country Park SANG

Interim Management Plan 2019-2021

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a network of heathland sites that was designated by European legislation in 2005 for its breeding populations of ground-nesting birds, namely the Dartford Warbler, nightjar and woodlark. Studies have shown that the designated species have been declining in numbers since the early 2000s. The decline is thought to be due to increases in housing within South East England, which has led to unsustainable recreational pressure on the SPA birds, from walkers and dog walkers in particular. To endeavour to alleviate pressure, a mitigation strategy has been formulated across Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey, to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG) at 8ha/1000 new residents. It is hoped that SANG sites will provide natural habitat, away from the SPA, and thus alleviate recreational pressure within the designated sites. Southwood Country Park has been identified as a SANG to serve new development planned within Rushmoor Borough Council's Local Plan.
- 1.2 This Interim Management Plan relates to the delivery and management of the Southwood Country Park SANG for the next 12 to 18 months ('Phase 1'). The Park is made up of two distinct parts – the area to the west of the A327 Ively Road ('western part') and the area to the east ('eastern part'). The western part is due to become available for SANG in September 2019, with the eastern part following in late 2019 or early 2020 as required. Taken as a whole, the Southwood Country Park SANG will provide mitigation for 5,875 people or around 2,447 dwellings, the majority of which are proposed as part of the regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough Town Centres.
- 1.3 Phase 1 of the Southwood Country Park will deliver the immediate infrastructure and management changes required by Natural England to enable the former Southwood Golf Course to provide SANG mitigation at the earliest opportunity. These requirements relate to signage, car parking, fencing and circular walks.
- 1.4 However, in order for the Southwood Country Park to fulfil its purpose of alleviating recreational pressure on the SPA in the long term, further habitat work, additional promotional services and a higher level of management is required. The Council is therefore considering options for Phase 2 of the Southwood Country Park, including

the creation of a wetland habitat and the future uses of the former Golf Course buildings. With the help of the Environment Agency, the Council has commissioned a wetland habitat feasibility study which is due to report in early 2020. The Council is also considering options for the future use of the buildings – the clubhouse, pro-shop and bungalow. Some of these uses are likely to be directly SANG-related (e.g. toilets, visitor centre and rangers office) and some may be complimentary. Decisions on the buildings are expected to be made in early 2020.

- 1.5 In calculating the SANG charge to be levied on developers, the Council has taken into account all of Natural England's requirements for Phase 1 and has made broad assumptions regarding Phase 2. This is because the Council is required to set a charge at the point at which the SANG becomes available and the charge must cover all maintenance and other costs over the 80-year life of the SANG.
- 1.6 In order to provide clarity about the SANG charge that has been set, this Interim Management Plan includes references to Phase 2 works where appropriate. A long-term Management Plan that sets out how the SANG will be managed over the coming decades is expected to be approved in 2020, once the Council has made decisions on Phase 2, including habitat enhancements and the buildings.
- 1.7 A planning application has recently been received for works to the Esso pipeline which crosses the eastern parcel of the site. Works are expected to commence in 2021. Any Phase 2 plans will take this into account. Further information is available on the Council's website at <https://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/planningsearch>

2 Site Description

- 2.1 Southwood Country Park is a 57ha site, owned by Rushmoor Borough Council, incorporating a former golf course and adjacent land. Cove Brook, Marrow Brook, the Ively Stream and three Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) support the majority of existing natural habitat, with additional areas of wet woodland and grassland, interspersing the site, generally associated with the drainage network. Mature and semi mature broadleaved and coniferous trees mark the fairways.
- 2.2 Southwood Country Park is located to the south west of Farnborough, within the Borough of Rushmoor in Hampshire, OS grid reference: SU8554. It forms a green oasis in a heavily urban environment and is a prominent natural feature within the local landscape. The site is visible from busy roads leading into Farnborough from

neighbouring Fleet. Due to the size of the site and the habitat connectivity with Southwood Woodland and other open spaces views from the golf course are largely of naturalised habitats rather than urban sprawl.

