

Appendix 1:

Eastleigh Borough Council Interim Mitigation Strategy to address recreation impacts on New Forest protected sites

Purpose of the document

1. By 2036, the emerging Eastleigh Borough Local Plan will have delivered approximately 14,580 dwellings within around 20 kilometres of the New Forest internationally protected sites for nature conservation. These are the parts of the New Forest designated as Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. In the absence of avoidance and/or mitigation measures, the Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan states this development could have an adverse effect on the integrity of these protected sites. This is due to potential negative impacts from increased recreation including disturbance from people and their dogs. Residential development will therefore not be permitted without appropriate mitigation.
2. The Council is part of a partnership of New Forest authorities, other nearby authorities, Natural England, the Forestry Commission and other wildlife organisations addressing this issue. The partnership is working together to develop a full strategy to address recreational impacts on the New Forest protected sites covering the New Forest authorities and other authorities within its catchment area. This is following the recent publication of research by Footprint Ecology on the pattern of visits to these designated sites¹.
3. As a full mitigation strategy agreed by all partners is not likely to be finalised within the next few years, this paper sets out an interim approach for residential development in Eastleigh Borough Council. It covers the period until the end of March 2027 and will enable the Council to fully address potential impacts for the borough for this time period and undertake further research and monitoring before the full strategy is finalised and agreed by the partnership.
4. Most of Eastleigh Borough is within the 13.8km zone of influence of the New Forest protected sites – that is the zone within which 75% of all day visits originate. Natural England has advised the Council that there is a likely significant effect from any additional residential development within the Borough on the New Forest protected sites based on additional visits from residents of new development. This is significant enough that objections are being raised by Natural England to all planning applications for new dwellings until satisfactory mitigation measures are put in place. Policy DM11 in the Emerging Local Plan commits the Council to implement a mitigation strategy to

¹ Footprint Ecology research reports published in 2020 and 2021 available at <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/conservation/managing-recreation/managing-recreation/research-into-recreational-use-of-the-new-forests-protected-habitats-footprint-ecology-2020/>

address the impact on the New Forest protected sites. This is an interim strategy containing a package of mitigation measures for the impacts of new residential development in the Borough.

Evidence of visitor impact

5. The Footprint Ecology research included a telephone survey and an on-site visitor survey to determine where visitors came from, why they visited and how frequently. Based on these findings, it also assessed the overall levels of growth and the potential effect of planned development.
6. The on-site survey reported that over 62% of visitors on a short visit or day trip from home lived within 5km of the boundary of the New Forest protected sites boundary. This comprised 20% of visitors from postcodes within the National Park boundary itself, a further 40% from within the New Forest District and 2% from outside these areas. The median distance travelled by all visitors on a short visit or day trip from home was 6.1km and three quarters of visitors were from within 13.8km.
7. All of Eastleigh Borough except the Netley coast lies beyond the 5km zone (measured as a straight line distance). The borough falls mostly within the zones 5-10 and 10-15km around the protected sites.
8. Based on the findings from the telephone survey², approximately 68% of Eastleigh borough residents stated that they had visited the New Forest protected sites in the last 12 months. Eastleigh households made between 40-50% fewer visits than the average of all households within a 25 kilometre distance. The research found that the visit rate per household declines dramatically with distance from the protected sites especially over the first few kilometres and the impact of each additional new house declines with distance³.
9. Residential development planned in Eastleigh borough will contribute 20% of the planned growth between 5-14km from the protected sites. Depending on the methodology used, the number of additional visits from Eastleigh residents living in new developments ranges from 13,000 - 28,000 visits per annum. This is an average of 20,495 additional visits or 4.2% of the total predicted increase in visits from within the 13.8km catchment area (an increase of 487,500 visits each year).

Scope of interim strategy

² Liley, D., & Panter, C., (2020). Recreation use of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar: Results of a telephone survey with people living within 25km. Footprint Ecology

³ Liley, D., Clarke, R.T., Panter, C. & Saunders, P. (2019) Overview of visitor results and the implications of housing change on visitor numbers. Footprint Ecology, paragraph 5.29

10. This interim approach sets out the mitigation required to address the disturbance from the increased number of visits from the occupiers of new residential development within Eastleigh borough to March 2027. It applies to development within the 13.8km catchment area, measured as a straight line distance from the boundary of the New Forest protected sites. This is based on the range within which 75% of all current day visitors live⁴.
11. The catchment area covers the majority of Eastleigh borough and includes all of the borough south of Fair Oak as shown in map 1 below.

