

Response to Main Issues for Examination from West Parley Parish Council

This document represents West Parley Parish Council’s written response to Matter 10 of the examination hearings in support of WPPC’s previous representations through the consultation process.

Summary

	7
Test of Soundness	Not effective
Suggested Modification	<p>Rewrite the SANG guidelines to explain how public accessibility will be ensured in perpetuity.</p> <p>Guidelines should provide some justification for the SANGs allocated.</p> <p>Clarify whether the use of floodplain as SANGs is acceptable.</p>

Matter 10: Other Matters

Do the SANG guidelines:

Provide clear and adequate guidance regarding the location and accessibility of SANGS?

- 1.1 The Councils have sought to link the location of SANGs to the allocation of residential development. The selected sites are not currently in recreational use and have not been scrutinised for their suitability as SANGs. The proposed sites are in private landownership raising questions about the accessibility of the SANGs for recreational users.
- 1.2 Bracknell Forest Borough Council operates a SANG policy and has conducted a strategic review of the land available for SANGs to assess which sites are most likely to mitigate damage to protected habitats by attracting the highest number of visitors. The sites selected are either Council or charity-owned to ensure a high level of public accessibility. WPPC appends an excerpt from the Bracknell Forest SANG Supplementary Planning Document which shows the process the Council used to select suitable green spaces in the borough.
- 1.3 Runnymede Borough Council also operates SANGs to mitigate damage to the Thames Basin SSSIs and as in Bracknell the Council selected sites which are in some form of public ownership to ensure a high level of accessibility (an excerpt from the Runnymede SANG SPD is also appended).
- 1.4 The only SANG to be developed so far in East Dorset District Council, at Bytheway Field, Colehill, was owned by the Council prior to SANG designation. Significant contributions from the residential development of the nearby flight refuelling station paid for additional features to make the site more attractive to visitors (see appended news story).
- 1.5 The Councils' Core Strategy allocates privately owned sites which are not currently publicly accessible for SANGs. This is a departure from the precedent set within East Dorset and amongst other Local Authorities which operate SANGs. WPPC are concerned that the Councils have not provided enough evidence and justification to demonstrate that this approach to SANGs is deliverable. Significant questions remain about the longer-term ownership and management of the SANGs, which will denote the level of public accessibility. WPPC consider that the SANG Guidelines are neither **justified** nor **effective** as the Councils have not prepared any evidence assessing the locations of SANGs and have not made clear in the Core Strategy who will have long-term responsibility for ensuring public accessibility at the sites.

Provide clarity regarding the quality and characteristics of the SANGS?

- 1.6 WPPC notes that whilst the SANG guidelines outline features to be provided on a SANG site there is no evidence to justify the suitability of land for SANG usage.

- 1.7 In West Parley, FWP7 proposes a SANG which includes a large amount of land which is within the functional floodplain of the River Stour. This means that for much of the year a large proportion of the proposed SANG is impassable to users as the land is under water. Figure 1 shows the extent of the flooding at the proposed SANG site.

Figure 1



Photo taken from the pavement on the western side of New Road adjacent to the access track to the stables (location indicated on Figure 2).


- 1.8 The Councils have not indicated whether it acceptable for the use of SANGs to be limited by natural features such as floodplains, however, paragraph 5.22 stipulates:


“A majority of paths should be suitable for use in all weathers and all year around.”


WPPC would suggest that given that the primary purpose of the SANG is to attract visitors away from the protected heathlands, a flooded site is unlikely to be attractive to dog-walkers and other users causing the site to fail in reducing the number of visitors to nationally protected sites. Figure 2 shows the extent of the SANG at FWP7 which will be flooded during the winter months (also seen in WPPC written response to Matter 3, Question 4 of the Inspectors Main Issues).

Figure 2:

Key:

 Proposed SANG boundary (SD28)

 Functional Floodplain of River Stour

 View shown in Figure 1



Provide sufficient flexibility to allow for site specific circumstances?

- 1.9 WPPC has grave concerns about the flexibility of the SANG guidelines to take into account site specific constraints, such as the floodplain in allocation FWP7. The main feature required by a SANG according to the guidelines is a 2.3-2.5km circular walk. WPPC are concerned that the floodplain West of New Road, along with the limitations of varying land ownership across the site (highlighted in Matter 3, Question 4, see figure 3 below) will seriously constrain the ability of the site to provide the necessary walks as well as public access throughout the year.