- 2.3 The Country Park is directly adjacent to Southwood Woodland SANG to the west, comprising 30ha of oak/birch woodland and wet woodland, containing open acidic grassland glades and bog habitats. The head of Cove Brook is located within the woodland extending into the western section of the Country Park. There is no formal boundary and visitors can move freely between the two green spaces. Southwood Playing Fields are to the north of the SANG with Cove Brook bordering to the east. On the western side, the site is bordered by housing to the north.
- 2.4 The site is predominantly flat though in a few places, the topography has been altered. The underlying geology is based on Windlesham Formation (sand, silt & clay) beds. Both the geology and existing patches of unimproved acid grassland indicate that there are likely to be opportunities to extend the acidic grassland habitats within the site.
- 2.5 Due to the site being low lying floodplain, it is prone to seasonal water logging. Surface water from the site is passed down open ditches and culverts towards the stream at the south of the western land parcel, where it flows away to the east into the Cove Brook. The eastern land parcel drains into the Marrow Brook, which then flows into the Cove Brook before meandering northwards through Cove Brook Grazing Area SINC and Cove Valley Southern Grasslands SINC into Cove. Due to the wet nature of the site floodplain grazing marsh and wet woodland habitats have formed within the SINC, along the drainage network and within low lying areas of the site.

3 Existing Biodiversity

- 3.1 Southwood Country Park contains three Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) identified as of County importance for their wet habitats. Cove Brook Grazing Area SINC supports a wide range of marshy grassland, swamp and floodplain habitats, with willow Carr scrub further diversifying the habitat complex. Cove Valley Southern Grasslands SINC is less diverse with much of the scrub having developed into species poor wet and secondary woodland. Within the area of open grassland, a good diversity of species is still present. Southwood Golf Course West SINC is designated for its wet woodland and remnant grazing marsh habitats.

- 3.2 The remainder of the Southwood Country Park SANG has been intensively managed historically as agricultural land and then as golf course. Within the roughs and low-lying areas, habitats are more diverse. When used as a golf course the surface water was pumped to main watercourses to ensure golfing could take place. With closure, the pumps have been decommissioned and the hydrology of the site is becoming re-established. Since the management has been relaxed, there has been colonisation of many of the areas by acidic grassland species. With time it is hoped that the historic flower rich natural habitats will again regenerate.

Bats

- 3.3 Bat transect, and static recording surveys were carried out in September 2018 and March and May 2019, with a further survey planned in July 2019. Five species of foraging bats were recorded, common and soprano pipistrelle, Daubentons, noctule and an unidentified Myotis species. Most of the bat activity was focused along the tree lines and the woodland edge.

Badgers

- 3.4 A badger walkover survey was conducted in September 2018. One outlier badger sett was found in the south east corner of the western section in the September 2018, with a further outlier sett being noted in the north east corner adjacent to Southwood Woodlands SANG, within the surveys undertaken for the car park. Latrines were noted within rough grassland in the eastern and western parcels. Southwood Woodlands supports a large main sett, which is likely to provide shelter for the foraging badgers using the Country Park.

Birds

- 3.5 Three bird surveys undertaken between April and June 2019 recorded 36 bird species on site. Five of the recorded species, bullfinch, house sparrow, reed bunting, song thrush and starling are listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan and protected under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 due to the sharp declines in these species over recent years.

Reptiles

- 3.6 Three reptile surveys were undertaken between 24th September - 26th October 2018, with further surveys in April 2019. A peak count of eleven common lizards were

recorded, comprising 5 adults and 6 juveniles. The results indicate that the site supports a good breeding population of common lizard.

- 3.7 In 2018, no slow worms were found within the survey – however, as the grass has grown, the peak counts have steadily increased. Within the final survey a peak count of 20 slow worms were recorded comprising 10 adults and 10 juveniles. The results indicate that the site supports a good - exceptional breeding population of slow worm.

Amphibians

- 3.8 Habitat Index Suitability (HIS) surveys were undertaken of the ditches and waterbodies on site to assess their suitability for great crested newts. Two ditches were assessed as of exceptional habitat quality, one ditch and two ponds as good, with one ditch and one pond being assessed as poor. However, water quality was poor in all water bodies, which limits the site's suitability for amphibians. Only one record for great crested newts was highlighted within the records search, 1 km North West of the site. This population was separated from the site by major roads and a railway line.
- 3.9 Further presence/ absence surveys were undertaken in 2019, to establish whether amphibians are present on site. A peak count of 20 Palmate newts were found indicating that a good population was present on site. A peak count of 4 frogs were found within the surveys indicating there was a low population present on site.