⁴ Liley, D., & Caals, Z. (2020). Discussion and analysis relating to the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar and a zone of influence for recreation. Footprint Ecology.

12. Parts of the borough are up to 17.8km away from the New Forest protected sites. These include parts of Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Bishopstoke and Fair Oak. Map 1 also identifies a zone within 13.8-15km. Large development (covered by the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations⁵) within the 13.8-15km zone should be screened to consider whether mitigation may be required such as the provision of SANG. Appendix 1 shows the 13.8km catchment area and 13.8-15km zone in more detail.

Development to be mitigated

13. The impact identified is from residents from new development visiting protected sites for recreation. The interim approach therefore requires contributions from new residential development involving a net gain in dwellings, both new build and redevelopment or changes of use to residential. This includes residential development delivered by the prior approval and permitted development processes, affordable housing and permanent gypsy and travellers pitches. This includes approved residential development that requires Reserved Matters approval.
14. There is also a potential impact from other development such as new hotels and development in C2 Use Class. This is not covered by this interim strategy. Proposals within the catchment area (and screening zone if applicable) will be assessed individually on a case by case basis to determine whether they will result in an increase in visits to the New Forest protected sites and if mitigation is required.

Interim strategy

15. The interim strategy provides two options for mitigation:
 - a. Contributions to a Strategic Mitigation Package comprising:
 - i. proportionate provision of SANGs within Eastleigh borough and
 - ii. financial contributions to the management of recreational impacts within the New Forest protected sites
 - b. Bespoke mitigation package

Strategic Mitigation Package

⁵ See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment#Screening-Schedule-2-projects> for further information on the screening thresholds. These currently include residential developments over 150 dwellings or with an overall area of the development of over 5 hectares.

16. The Council has developed a strategic mitigation package based on providing alternative countryside recreation opportunities within the borough and including financial contributions to measures within the New Forest National Park. These will need to be funded from developer contributions in proportion to the number of housing units to be delivered.

A i. Proportionate provision of SANGs

17. A SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) is a recreation area specifically created to provide an alternative natural or semi-natural area in a more local and convenient location to attract visitors away from designated sites. It is a well-established mitigation tool for recreational disturbance and is widely used across England including nearby in the Thames Basin Heaths and the Dorset Heaths. The interim approach applies SANG in a proportionate way to reflect the number of visits from residents of new development in the borough.
18. In order to provide suitable mitigation, SANG has to meet certain key criteria set out by Natural England, as set out in Appendix 2. These include car parking, good-surfaced pathways providing for long walks of 2.3 - 2.5km and upwards where dogs can be allowed off lead to exercise and an attractive natural environment.
19. Natural England advises that SANG should be provided at the rate of 8ha/1000 population increase. This is the rate used within the 5km zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heaths and has also been adopted by the New Forest District Council. None of the planned Eastleigh housing growth will be in the 5km zones within which 62% of all day visits originate. It will account for just over 20% of all planned new residential development between 5-14km from the New Forest protected sites from which 13% of all day visits originate.

Calculating a proportionate SANG provision for Eastleigh Borough

20. The research includes a variety of data including survey data and separate projections of the total number of visits to the New Forest protected sites. These can be used to estimate the additional visits from the borough. The Council calculated estimates based on the proportion of new housing in the 5km – 14km zone delivered in the borough, the proportion of the total visits originating from the borough and the survey results where people reported how often they visited the New Forest protected sites. The Footprint Ecology research demonstrates a clear principle that the number of visits from each household decreases with distance from the New Forest.
21. The telephone survey findings provide robust data on which to compare visits from Eastleigh residents with New Forest district residents and, as the highest estimate, demonstrate a precautionary approach. The average number of visits

from each household in the borough is just under one quarter of the average number from households in New Forest district, which is predominantly within the 0-5km zone (25 visits compared to 105 visits). In order to demonstrate a precautionary approach, it was decided to compare the rate against residents living in the New Forest district, instead of residents of the New Forest National Park itself (who make an average of 211 visits), due to the very low levels of new development within the National Park.

