

# Agenda Item 74.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
181631	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	Shinfield Village	Shinfield South;

<b>Applicant</b>	University of Reading
<b>Site Address</b>	Land South of Reading Road and Arborfield Road, East of Chestnut Crescent, West of the River Loddon
<b>Proposal</b>	Full planning application for the change of use of 21.7ha of land from agricultural use to informal recreational land ( Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace SANG ) and associated infrastructure including pedestrian and vehicle access, a car park, footpath network and landscaping.
<b>Type</b>	Full/Outline/Hybrid
<b>PS Category</b>	1
<b>Officer</b>	Kayleigh Mansfield
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Major application

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 13 February 2019
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place

## SUMMARY

The proposal seeks to extend the existing Langley Mead Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) which was approved via appeal and opened to the public in 2015. The existing 18.3ha SANG is at capacity and therefore the application is required to facilitate future residential development proposed at Cutbush Lane, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP8, The application site is approximately 21.7ha in size and has predominantly been in agricultural use. Arborfield Road is located to the north of the site and the River Loddon to the east.

The SANG extension is proposed to be undertaken in two (or more) phases. Phase 1 will provide just over 4ha of SANG to serve the proposed development coming forward at Land South of Cutbush Lane and North of Arborfield Road. Phase 2, which would be undertaken should the southern half of Cutbush area come forward represents the remainder of the proposed SANG area (17.7ha).

The design and layout is considered acceptable by Natural England and accords with the specific SANG requirements outlined in this report. Overall the proposal is considered to accord with National and Local Policy and therefore is acceptable.

## PLANNING STATUS

- Strategic Development Location
- Overhead cables 15m buffer
- Flood Zone 2 and 3
- Bat Roost Habitat suitability
- Archaeological Sites
- Ground Water Zones
- Mineral Site Consultation Zone
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones
- Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area 5km

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
<p><b>That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:</b></p> <p><b>A. Completion of a legal agreement to:</b></p> <p>Permitted Use of the Site Phasing of Delivery Step in Rights for the Council Contingency Sum</p> <p>The Heads of Terms may be subject to amendments which will be outlined in the members update.</p> <p><b>B. Conditions and informatives:</b></p> <p>Conditions and Informatives to be included in the members update.</p> <p><b>C. Reason for Refusal:</b></p> <p>In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures and access management monitoring arrangements together with the failure to secure the obligations listed at section A. of the recommendation, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the LPA is unable to satisfy itself that the proposals include adequate mitigation measures to prevent the proposed development from having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, in line with the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC. The proposal would be contrary to Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies CP8 and CP4 of the Core Strategy.</p>

<b>PLANNING HISTORY</b>		
<b>Application Number</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>
181499	Full planning application for the erection of 249 dwellings, new public open space, landscaping, surface water attenuation, access and associated works at land to the south of Cutbush Lane Shinfield.	To be determined by planning committee members 13 February '19
F/2010/1434	Application for change of use of land from agricultural to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (Sui Generis use) and associated development to include Pedestrian and Vehicular access, car park, Footpaths and Landscaping.	Appeal upheld by Secretary of State 22 October '12

<b>SUMMARY INFORMATION</b>
<b>For Commercial– Not applicable</b>

Site Area
Previous land use(s) and floorspace(s)
Proposed floorspace of each use
Change in floorspace (+/-)
Number of jobs created/lost
Existing parking spaces
Proposed parking spaces
<b>For Residential– Not applicable</b>
Site Area
Existing units
Proposed units
Existing density – dwellings/hectare
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare
Number of affordable units proposed
Previous land use
Proposed Public Open Space
Existing parking spaces
Proposed parking spaces