Aquatic Macroinvertebrates

- 3.10 9 water samples were collected across the site encompassing all waterbodies. 47 family/ taxa, comprising 5700 individuals were recorded. The waterbodies and watercourses on the site are considered to support aquatic macroinvertebrate communities of moderate to low ecological value. The pond in the north/north east is considered to be of highest value, but still at moderate ecological value, whereas the ditch in the west of the sites is of lowest ecological value. A thick layer of silt and leaf litter over the aquatic habitats, the slow sluggish flows present within the ditch/ stream network, the presence of concrete lining to the sides and bed of many of the watercourses, and the observation of an unknown discharge into at least one pond, is likely to be adversely impacting the ecological value of these habitats and macro invertebrate communities/assemblages.
- 3.11 The terrestrial invertebrate survey, undertaken on June 22nd 2019 found a number of species with conservation status. The ecologist has stated that the site is important for

terrestrial invertebrates and the biodiversity interest will improve as the site undergoes more sensitive management.

- 3.12 Some species of fish including stone loach *Barbatula barbatula*, three spine stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* and common minnow *Phoxinus phoxinus* were recorded within the survey as well as a raft spider (*Dolomedes fimbriatus*) which is registered as nationally scarce.

Invasive Non indigenous Species (INNS)

- 3.13 Four schedule 9 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were noted within the survey. North American signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) were present within Cove Brook and a small ditch within the south/south east of the site, New Zealand Pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) dominated the pond in the north/ north east and a stand of Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was noted near the downstream extent of Cove Brook within the south of the eastern land parcel. In later surveys, variegated yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon subsp. Argentatum*) was noted in small areas adjacent to Southwood Woodland.

4 Existing Visitor Usage

- 4.1 A visitor survey was undertaken by Footprint Ecology in 2018 with the site surveyed for a total of 32 hours. At the time of the survey Southwood Golf Course was still operating and only Cove Brook Grazing Area and Cove Valley Southern Grasslands SINCS and adjacent flood attenuation area were publicly accessible. 121 groups were recorded entering the site; consisting of 188 people and 92 dogs. 71% of visitors use the sites for exercising their dogs, followed by 18% walking 5% cycling and 3% taking a short cut. One interviewee was jogging with one commercial dog walker interviewed.
- 4.2 Since closure as a municipal golf course, the site has become publicly accessible and has begun to fulfil its intended role to provide informal recreation. The survey results and the increase in dog walkers and walkers since closure indicate that the SANG, will provide an attractive alternative to recreating on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

5 Natural England Requirements

- 5.1 Natural England has published criteria for SANG to be used as mitigation or avoidance land to reduce recreational use of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Some of these criteria are considered essential and others are desirable – further details of these

criteria and how they have been met in the Southwood Country Park are set out in Appendix X. In summary, Natural England has agreed that Phase 1 of the Southwood Country Park can be opened in September 2019 providing the following works are undertaken:

- Signage at all site entrances. Signs should contain a map of the walks, information on the site's biodiversity and information relating to recreational impact on the SPA and mitigation in the form of SANGS.
- Boundaries with busy roads (i.e. A327, Ively Rd, Kennels Lane and Bridge Rd) should be dog-proofed to prevent dogs running into the road. The boundary may be hedging or fencing but no wholesale tree clearance should be undertaken.
- A minimum 2.3km circular walk comprising existing hard surfaced paths linked by mown paths following the desire lines present within the site.
- Due to the significant traffic on the A327, a car park is required to serve the western parcel, with the existing car park serving the eastern section.

6 Car Parking and Access

- 6.1 The former golf course car park, consisting of 75 spaces with approximately 20 spaces in the overflow area, will serve the eastern parcel, with a new 29-space car park, with 2 additional accessible spaces and cycle provision, constructed off Kennels Lane to serve the western section. There is capacity to extend this car park if required. There is some informal parking along Kennels Lane which serves the Southwood Woodland SANG and Southwood Country Park SANG.
- 6.2 Pedestrian access points are via Ively Rd and Kennels Lane for the western parcel and via the Southwood Playing Fields, Ively Rd, Kempton Court and Cove Brook Greenway (Bridge Rd) for the eastern parcel.
- 6.3 All vegetation will be controlled to ensure clear sight lines into the site for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Appropriate measures will be taken on entrances to secure access onto the site. New field gates will be provided to ensure access for vehicles required to manage the site. Directional signage will be provided to inform the public of the location of the site and car parking. In addition, planting will be provided to screen the Council's compounds off Kennels Lane and Ively Road.