22. The interim strategy is calculated to reflect both the number of additional households built within the catchment zone and the estimated number of additional visits to deliver proportionate mitigation to address the impact.
23. The interim strategy is based on a proportionate requirement of 25% SANG, equating to 2ha per 1,000 population. Based on an average household size of 2.4 people and an outstanding requirement to March 2027 of 5,648 dwellings, this results in a requirement of 27.1ha of SANG within Eastleigh borough. The SANG provision will include both a new greenspace site and improvements to increase the attractiveness and capacity of existing greenspaces throughout the year which can therefore function as SANG.

Land identified for SANG creation

24. The SANG contribution will deliver a new SANG site and improvements to Itchen Valley Country Park, see Appendices 3 and 4. An area of land east of Allington Lane has been identified which will deliver 14.3 hectares. This is considered suitable for a new SANG to deliver greenspace close to new development, especially the One Horton Heath development, and link into the Itchen Valley Country Park to the south west. Based on Natural England guidance, a SANG of this size will have a likely effective catchment radius of 4km.
25. The new SANG will provide public recreational space and improved links into the wider footpath network. It will make the existing Country Park more accessible to people living to the north of the park. It comprises part of the One Horton Heath site and adjoining farmland in Council ownership (see Appendix 3). The land includes Hearts Copse, a 3.3 hectare SINC, criteria 1A (1A Ancient Semi-natural woodland). There is negligible public use in this area at the moment and the informal footpaths here can be formalised and used to direct people away from sensitive areas. There is an existing public right of way through the sites between Burnetts Lane and Allington Lane (West End FP3).
26. The components required to deliver SANG on the site following the removal of debris and tree safety work have been identified. This will include a circular gravel surfaced path, 10-15 car parking spaces, benches and signage, with

boundary treatment as required to include enclosed fencing and designed to screen the SANG and maintain its character. In addition to land acquisition and funding capital infrastructure costs, the calculation includes management and contingency costs and annual costs for maintenance in perpetuity (for 80 years).

27. Itchen Valley Country Park is an existing open space at the centre of the borough with public access with the scope to significantly increase its capacity. This is by improvements to the existing open space to make it more attractive for visitors who would otherwise visit the New Forest.
28. The Country Park contains a mix of water meadows, woodland and meadows and is suitable for dog walking and provides a range of walking routes and circular trails. It has shown an upwards trend in visitor numbers in the last five years and increased dwell time. During this time the Council has invested in facilities and improvements such as the installation of a dog wash. Data from 2017-2020 shows that twice as many people visit in the busiest month (August) as in each of the months of November, December and January. The Council has identified improvements to both increase the overall capacity including additional car parking and to extend the season and increase its attractiveness in the winter months with improvements to the footpath network and infrastructure such as covered seating.
29. Most of the visitors to the Country Park are families⁶. The improvements planned increase the attractiveness of the Country Park to families looking for a destination for a half or full day out. In addition to delivering improvements on site, the Country Park will become more accessible to people living to the north of the park. There will be new links into the wider footpath network and improved access to the mix of habitats within the Country Park from the new SANG in Allington Lane.
30. The Country Park includes areas designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Areas of high biodiversity value including SSSI and SAC are excluded from the calculations of the additional recreational capacity within the existing Country Park. The areas considered as suitable include the recreational fields and meadows, and woodland containing play trails which the main footpaths and cycle paths go through.
31. In addition to the delivery of a new SANG and increased capacity at Itchen Valley Country Park, the Council is investigating opportunities to address the impact by delivering new and improving existing greenspaces across the borough. These include at the new Windhover Meadows Country Park,

⁶ Survey research (2015) shows that nearly 70% of visitors typically visit with other family members

Bursledon (10.5 hectares). The full strategy will consider opportunities for further large scale SANG in the borough. In the event that the Council is not able to deliver sufficient SANG at Land at Allington Lane and Itchen Valley Country Park, the Council has other land holdings that may be used. In this situation, the Council's approach to deliver the interim strategy is to improve existing greenspace where possible.