Figure 3:

Key:

- Proposed SANG boundary (SD28)
- Functional Floodplain of River Stour
- Public House land
- Land in Alternate Ownership



Suggested Modification

- 1.10 WPPC suggests three modifications to the SANG guidelines to make them effective in delivering mitigation measures. Firstly, the Councils rewrite the SANG guidelines to explain how public accessibility will be ensured in perpetuity, particularly with regards to the ongoing ownership of SANG land. Secondly, the guidelines should provide some justification for the SANGs allocated, in particular the Councils' choice to allocate new sites in private ownership. Finally, WPPC consider that the Councils needs to clarify their position on the use of floodplain as SANGs, this may be best achieved through site specific masterplanning documents or a SANG supplementary planning document.

APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Extract from Bracknell SANG
SPD**

**Appendix 2: Extract from Runnymede
SANG SPD**

**Appendix 3: News Story for Opening of
Bytheway Field SANG,
Colehill, East Dorset**

APPENDIX 1

EXTRACT FROM BRACKNELL SANG SPD

Appendix 4: The Identification of Strategic SANGs

This is taken from Section 20 of the Technical Background Document to the Core Strategy DPD (2007) and updated, where relevant.

1. Focus groups of local residents, carried out for the BFC Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2002), supported the concept of strengthening facilities at particular parks to serve the purpose of district parks, and reduce the number of visitors to the Look Out (adjacent to the Special Protection Area).
2. In addition to the above work, an independent study evaluated several areas of open space within the borough using a criteria-based approach. There were some generic issues identified by the study as potential reasons that visitor expectations were not being met:
 - Weaknesses in respect of welcoming, in particular in respect of the entrances.
 - Poor on-site information.
 - Poor nature of ponds and riverside areas.
 - Poor levels of furniture provision.
 - Failure to provide surfaced paths to accommodate circulation and through-route needs.
3. This implies that enhancing these specific areas, amongst others, would increase the attractiveness of the site to existing and new visitors and could encourage use of these sites over the SPA.
4. The first stage in the assessment of potential alternative open space provision was the identification of sites. This was carried out in the following way.
5. A review of existing open space of a strategic size was carried out in order to identify areas where enhancement may be possible to increase visitor capacity. The starting point for this was the PPG17 audit, which identified all areas of publicly accessible open space by typology (for example, woodland, amenity park etc.). Sites over 5 hectares with typologies Parks & Gardens (A), Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace (D), Urban Woodlands (E) and Green Corridors (F) were considered suitable for potential enhancement, obviously excluding the SPA itself. In addition, smaller sites of these typologies were also considered if they were close to and had good links to other smaller sites, to form a larger total area. Sites of Amenity Greenspace (B) over 10 hectares were also considered.
6. Natural England proposes access agreements or compulsory purchase could be explored if an area of privately owned greenspace was considered of strategic importance to the network of open space. However, as part of this review no privately-owned land was put forward to the Council as having potential as mitigating open space. As a result, at this stage no privately owned land was considered suitable for inclusion within the suite of SANGs.

7. From this initial list certain areas of open space were removed, which would almost certainly be undeliverable as an avoidance measure, for example because of established uses which would conflict with the purpose of SANGs.
8. This exercise concluded there were 17 individual areas of open space of a suitable size with the potential to avoid use of the SPA. Their suitability is subject to there being spare visitor capacity and the potential for enhancements to be carried out. The following sites met the criteria for further assessment of suitability:
 - Jock's Copse / Tinker's Copse / The Cut (south)
 - Clintons Hill
 - Englemere Pond
 - Great Hollands Recreation Ground
 - Horseshoe Lake
 - Lily Hill Park
 - Sandhurst Memorial Park
 - Shepherd Meadows
 - Swinley Park
 - Silver Jubilee Field / Wicks Green, Binfield
 - South Hill Park
 - Edgbarrow Hill
 - Ambarrow Court / Ambarrow Hill
 - Garth Meadows
 - Larks Hill
 - Piggy Wood
 - Longhill Park / Milman Close / Beswick Gardens Copse
9. A land identification exercise on a regional level for SEERA, carried out by Land Use Consultants⁽³¹⁾ concluded some similar results and many of the sites in this study have been analysed in more detail. The sites included in the SEERA study, which were not assessed further, are listed below with reasons for their exclusion.