7 Circular routes

- 7.1 Circular routes of at least 2.3km are available through the eastern and western parcels of Southwood Country Park. Paths are already significantly longer than the minimum required, at over 5 km within the western parcel and over 4 km within the eastern parcel. The network will initially comprise existing hard surfaced paths linked by mown areas, providing strategic links to Southwood Woodland in the west and Southwood Meadow and the Cove Brook Greenway in the east. This will provide opportunities for the public to create desire lines away from the main route. Once the preferred routes are known these can be formalised at a later date if required.

8 Signage and information

- 8.1 Temporary signage will be erected at all entrances, with a view to permanent signage being installed during Phase 2. Interpretation signage will inform visitors of the reason for the SANG designation, the scale and diversity of the site, and provide a site map of the Southwood Country Park with a range of routes marked.
- 8.2 Fingerposts and way markers will link the SANG to Southwood Woodland providing a clearly marked route within the more informal areas of Southwood Country Park. Fingerposts will also link the SANG with adjacent areas and long-distance walks such as the Cove Brook Greenway and Brenda Parker Way.
- 8.3 Information about the Southwood Country Park will be made available on websites and via social media to promote the site as a SANG and encourage its use as an alternative to the Thames Basin Heath SPA, especially by new residents moving into the area.

9 Fencing and gates

- 9.1 Dog-proof fencing will be provided along the busy and open boundary with Ively Road between the Ively Roundabout and the Monkey Puzzle Roundabout to provide a secure site for dogs and young children. Consideration will be given to the need to fence or enhance the existing treeline and hedging along the southern boundary of both western and eastern parcels (Ively Rd), along Kennels Lane (western parcel) and Bridge Rd (eastern parcel) and to any fencing that may be required to prevent dogs accessing private land.

9.2 A field gate will be provided at Ively Road to limit access of vehicles into the western area with an accessible kissing gate along the Ively Road boundary as pedestrian entrance. A secure entrance at the Ively Road car park will create a sense of entrance.

10 Other infrastructure

10.1 Combined litter and dog refuse bins will be provided close to all entrances accessible by road.

10.2 New site furniture will enhance the visitor experience by providing a welcoming and attractive appearance and facilities that can be used by all residents regardless of age, or disability. Site furniture will include picnic benches and seating at strategic points around the sites.

10.3 Work will begin on decommissioning the golf course infrastructure, including the pumps, pits and bunkers. Bridges over the small ditches and watercourses within the site will be replaced or removed to manage access and improve safety.

11 Aspirations for Phase 2

11.1 Rushmoor Borough Council has entered into partnership with the Environment Agency, to explore the feasibility of removing hard surfacing and restoring and naturalising Cove Brook and Marrow Brook, providing backwaters rills and meanders and recreating floodplain grazing marsh and creating a wet woodland/ hedgerow habitat complex as part of the Phase 2 development.

11.2 A feasibility study has been commissioned to explore the options and design the habitat complex, known as the Southwood and Cove Brook Floodplain Improvement Project. The feasibility study is due to report in January 2020, with the extent of habitat creation and restoration being agreed by the Council in early spring. If agreed, work could commence on site in the summer of 2020, subject to the Esso pipeline works. In addition, the Council is considering options for delivering the following facilities and services within Phase 2 of the Country Park:

- The employment of staff including a ranger to manage the SANG;
- A visitor centre, café, toilets and ranger's office either within the existing buildings or as part of a new build;
- A pedestrian crossing on Ively Road to provide a safe link between the eastern and western sections, subject to traffic assessment and Hampshire Highways;

- A playground constructed of natural materials close to the Ively Road car park;
- A fenced dog exercise area and washdown facilities;
- Cycle paths to encourage use of the SANG by cyclists, especially families;
- Creation of focal points and/or adventure structures;
- CCTV to provide security around buildings;
- Educational aids such as a pond dipping platform for use by schools and clubs to study wildlife.

11.3 The SANG charge to developers includes provision for these facilities to be delivered over the life of the SANG - the exact details of provision will be set out in the long-term Management Plan for Phase 2.

12 Phase 1 Management

12.1 This section of the Interim Plan relates to the management of Phase 1 in the short term. Further details are set out in the Schedule of Works at Appendix B.

12.2 Infrastructure

12.2.1 All hard infrastructure, including car parks, fencing, gates, signage etc will be checked on a regular basis to ensure it is safe and accessible, with repairs or vegetation clearance undertaken as necessary.