32. The developer contributions towards SANG provision will be required to cover land acquisition costs, the capital costs of infrastructure and landscaping and associated costs, ongoing management and maintenance costs in perpetuity and for monitoring⁷. The monitoring component is to check the implementation of the measures and their costs and to assess their effectiveness in increasing the use of greenspaces within the borough and diverting trips from the New Forest. Further survey work will also be undertaken to supplement the existing evidence on the number of visits Eastleigh residents make to the New Forest protected sites.
33. The figures in the interim strategy will be reassessed as required in 12 months following detailed design work and reviewed annually.

A ii. Financial contributions to the management of recreational disturbance within the New Forest protected sites.

34. While the provision of SANG will provide a convenient alternative destination and reduce the total visits, new residents of Eastleigh will still visit the New Forest protected sites. This residual impact therefore also has to be addressed through appropriate mitigation. To manage the growing number of visits, the New Forest National Park Authority has established site wardening, monitoring and information services (Strategic Access Management and Monitoring or SAMM) that are intended to reduce recreational disturbance at source. This provides a potentially suitable interim approach to mitigate the residual impacts.
35. There is currently a limited programme of access management to address the impact from residents living within the National Park itself. The Footprint Ecology research demonstrates that the locations visited and activities undertaken vary significantly depending on where people travel from. Consequently different measures will be required to address the impact of residents travelling from Eastleigh borough. Until further work is undertaken to assess the measures and level of contributions required, the interim strategy proposes funding the equivalent of one ranger post throughout the interim strategy period (i.e. 5 years). This is in addition to the New Forest National Park Authority staffing levels. This contribution is a precautionary approach for the interim strategy to reflect the growth planned in Eastleigh borough and the

⁷ In perpetuity is considered to be 80 years

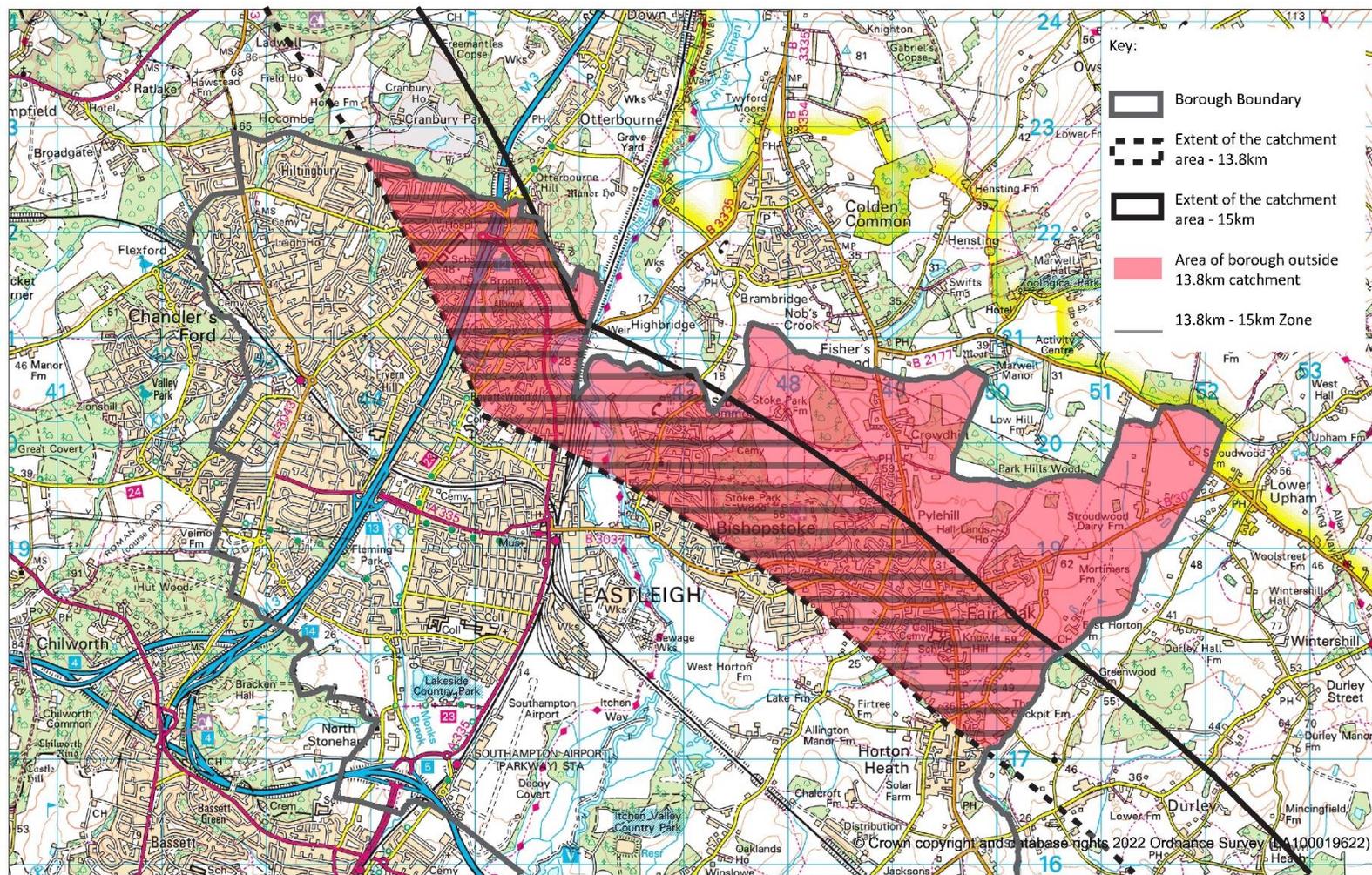
number of visits from the borough. The New Forest National Park Authority supports the proposal and will work with the Borough Council to set up the post and report back on the employment of the ranger and activities undertaken. It is intended that the role will be similar to those of the Bird Aware posts on the Solent coast, engaging with visitors to the New Forest protected sites, advising them of the special interest features and their vulnerabilities and providing advice on how to avoid damaging and disturbing these interest features.