Table 9 Sites Excluded from the Regional Open Space Review

Site	Reason for Exclusion
Mill Park	This was not considered in the review as it is amenity open space (typology B). This area does contain an element of suitable dog-walking open space, but much of the site consists of sports pitches and a skate-ramp.
Bill Hill	Available capacity was already reserved via SPA avoidance and mitigation package agreed for Bracknell Town Centre. ⁽¹⁾
Allsmoor Wood	The ownership of this site is unknown.

31 Thames Basin Heaths SPA: Audit and assessment of land to mitigate effects of housing development. Available at: <http://www.eipsoutheast.co.uk/downloads/documents/20070126123933.pdf>

Site	Reason for Exclusion
Land to the north of Shepherds Meadows	This is within private ownership and deliverability is unknown.
Further land around Church Farm / Grove Farm lakes	Much of the land is within private ownership and deliverability is unknown.
Land south of Hayley Green / west of Chavey Down	Much of the land is within private ownership and deliverability is unknown. The further investigation referred to in Policy R7 of the Local Plan has not been carried out and this area of open space is not being carried forward into the Core Strategy DPD.

1. A new Appropriate Assessment undertaken in June 2010 in respect of the application 10/00434/EXT (an application of new planning permission for the Bracknell Town Centre redevelopment with periods for implementation extended from that under the existing planning permission) did not include Bill Hill as part of the bespoke SANGs solution due to a change in the mitigation standards from 12ha/1000 population to at least 8ha/1000 population as set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework JSPB (2009). In agreement with Natural England, Bill Hill is now included as part of a bespoke solution for larger development sites within its catchment, as identified in the Site Allocations DPD Draft Submission.

10. Next, additional information was collated on the suitable sites (or groups of sites) in order to identify the habitat and potential for enhancement.

11. The first stage in assessing the suitability of land for impact avoidance purposes is to address its quality and suitability to provide an area equally as attractive as the SPA to encourage new residents to visit this different area as opposed to the protected site.

12. During a project level appropriate assessment, the advice from Natural England⁽³²⁾ was, “...an area of greenspace is suitable as mitigation where it is self evident that the greenspace is suitable in terms of size, quality, capacity and location. As a general rule, where greenspace is of questionable value as mitigation, we would expect the local authority to seek evidence to satisfy itself that the land is, or could be made, suitable.” They go on to suggest the following examples of what could be sought as evidence:

- The site is located in a place which would make it attractive to the particular people most likely to visit the SPA.
- The site is, or could be, of a type which is attractive in terms of its appearance and facilities.
- The site is not heavily used and has the capacity to attract more people of the type who would visit the SPA.

13. Research by Natural England⁽³³⁾ has been carried out to understand why people choose to visit particular sites. This provides an idea of the type of alternative sites which would be attractive to visitors of the SPA and what may deter visitors from certain areas. The following emerged as major features which would attract SPA users to a site:

- Ability to let the dog off the lead.
- Safety on site.
- A quick journey time and convenient access from home.

32 A letter dated 24 February 2006 from English Nature regarding ‘Mitigation for the impacts of residential developments on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA: developments close to Lily Hill Park’.