12.3 Grounds Maintenance

Mowing

12.3.1 An annual mowing regime will commence on site to reduce the predominance of invasive grass species. Within the former golf course, grass that has been cut regularly will be mown in a phased manner to cater for footpaths and differentiated areas in relation to users and habitats. Care will be taken to ensure that reptiles in particular, which may bask on the close-cut paths, are not harmed. Mowing will take place after the end of August and in late March, following site visits to assess and identify the areas to be mown.

The roughs

12.3.2 A survey of the roughs will be undertaken, during the summer of 2019 to document their floral composition and assess the appropriate management for these areas. It is likely that on some of the roughs no management will be required during the first two seasons, however within the roughs dominated by invasive grasses mowing would be appropriate.

Reptile buffer

12.3.3 A 30m buffer will be established around all SINC's, incorporating the bank to the west of Cove Brook Grazing Area and Cove Valley Southern Grasslands Area SINC's. These areas will be left uncut for the first two years to ensure the survival of the common lizard and slow worm populations recorded within the site. In the third year the areas will be topped to control any scrub encroachment.

SINC's

12.3.4 Surveys show that the Cove Valley Southern Grasslands SINC in particular is becoming wooded. An annual cut in two stages is likely to be required in early September. 20m buffers should be preserved along the Cove Brook to enable the swamp vegetation to establish.

Cove and Marrow Brooks and the drainage network buffers

12.3.5 20m buffers should be established along both banks of Cove and Marrow Brook, with 10m buffers along either side of the drainage ditches. The buffers should remain uncut in the first season with a review in February 2020.

Woodlands

12.3.6 No mowing should be undertaken within the woodland areas and within a 20m buffer to enable ground flora and a woodland edge to establish. Ideally these areas will be grazed in the longer term.

12.3.7 A 20m buffer should be left unmown in areas adjacent to Southwood Woodlands to establish a woodland edge. Over time the natural habitat within a woodland edge should regenerate naturally, however if this does not occur there may need to be some shrub planting in later years.

Scrub clearance

12.3.8 Scrub clearance will be required within selected roughs and within Cove Brook Grazing Area SINC and Cove Valley Southern grassland SINC. This should be undertaken after reptiles have woken from hibernation but before bird nesting season, in mid to late March.

12.3.9 Within the river corridors selected trees will be cut back and removed to ensure more light to the aquatic habitat. These works are likely to be undertaken as part of the Southwood and Cove Brook Floodplain Improvement Project but could also be undertaken in the winter of 2019.

Tree safety

12.3.10 A tree inspection will be undertaken in the summer of 2019 and every three to five years during the spring to assess the trees for damage and ensure visitor safety. Appropriate methodology for works to trees will be agreed, taking proper account of the Council's legal responsibilities and practical considerations, to ensure no disturbance to bat roosts or bird nests. Works will be conducted in winter when there is less likelihood of bats and birds being present (November to March inclusive).

12.4 **Habitat Management**

Bats

12.4.1 The establishment of woodland edge, enhancement of the river corridors and creation of floodplain habitats, will improve foraging areas for all bat species found on site. In the longer-term woodland/ hedgerow and wetland networks are likely to be increased with transitional areas established. This will ensure the invertebrates are attracted into the site and bat foraging opportunities are maximised.

12.4.2 Lighting should be kept to a minimum, with the site preferably remaining dark. Bat boxes will be erected throughout the foraging corridors to increase roosting habitat for all species recorded. If works are to be undertaken on mature trees their bat potential will first need to be ascertained with the appropriate licences obtained if bat roosts are present.

Badgers

12.4.3 Mown paths and the long-term increase in hedgerows and woodland copses will provide foraging for badger species using the site. Within the August assessment,

areas should be identified where grassland will be kept short to ensure adequate badger foraging areas remain.

Birds

12.4.4 The creation of wetland, grassland, woodland and hedgerow habitats will increase the bird diversity on site, attracting in birds associated with these habitats and enabling woodland species present within Southwood woodland and other woodland habitats on site to colonise the newly created areas. Species specific bird boxes and boxes for more common species will be erected throughout the site.

Reptiles

12.4.5 A 30m buffer will be established around all three SINCs. These areas will be left uncut for the first two years to ensure the survival of the common lizard and slow worm population recorded within the site. In the third year the areas will be topped to control any scrub encroachment.