36. The Council will transfer an annual contribution to the New Forest National Park Authority. This will be ringfenced for the delivery of the equivalent of one full time ranger post (including necessary overheads), focused on the designated sites in the New Forest. This will supplement their existing team of rangers. The National Park Authority will manage the post and report back at least annually on its delivery and activities undertaken.
37. The components of the SANG creation, improvement and mitigation of impacts on the New Forest are set out at Appendix 4. The total contribution required from new development in Eastleigh borough for SANG and SAMM is calculated at **£1,161 per dwelling**. This figure is subject to annual review and monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the strategy. Contributions will be index-linked, and payable on commencement of development to ensure that SANG creation measures are completed in a timely manner, where possible ahead of occupation of new dwellings.

B. Bespoke mitigation

38. There is the option for new residential development to deliver bespoke mitigation as an alternative to the SANG component of the contributions above. The bespoke approach will still need to include the SAMM contribution as set out in this interim strategy.
39. Any bespoke mitigation will need to be agreed by the Council and by Natural England. It will have to demonstrate that the measures are additional to public open space requirements, provide additional capacity for the visits generated by the development and deliver an appropriate alternative to visits to the New Forest protected sites and address any residual impacts.

Appendix 1 Detailed 13.8km catchment map and 13.8km-15km screening zone for EIA developments



Department:	Department: SP
Date: 01/03/2022	Scale: 1:50,000

Appendix 2 Natural England SANG checklist

'Must haves':

- 1 For all sites larger than 4ha there must be adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local use, i.e. within easy walking distance of the developments linked to it. The amount of car parking should be determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflect the visitor catchment of both the SANGS and the SPA
- 2 It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3 – 2.5 km around the SANG
- 3 Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
- 4 The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGS is intended to cater for.
- 5 The SANGS must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpaths
- 6 All SANGS with car parks must have a circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park.
- 7 SANGS must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users: they must not have tree and scrub covering parts of the walking routes
- 8 Paths must be easily used and well-maintained but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming urban in feel
- 9 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.
- 10 All SANGS larger than 12ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience
- 11 Access within the SANGS must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead.
- 12 SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works smells, etc.)