33 Liley, Mallord & Lobley, 2005.

- Provision of parking.
 - Presence of way-marked paths.
 - Presence of water on-site.
 - Presence of view points.
 - Gravelled, relatively thin paths through deciduous woodland.
 - Variety of semi-natural habitats and varied topography.
14. Research undertaken on the distance covered by SPA visitors⁽³⁴⁾ found dog walkers walked an average of 2.5km, penetrating a mean of 760 metres onto the heath. This underpins Natural England's guidelines for the creation of SANG⁽³⁵⁾ and provides a transparent and clear way of ensuring that the enhanced semi-natural open space meets the requirements of a SANG. It should be noted that there are separate requirements for those SANGs provided as part of a suite and an individual SANG provided as part of a bespoke solution.
15. The agreed Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework⁽³⁶⁾ also contains some guidelines for the provision of SANGs. These include delivery of SANGs in advance of occupation, maintenance of the SANGs in perpetuity, protection of the nature conservation interest of SANGs, catchment areas, the need to have regard to NE's SANGs Quality Guidance and the potential to uncouple small developments (less than 10 dwellings) from SANGs catchment areas.
16. As a result of the above findings, a considerable amount of research was carried out to establish the ability of each potential area of mitigating open space to meet Natural England's criteria, subject to enhancements to the open space. This included:
- Visitor counts and surveys at each of the sites. Visitor counts were carried out for a total of 24 hours at each site, covering 6 different time periods during mornings, afternoons and evenings in the week and on the weekend. 683 surveys were carried out in 2006 and in 2008 (Leisure-net, 2006 & 2008).
 - A review of the access on each site, including location of car parks, number of parking spaces, formal and informal entrances, length of footpaths (Strategic Leisure, 2006).
 - A review of the accessibility to each site, including travel times by car and on foot, using the computer model Accession (Integrated Transport Planning Ltd, 2006).
 - A review of legislation covering each site and nature conservation interests (several sources, including Bracknell Forest Council Parks and Countryside Service).
 - A review of other research carried out on each site from other available information sources.
17. Appendix 5 provides a summary of how analysis of the information collected has been used to establish whether the site meets the criteria to provide SANG.

34 Liley, Jackson & Underhill-Day, 2005

35 Natural England's SANGs Quality Checklist can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spa>

36 See the Council's website at <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spa>

18. This exercise identified the following areas of open space (see Table 10), which could be secured and enhanced to provide suitable alternatives to use of the SPA over the lifetime of the development. A full description of why these sites were chosen and why others were rejected is detailed in Appendix 5.
19. A SANG catchment area (the area within which a development needs to be located in order to use a particular SANG as an SPA avoidance measure) will depend on the individual site characteristics and location, and its location within a wider green infrastructure framework. An indicative guide to the size of such catchments is given in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework (2009). Table 10 shows the catchment areas that have been agreed with Natural England:

Table 10 Suitable Areas of Strategic SANGs

Open Space Site ⁽¹⁾	Estimated Area	Catchment Area
The Cut Countryside Corridor: Jocks Copse, Tinker's Copse, & The Cut (south) (5.88ha) / Garth Meadows (7.12ha) / Larks Hill (7.58ha) / Piggy Wood (2.06ha)	22.64ha	5km
Shepherd Meadows	33.74ha	5km
Englemere Pond	27.59ha	5km
Horseshoe Lake	19.44ha ⁽²⁾	4km
Longhill Park Group: Longhill Park (9.31ha) / Milman Close (0.53ha) / Beswick Gardens Copse (0.54ha) / Clintons Hill (3.91ha) / Lily Hill Park (22.74ha)	37.03ha	5km
Ambarrow Court / Hill	13.73ha	4km
Part of Great Hollands Recreation Ground	4.78ha	2km

1. In 2007, South Hill Park was identified as an area of open space which had the potential to be a SANG. Due to its limited catchment (400m) it would however in practise only provide mitigation for residential developments of less than 10 dwellings. For such developments, the Council has SANGs in the south of the Borough. The site has therefore been removed from the Council's suite of SANGs through this SPD.
2. 10.07 excluding the lake, island and watersports centre.

20. These SANGs catchment areas cover the entire borough with the exception of a very small north-east section; however this area is predominantly designated as a Special Area of Conservation and owned by the Crown Estate so development proposals are highly unlikely to come forward in this area. A map showing the catchment areas in more detail is provided for each SANG in Appendix 5. This will aid implementation and link development proposals to a particular SANG.