12.4.6 The creation of a hedgerow network will increase shelter and food sources for both species of reptile. Hibernacula such as log and brash piles and turf covered mounds, will be erected in appropriate areas to ensure adequate hibernation; shelter and food opportunities are available for the reptile populations.

Amphibians

12.4.7 The creation, enhancement, extension and management of wetland habitat, backwaters, and the ditch, hedgerow and pond networks, coupled with the establishment of good water quality through the Southwood and Cove Brook Floodplain Improvement Project, will lead to the expansion of any amphibian populations on site. Hibernacula will be erected in appropriate areas to ensure adequate hibernation and shelter is available for the amphibian populations.

Aquatic Macroinvertebrates

12.4.8 The control of tree growth adjacent to the streams, extension and management of wetland habitats and the improvements to Cove Brook and Marrow Brook, coupled with the increase in water quality should ensure the aquatic macroinvertebrate communities improve on site and throughout the river corridor.

Himalayan Balsam Removal

12.4.9 One area of Himalayan Balsam has been identified to the east of Cove Brook within the SINC area. This should be removed by the Cove Brook Greenways Group before flowering. Site visits to the Cove Brook corridor will be undertaken in June. All stands of Himalayan Balsam will be noted and removed to stop recolonization of the stream corridor.

New Zealand Pygmyweed Control

12.4.10 The pond containing New Zealand Pygmyweed has been fenced off. A full survey is required on site to ensure no other colonies are present within the wetland areas. Once the extent of the problem is ascertained, a removal plan will be formulated using either biological or manual controls.

Signal Crayfish Control

12.4.11 Safe working practices will be formulated in relation to the floodplain works to ensure that signal crayfish and signal crayfish plague is not spread through these works. Any signal crayfish seen will be removed from the site and disposed of appropriately. Consideration should be given to the constant removal of signal crayfish under licence in the longer term.

13 Phase 1 Implementation

13.1 Funding

13.1.1 Funding for the new infrastructure, habitat works and the long-term management of the SANG will come from developer contributions for new residential development. The levels of SANG contributions have been calculated to ensure all the facilities and habitat management can be delivered and maintained 'in perpetuity', defined as 80 years.

13.1.2 As well as contributing towards SANG provision, developers must also contribute towards actions on the SPA itself to manage access and encourage the use of these alternative sites, known as the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project. Further information about SANG and the SAMM contribution (which is managed by Hampshire County Council) is set out in the Council's TBH Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.

13.1.3 The charging levels for the Southwood Country Park SANG are as follows, based on a standard cost of £3,167 per person:

Dwelling Size	SANG developer contribution	SAMM Contribution per dwelling (£)	Total per dwelling (£)
1 bedroom/studio/bedsit	4,434	399	4,833
2 bedrooms	5,859	526	6,385
3 bedrooms	7,918	711	8,629
4 bedrooms	9,026	807	9,833
5+	11,718	1,052	12,770

13.1.4 These charges are based on a detailed assessment of the costs associated with this management plan and the aspirations for Phase 2 and have been agreed with Natural England. The charges have been calculated to include:

- Provision of a visitor centre, toilets, rangers' office and any other SANG-management related infrastructure;
- Inclusion of staffing costs which may include rangers, educational development and/or volunteer co-ordinators;
- £500,000 for habitat creation following the EA feasibility study;
- £1m capital receipt for land at agricultural value;
- Inflation and interest rates relating to the management of the SANG fund over 80 years by the Council, in line with its Medium Term Financial Strategy.

13.1.5 It is important to note that a café and other complimentary uses on the site are NOT chargeable to the SANG and have therefore been excluded from the charge. Funding for these will be provided by the Council and/or sought from elsewhere.

13.2 **Monitoring and Review**

13.2.1 The management of the SANG during the interim period will be undertaken by Rushmoor Borough Council. Details of how the SANG will be managed in the longer-term will be set out in the next Management Plan, likely to be approved as part of Phase 2 in 2020. The SANG charge includes provision for a review of the

management plan and appropriate monitoring surveys to take place on a 10-yearly basis.

13.2.2 Habitat monitoring will be undertaken throughout the interim management plan period by the Council.

14 Conclusion

14.1 This Interim Management Plan has been developed with the support of Natural England to enable the opening of the Southwood Country Park SANG in September 2019, in order to facilitate the regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough Town Centres.