'Should haves':

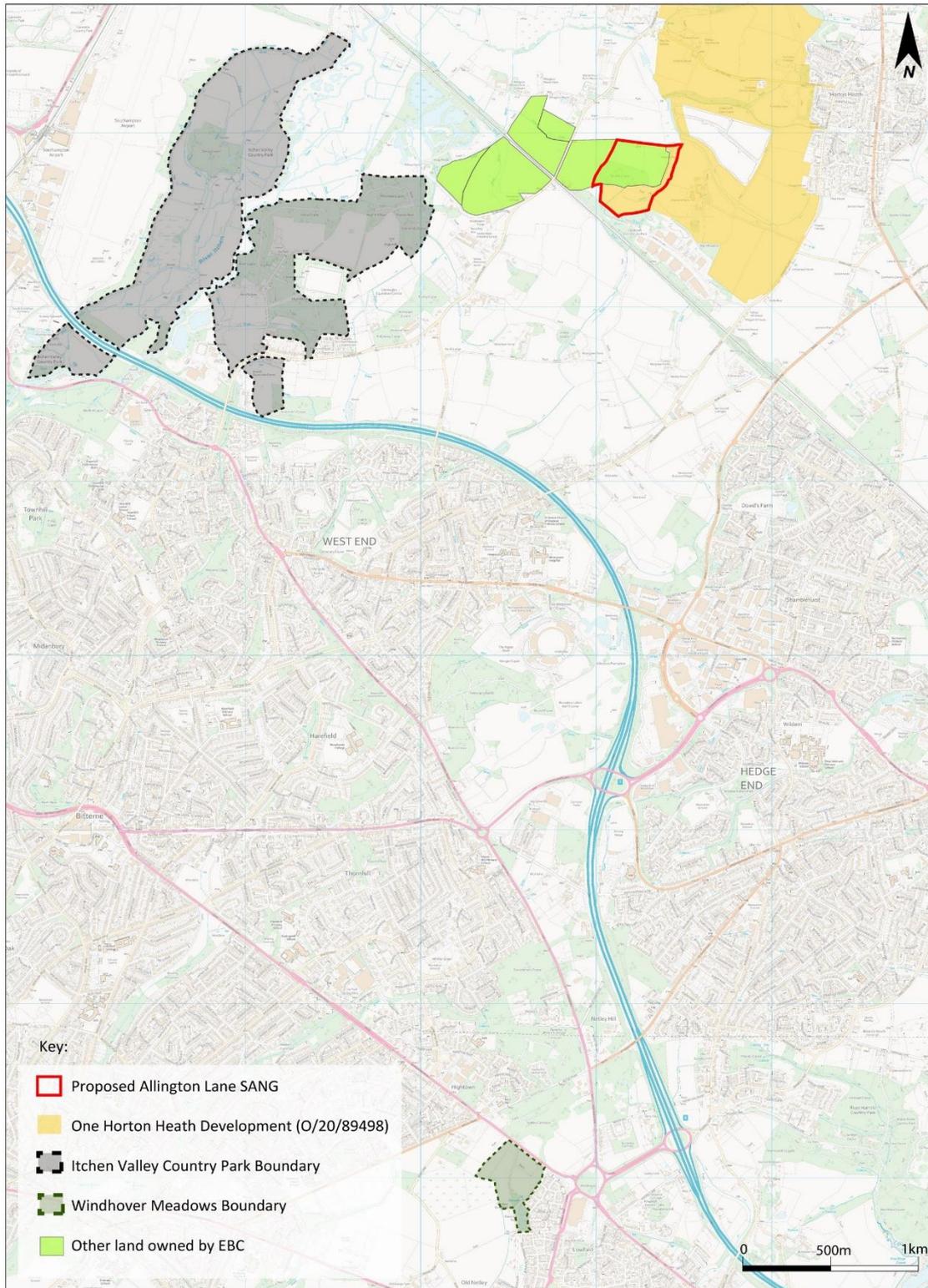
- 13 SANGS should be clearly sign-posted or advertised in some way.

- 14 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 at car parks

Desirable:

- 15 It would be desirable for an owner to be able to take dogs from the car park to the SANGS safely off the lead.
- 16 Where possible it is desirable to choose sites with a gently undulating topography for SANGS
- 17 It is desirable for access points to have signage outlining the layout of the SANGS and the routes available to visitors.
- 18 It is desirable that SANGS provide a naturalistic space with areas of open (nonwooded) countryside and areas of dense and scattered trees and shrubs. The provision of open water on part, but not the majority of sites is desirable.
- 19 Where possible it is desirable to have a focal point such as a view point, monument etc. within the SANGS.