21. The Delivery Framework (JSPB 2009) states that SANGS on existing, publicly accessible sites is appropriate where there will be no harm to nature conservation interest and there is capacity and potential for improvement. This is subject to meeting the Natural England's Quality Standards.
22. Any deficits in provision or quality of each potential SANG were established by the collection of data in earlier stages of the assessment (shown in Appendix 5). This information, in addition to the professional expertise of employees with responsibility for managing open space within the borough, was then used to collate a schedule of specific improvements to individual sites, which would ensure that the sites can comply with the relevant SANGS quality standards. The key elements of these enhancements were to increase accessibility of the sites and to provide a well-designed circular walk (preferably way-marked) of 2.3 – 2.5km.
23. Once areas were identified as potentially suitable to provide a function as alternative open space, the capacity of this existing open space must be established in order to ensure they have potential to absorb new visitors. An area will only be suitable as a SANG if either existing capacity can be identified, or if capacity can be increased.
25. Studies by Leisure-net (2006 & 2008) established the total number of annual visits to the proposed SANGs and adjusted this to account for seasonality. The surveys were conducted over 450 hours of visitor usage data at 18 parks, over the time period 7am to 7pm on weekdays and weekends. In addition, 861 people were interviewed in more depth. Data was also collected on the frequency of people's visits to estimate the number of people using each site. This data on local frequency of visit relates well to national benchmarks.

Table 11 Calculation of Open Space Use

% of People Visiting	Frequency (visits per week)	Visits per person per week	Visits per person per year
34%	6.50 (either 6 or 7)	2.21	115
6%	4.50 (either 4 or 5)	0.27	14
21%	2.50 (either 2 or 3)	0.53	28
14%	1.00 (once a week)	0.14	7.5
25%	0.30 (less than once a week)	0.08	4
100%		3.22 (# of visits per week by average visitor)	168 (# of visits per year by average visitor)

Source: Leisure-net (June 2006) Parks and Open Spaces Users Survey

31. This shows that one person who regularly visits the open space, on average, visits approximately three times a week and makes 168 visits per year. This figure can then be used to establish the number of people in the locality who use each area of open space; this is calculated in the table below.
32. The overall carrying capacity of each site can be calculated with reference to the standard of at least 8ha/1000 population set out in the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework. However, as demonstrated by the visitor surveys, all of the potential SANGs have a level of existing visitor use. The actual mitigation capacity of each site is the difference between the overall carrying capacity (based upon the standard of at least 8ha/1000 population) and the current visitor use, as demonstrated in the table below. It should be noted that the figures are rounded.

Table 12 Mitigation Capacity of SANGs

A. SANGs	B. Total visits per annum to SANGs ⁽¹⁾	C. Equivalent no. of visitors p.a ⁽²⁾	D. Estimated Area (ha) ⁽³⁾	E. Capacity to Mitigate (D / 8 x 1000)	F. Residual Mitigation Capacity (E - C)	G. Residual area of SANG capacity available (F / 1000 x 8)
The Cut Countryside Corridor: (Jocks Copse/ Tinker's Copse/ The Cut (south)/ Garth Meadows/ Larks Hill/ Piggy Wood)	116,000	691	22.64ha	2,830 persons	2,139 persons	17.12ha
The Longhill Park Group: Longhill Park/ Milman Close/ Beswick Gardens Copse/ Clintons Hill/Lily Hill Park ⁽⁴⁾	37,000	221	14.29ha	1,787 persons	1,566 persons	12.53ha

A. SANGs	B. Total visits per annum to SANGs ⁽¹⁾	C. Equivalent no. of visitors p.a. ⁽²⁾	D. Estimated Area (ha) ⁽³⁾	E. Capacity to Mitigate (D / 8 x 1000)	F. Residual Mitigation Capacity (E - C)	G. Residual area of SANG capacity available (F / 1000 x 8)
Lily Hill Park	86,000	512	22.74ha	2,843 persons	2,331 persons	18.65ha
Englemere Pond	10,000	60	27.53ha	3,442 persons	3,382 persons	27.06ha
Horseshoe Lake	30,000	179	10.07ha	1,259 persons	1,080 persons	8.64ha
Shepherd Meadows	90,000	536	33.74ha	4,218 persons	3,682 persons	29.46ha
Ambarrow Court/ Hill	32,000	191	13.73ha	1,717 persons	1,526 persons	12.21ha
Part of Great Hollands Recreation Ground	19,000	114	4.78ha	598	484 persons	3.9ha
TOTAL					16,190 persons	129.57ha

1. See Open Spaces Study - Parks and Open Spaces Users Survey Leisure-net (June 2006)
2. Calculated by dividing the number of visits to the site per annum, by the average number of visits made by users per year [see Table 12]. This methodology has been approved by Natural England.
3. See Table 11.
4. Lily Hill Park is part of the Longhill Park Group SANG. This is however shown separately in the row below as SANGs capacity on this site has been reserved for the Bracknell Town Centre Redevelopment and is not included in the cost calculations for the strategic SANGs.