14.2 The long-term management of the SANG will depend on the final site design, on which decisions are expected to be made in 2020. The design will incorporate decisions made on the EA feasibility study and wetland habitat proposals and the uses of the buildings. Consultation will be undertaken on the final site design with the public, Natural England, the Environment Agency and any other interested parties. The long-term management plan will be signed off by Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Council.

Appendix A

Criteria for Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
<p>For all sites larger than 4ha there <u>must</u> be adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local use, i.e. within easy walking distance (400m) of the developments linked to it. The amount of car parking space should be determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflect the visitor catchment of both SANGS and the SPA</p>	<p>The car park serving the western parcel, adjacent to Kennels Lane, can accommodate 29 cars plus 2 accessible spaces and cycle provision.</p> <p>The car park serving the eastern parcel can accommodate 75 spaces with approximately 20 spaces in the overflow area.</p>	<p>Both car parks will remain fully operational, with unimpeded access during the works</p>	<p>There is space for further car parking spaces to be constructed in the Kennels Lane car park if required.</p>
<p>It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3km – 2.5km</p>	<p>Walks of over 9km have already been created on both the eastern and the western parcels within the Country Park.</p>	<p>Some paths may need to be closed to pedestrians but there will always be at least one 2.5km walk available in its entirety, with only limited access restrictions on the impacted walk.</p>	
<p>Car parks <u>must</u> be easily accessible by car and should be clearly signposted</p>	<p>The eastern and western car parks are easily accessible from Ively Road and Kennels Lane respectively. The</p>	<p>Both car parks will remain open, with access unimpeded during the works.</p>	

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
	Country Park will be clearly signposted		
The accessibility of the site <u>must</u> include access points appropriate for the visitor use the SANGS is intended to cater for.	There are many access points throughout the site which enable pedestrians, car drivers and cyclists to access the site from any direction. The two car parks will accommodate any drivers with overflow facilities for busy periods. Local visitors can access the site on foot. Two of the access points lead to longer walks into Southwood Woodlands, Cove Brook Greenways and Brenda Parker Way.	All access points will remain open throughout any works.	
The SANGS <u>must</u> have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpaths	All access points are safe and free from traffic and have been designed to ensure safe routes for visitors and dogs onto the site. Some of the pedestrian routes into the site are along roads therefore dogs will need to be	All routes onto the site will be safe throughout the works. If routes adjacent to Kennels Lane do require closure, alternative routes will be clearly signposted	A pedestrian crossing over Ively Rd will provide safe access between the eastern and western parcels.

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
	kept on lead until entering the site.		
All SANGS with car parks <u>must</u> have a circular route that starts and finishes at the car park.	Both car parks serve at least one 2.5km circular route around the park. In the case of Kennels Lane there is also a 2.5km accessible circular route within Southwood Woodlands SANG adjacent to the car park.	Throughout the works the Council will ensure that at least one 2.5km route is available from each car park.	
SANGS <u>must</u> be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users; they must not have tree and scrub cover along parts of the routes.	The routes within the SANGS have been designed to mirror the desire lines of existing users. Visitors have generally used routes that pass under the trees rather than routes within the open areas. Use will be kept under review with route alterations if the requirements of visitors alter.	Any areas impacted by works will be fenced off and clearly signposted with alternative routes provided.	
Paths <u>must</u> be easily used and well maintained but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the	Existing hard surfaced paths have been retained and linked by mown paths to form an extensive path network throughout the site.	Paths will be kept open wherever possible.	

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
site becoming too urban in feel	Generally, the path network is focused on the higher drier habitats. Mown paths will be reviewed during the first winter season to ensure they do not become waterlogged.		
SANGS <u>must</u> 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.	The site's former use as a golf course remains visible with tree lines marking the fairways, roughs and bunkers. By switching the pumps off and allowing Cove Brook to revert to its natural course, the site is gradually naturalising.	There may be some disruption to the natural feel of the site during the works and until the new habitats have established, however work will never be undertaken on both land parcels at once.	The Southwood and Cove Brook Floodplain Enhancement Project will complement the rewilding of the site. Once the habitats mature, visitors will experience a much more naturalised site than presently.
All SANGS larger than 12ha <u>must</u> aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience.	There is a limited variety of existing habitats due to the site's former use as a golf course.	The variety of existing habitats will remain during the works with additional habitats being provided due to the habitat creation and enhancement.	With the completion of Phase 2, the site could contain riparian, acid grassland, grazing marsh, hedgerow and wet and dry woodland habitats.
Access within the SANGS <u>must</u> be largely	The 57ha site comprises largely open	This is a 57ha site. Only a small	