Appendix 3 New proposed SANG at Land off Allington Lane and existing country park sites for proposed and potential SANG



Proposed Allington Lane SANG

Date: March 2022 | Dept: SP | Scale: NTS



© Crown copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey (LA100019622)

Appendix 4 SANG components

Deliver a new SANG: Land at Allington Lane

Nature of proposal: New area of SANG providing public recreational space and improved links into the Itchen Valley Country Park and the wider footpath network

Site area: 14.3 hectares

Length of public right of way created: Provision of a minimum of 2.3km path. Site includes existing public right of way between Burnetts Lane and Allington Lane

Planning considerations: The land comprises part of the One Horton Heath site (approximately 5ha) and adjoining farmland to the north of Itchen Valley Country Park. The land includes Hearts Copse, a 3.3 hectare SINC, criteria 1A (1A Ancient Semi-natural woodland). There is also a public right of way crossing the site (West End FP3)

Background: The Council has undertaken land acquisition to address issues including nitrates, phosphates, mitigating recreational disturbance on the New Forest and the delivery of biodiversity net gain. This land is considered suitable for a new SANG to deliver greenspace close to new development and a link into the Itchen Valley Country Park to the south.

Delivery: This land is now owned by Eastleigh Borough Council. Notice has been given to the occupier for the land under grazing licence and there is no lead in time for the land at Hearts Copse. A programme of improvements is being drawn up to deliver SANG on the site following the removal of debris and tree safety work. This will include a minimum 2.3km circular gravel surfaced path, 10-15 car parking spaces, benches and signage, with boundary treatment as required to include enclosed fencing and designed to screen the SANG and maintain its character.

Components of the New SANG
Capital items: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land acquisition• Landscaping, tree planting, hedgerows• Footpaths - creation of new footpaths (2.3km in length), improving existing footpath, boardwalks• 10 car parking spaces• Fencing and entrance gate• Waymarker posts and signage• Other items – dog bins and benches
Surveys - Baseline ecology surveys and Management Plan
Management costs and contingency
Annual costs (in perpetuity for 80 years): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replacement and repairs – footpaths, entrance gates, dog bins, fencing

- Maintenance and clean up
- Vegetation management
- Management and monitoring

Increase capacity at existing SANG: Improvements at Itchen Valley Country Park

Nature of proposal: Improvements to Itchen Valley Country Park to increase its capacity as SANG

Equivalent to site area delivered: Improvements to deliver additional capacity 12.8 hectares (on land not identified as high biodiversity value).

Planning considerations: Analysis has demonstrated that there is an opportunity to increase the recreational capacity within the Itchen Valley Country Park. In 2020/21 there were 240,860 visitors to the Country Park (based on parking data and an estimated occupancy of 2.5 people per car). Survey data shows that the average number of visits per annum was around 18 visits. The Country Park includes areas of high biodiversity value including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Based on 2ha/1,000 population and excluding areas of high biodiversity value, there is scope for improvements to deliver additional recreational capacity. A planning application will be submitted in Summer 2022 to deliver some of the improvements identified in the Itchen Valley Country Park Masterplan.

Background: Itchen Valley Country Park is an existing Country Park owned and managed by the Council with an estimated 240,860 visitors in 2020/21. It is in a central location in the borough and is close to new development to the north. The Council is committed to implement improvements at Itchen Valley Country Park in accordance with its Masterplan. There is scope for contributions to fund improvements to deliver an increased area of SANG. The areas considered as suitable include the recreational fields and meadows, woodland containing play trails and which the main footpaths and cycle paths go through.

Delivery: This land is owned and managed by Eastleigh Borough Council. A planning application will be submitted in Summer 2022 to deliver improvements related to the delivery of SANG identified in the Itchen Valley Country Park Masterplan. In order to deliver additional SANG at the Country Park, contributions could finance:

- Footpath improvements with over 5km of solid footpaths and increased penetration into variety of habitats across the Country Park
- Relocation of parking from wooded areas and provision of additional car parking spaces
- Improved signage and communications materials

New Forest ranger

- Full time equivalent post for 5 years

Monitoring costs

- Installation of automatic visitor counters at new SANG
- Implementing and analysing surveys to supplement Footprint Ecology data on visits to the New Forest protected sites.