33. Therefore it is estimated that the open spaces listed above have the capacity to mitigate against a total of **16,190** additional people if enhancements are implemented.

34. The total costs of enhancements presented in Section 4 and Appendix 7 will be included in the total mitigation package, which will be funded by proportional developers' contributions.

33. The broad enhancements to various areas of open space are provided in Appendix 6. This will be implemented as a rolling programme of works as development occurs funded by developer's contributions.

34. Due to the strategic nature of additional housing development required to be delivered up to 2026 (the plan period), it is difficult to anticipate all the additional works which may be required to maintain SANGs in suitable condition. Future monitoring and surveys may indicate additional works or improvements that could improve suitability as SANGs.
35. This SPD sets out the avoidance and mitigation principles and identifies SANGs, whilst a Open Space Management Plan will give full details of the exact works to be carried out at each site over a 5 year period. The Open Space Management Plans will be reviewed every 5 years in agreement with Natural England, in consultation with other partners where relevant.

APPENDIX 2

EXTRACT FROM RUNNYMEDE SANG SPD

4. The Approach

- 4.1 For applications for residential development on sites situated between 400m and 5km from the SPA, Natural England considers that the impact of such development on the natural habitats in the SPA can be managed, in combination with on site access measures, by the provision of suitable alternative natural green space (SANGS) either through provision of new open space or significant improvements to existing sites. As such, it has produced a draft 'Delivery Plan', which set out standards to avoid harm to the SPA.
- 4.2 The current approach has identified three zones around the SPA:
- Zone A up to 400m from the SPA where avoidance of impacts from new housing development is considered not to be reliable and therefore housing would not normally be permitted. The impact of non recreational effects such as predation, recreation, fire, fly-tipping and hydrological effects is greatest in the 400m buffer area.
 - Zone B at 400m–2km from the SPA where recreational impacts from residents of housing development has the potential to impact on the SPA, but where this could be addressed by the provision of SANGS to attract recreational users away from the SPA (now deleted see below).
 - Zone C at 2–5km from the SPA where SANGS would be required.
- 4.3 This Interim Advice Note proposes improvements to existing areas of potential SANGS in the Borough which could be contributed to by a housing developer.
- 4.4 Applications for planning permission for residential development should be submitted in the normal way. The Interim Advice Note will be a material consideration in determining the planning application. Subject to all other Development Control considerations and the approval of the Council a unilateral obligation, pursuant to section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended, will be invited from the Developer that provide a contribution towards the cost of the measures to enhance the SANGS, in accordance with this Interim Advice Note. A template form of the unilateral obligation has been prepared. (see Appendix 'C' for an example of a Section 106 Agreement). The Unilateral Obligation will be submitted at the same time as the planning application.
- 4.5 The Council's duty to consider the impact of development on the SPA applies also to non-residential development applications which will need to be considered on their individual merits.
- 4.6 Sheltered and accommodation for the elderly is subject of recent clarification by Natural England and will be dealt with separately from this Interim Advice Note.
- 5 Identification of Potential SANGS
- 5.1 The Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit of 2006 helped to provide a basis for the identification of potential SANGS. These potential sites were also identified by consultants appointed by the South East England Regional Assembly appointed to identify potential SANGS in the South East.