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.	habitats and provides plenty of space for visitor's dogs and nature to co-exist.	proportion of the site will be inaccessible at any time	
SANGS <u>must</u> be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works, smells)	There are no intrusions on the site except for a large structure associated with the drainage of Farnborough Airport into Cove Brook. This cannot be removed.	There may be some disturbance due to the works, but one parcel of the site will always be totally free from disturbance.	
SANGS should be clearly sign posted and advertised in some way	Signage will direct visitors to the Country Park and demarcate the routes within it. See below for details as to how the site will be advertised.	No change	
SANGS should have leaflets and/or websites advertising their location to potential users. It would be desirable for leaflets to be distributed to new homes in the area and be made available at entrance points and car parks.	Information about the Southwood Country Park will be made available on websites and via social media to promote the site as a SANG and encourage its use as an alternative to the Thames Basin Heath SPA, especially by new residents moving into the area.	Websites and social media will be used to keep the public informed of the works and any impact on visitors	

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
It would be desirable for an owner to be able to take dogs from the car park to the SANGS safely off lead.	Fencing will be provided along busy roads abutting the site. The Kennels Lane car park will lead straight onto the site.	Some areas in or near both car parks may be disrupted due to planned works to restore the headwaters and their connectivity with Southwood Woodlands (Kennels Lane) and works to the existing buildings (Ively Rd).	There may be a need to keep dogs on leads around the car park off Ively Road as this area is likely to contain a playground, café and visitor centre. This would only involve a short walk before the dogs could be unleashed.
Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS	This site is largely flat however there is some gradient which leads to higher dry habitats graduating to lower wetter areas within the floodplain.		Some of the topography maybe altered to revert to ground levels in existence before the site become a golf course.
It is desirable for access points to have signage outlining the layout of the SANGS and the routes available to visitors	Signs will be erected at all access points. Temporary signage will be erected for Phase 1	No change	Permanent signage will be agreed for Phase 2.
It is desirable that the SANGS provide a naturalistic space with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside	The site comprises largely open habitats and Cove and Marrow Brook can be accessed. This is an	Works may impact on the natural views within the site for a short period of time, but this will be	Some copses are proposed to provide a more varied experience and biodiversity

SANG Criteria	Phase 1	During Phase 2 and ESSO pipeline works	Phase 2
and areas of dense scattered trees and shrubs. The provision of open water on part but not the majority of sites is desirable	urban site and therefore cannot provide extensive views into the countryside. However, the site is part of an open space complex with woodland, tree lines and pitches adjacent to most of its boundaries	limited to small areas of land on one parcel only	links into Southwood Woodland beyond. A pond network may be established on site in the longer term.
Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a view point, monument etc within the SANGS	The existing buildings are likely to form a meeting point. There are a number of views looking across the SINC's and towards Southwood Woodland that are particularly attractive.	No change	Phase 2 will include visitor facilities and focal points and/or adventure structures within the SANG.

Appendix B
Schedule of Works






Month	Task	Frequency
January	Tree thinning along Cove Brook and Marrow Brook Mow 20m and 10m buffers along one side of Cove Brook and one side of the ditch system	2020 Biannually alternate sides to be cut each year
February	Site visit to assess the site and identify areas to be mown and scrub to be cleared	Annually
March	Scrub Clearance Mowing in late March once reptiles have woken from hibernation	When necessary
April		
May		
June	Botanical monitoring of the roughs commences	
July	Tree safety inspection	2019 then every 3-5 years
August	Botanical monitoring of the roughs ends Site to assess the site and identify areas to be mown Mow all areas excluding reptile/SINC buffers and SINC's	Annually Annually Annually
September	Selected areas of the Southern Grassland SINC to be cut in September Top reptile buffers	2019 2021
October	Check and clean bird boxes Tree works after trees checked for bats	Annually As necessary

November	Tree safety inspection	2019 then every 3-5 years
December	<p>Check bat boxes</p> <p>Thin selected trees along Cove and Marrow Brook</p> <p>Scrub planting along all woodland edges if required</p>	<p>2022 then every three years. This must be done by a licenced bat worker</p> <p>2019 -2020</p> <p>2021</p>

Appendix C

Site map

Southwood Golf Course SANG

-  SANG boundary
-  SINC
-  Waterways
-  SINC Buffer (30m)
-  Waterways Buffer (20m)