- 5.2 The current advice from Natural England indicates that 2ha is the minimum size for a SANGS to function satisfactorily in a suite of SANGS which must include the majority of sites of much larger size. The potential SANGS identified in Runnymede, following on site consultation with Natural England, were as follows; Hare Hill (13.45 ha), Timber Hill (6.5 ha) Chaworth Copse (3 ha), Ottershaw Chase (12 ha), Ether Hill (6.3 ha) and Queenswood (4.3 ha). The Ottershaw Memorial Fields (and specifically the car park/toilets) was identified as a support facility for providing access to Ether Hill/Queen Wood but was discounted as being suitable as a SANGS in its own right as it is too formal and is not a semi natural habitat. Consideration has also been given to Homewood Park (23.64 ha) – a mixed formal/semi natural site enhancements to Englefield Green (12.32 ha), and to St Ann’s Hill (21.17 ha). These will need to be discussed further with Natural England.
- 5.3 Following the identification of the potential SANGS their capacity was assessed. This was achieved by undertaking a visitor survey to confirm existing use and then identifying measures to enhance their capacity. Homewood Park, Englefield Green and St Ann’s Hill have not yet been subject to a visitor surveys as it has only recently been regarded as having potential for additional capacity. However, further work is required to examine the capacity of these sites but it is anticipated that they will make a significant contribution to the local SANGS.

6 The Visitor Surveys

- 6.1 Visitor surveys have been undertaken on Hare Hill and the potential linked sites PLS at Timber Hill, Chaworth Copse, Ether Hill, and Ottershaw Chase. The site at Ottershaw Memorial Fields is not regarded as a potential SANGS but it does provide a good quality car park that offers access to the adjoining SANGS. Queenswood is a new site with no formal access. The sites are identified on Appendix ‘A’
- 6.2 The visitor survey was undertaken in consultation with Natural England and reflected the surveys that were undertaken on the Dorset Heaths and Thames Basin Heaths. Natural England signed off the survey methodology as being ‘fit for purpose’ in terms of a visitor survey for identifying existing user patterns on the study areas.
- 6.3 The Hare Hill surveys took place over the period 18th, 20th and 21st May (outside school holiday period) and over the 25th, 27th and 28th May (school holiday/Bank holiday period). The survey took place over 8 hours during the period 7-19 hr and surveyors were placed at every identified entry point to the study areas. The surveys for the potential linked SANGS (PLS) took place on the 10th, 12th, 13th, 17th, 19th and 20th August (school holidays), and 14th, 16th, 17th, 21st, 23rd and 24th September (outside school holidays).
- 6.4 The surveys revealed that the number of visitors was:

Visitor Type	Hare Hill	Linked Sites	Totals
Total visitors	539	516	1055

Details of the survey are available on request.

- 6.5 Whilst the surveys revealed current visitor numbers to the sites they do not reveal capacity. Natural England set out an approach to identify capacity in the Draft Delivery Plan.

APPENDIX 3

**NEWS STORY FOR OPENING OF
BYTHEWAY FIELD SANG, COLEHILL, EAST
DORSET**

**Categorised | East Dorset District Council**

Tags | **Bytheway Field, Colehill, East Dorset District Council, Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space, Wimborne**

Official opening of Bytheway Field

Posted on 08 April 2013 by Christchurch Borough Council

Work to turn Bytheway Field off Leigh Road in Colehill into a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) has been marked with an official opening.

The Chairman of **East Dorset District Council**, Cllr Lucy Clark performed the ceremony by planting an oak tree watched by users of the field.

The 37-acre field was bought by East Dorset District Council from The National Trust in 2002. Though it has been well-used by walkers and dog owners since then, the Council decided to make it more accessible and user-friendly.

Using money from the Heathland Mitigation Fund – £322,000 from Charles Church and Persimmon Homes in respect of the housing development on the former Flight Refuelling site in Wimborne – Bytheway has now had 3,000 metres of pathway suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs installed. A lake has been dug at the lowest part of the site, which was often waterlogged, and a walkway constructed across the lake. Benches and signage have been installed and a play area will be constructed to be unveiled in late summer.



It has also been designated as a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) – an area of green space intended to provide mitigation for the potential impact of residential development on nearby heathland by preventing an increase in visitor pressure on the heathland.

On opening Bytheway, Cllr Lucy Clark said: “I would like to thank all of the organisations who have helped in the design and construction of the redeveloped site. I am happy to say that this project has been brought in under budget and on time.

“I am sure this Bytheway SANG will give many generations an immense amount of enjoyment from walking dogs, watching the herons on the lake or just simply having a great time in the children’s play area. I have no doubt it is going to be very successful and well-used.”