<b>CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>	
Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust	No comments received
Crime Prevention Design Officer	No comments received
National Grid	No comments received
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	No comments received
SEE Power Distribution	No comments received
<b>Berkshire Archaeology</b>	<b>No objection – Subject to condition</b>
<b>Natural England</b>	<b>No objection</b>
<b>WBC Biodiversity</b>	<b>No objection – Subject to conditions</b>
WBC Economic Prosperity and Place (Community Infrastructure)	No comments received
<b>WBC Drainage</b>	<b>No objection – Subject to condition</b>
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No comments received
WBC Environmental Health	No objection
<b>WBC Highways</b>	<b>No objection – Subject to conditions</b>
<b>WBC Tree &amp; Landscape</b>	<b>No objection – Subject to condition</b>
WBC Cleaner & Greener (Waste Services)	No comments received
WBC Property Services	No comments received
WBC Public Rights of Way	No comments received

<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>
<b>Town/Parish Council:</b> Unable to comment on the application, as it relates to SANG provision for development which the parish has not yet been able to review.
<b>Local Members:</b>
1. With the majority of the site within Flood Zone 3, what proportion of the year would the site be expected to be useable by pedestrians and does the accord with Natural England SANG requirements?

**Officer Comment:** Natural England have confirmed they are satisfied with the proposed layout of the SANG extension. The existing Langley Mead SANG, also located within Flood Zone 2 and 3, was also supported by Natural England

2. In view of the frequency of the site being subject to flooding, is it proposed the paths would have a pronounced camber? This would allow people to walk on the paths even when the surrounding land is under several inches of water.

**Officer Comment:** Cambers would not necessarily be the correct solution here due to the displacement of flooding. However details of this will be provided to the Council by way of condition.

3. I note the parking includes one wider space but it is unclear whether it will be a designated disabled parking space - please clarify?

**Officer Comment:** This space is larger in size to ensure ease of turning in and out of the space.

4. The parking is free and available to the public, what stops it being used by patrons of the Magpie and Parrot pub opposite? This could exclude legitimate visitors to the SANG?

**Officer Comment:** Use of the SANG will occur during daylight hours and the pressure of the pub is not anticipated to impact parking availability.

**Neighbours:** 4 Neighbours objected to the proposal on the following grounds:  
Neighbour One:

1. Footpath to be aligned with the public right of way north of Arborfield Road.

**Officer Comment:** Details have been requested by condition.

2. The existing Langley Mead footpaths have not survived flooding. The plans fail demonstrate how with will be prevented in the extension.

**Officer Comment:** The Langley Mead SANG, which has the same flooding constraints as the application site, was awarded planning permission by appeal/Secretary of State. It is acknowledge that the paths will be unusable for short durations during flooding

3. There is no footpath from the pub to the river bridge which is unsafe for users.

**Officer Comment:** The Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and is satisfied with the access arrangements overall. However further Highways details are requested by condition

4. Signs should be provided to warn users of the underground sewage storage tanks and the risks.

**Officer Comment:** Environmental Health and the Flood Risk Officer are satisfied there will not be environmentally harmful risk resulting from sewage storage flooding. Signage in these areas is limited to prevent their urbanisation where possible

5. There should also be a plan to close the area to visitors when under water.

**Officer Comment:** As with the Langley Mead SANG and other areas of open space, users will be expected to exercise caution and common sense. It is not Council policy to close parks or footpath in open spaces unless absolutely necessary. In any case the area will be managed by the University of Reading.

Neighbour Two:

1. Proposed walkways/access to the field overlooks into rear garden.

**Officer Comment:** It is acknowledged the proposal does not seek to alter the boundary treatments along this side of the site. Therefore residents may wish to erect fencing under their own permitted developments rights. However overlooking as described is considered to be limited as the proximity of the path to the site boundary is at its minimum 18metres. Therefore providing a minimum distance of 22 metres from the path to habitable window - in line with Borough Design Guide standards.

2. The proposal will require the rear boundary of the property to include tall fences, which will ruin the appreciation of the landscape and wildlife thus de-valuing the property value.

**Officer Report:** The western boundary treatments will remain unchanged in accordance with drawing L-04-02 Rev B.

Neighbour Three:

1. Is the SANG being provided in lieu of existing or future development? If so where?

**Officer Comment:** The SANG is being provided to facilitate the proposed development, at land north and south of Cutbush Lane.

2. As part of this application can the proposed footpaths be connected up with the existing public right of way network?

**Officer Comment:** The footpaths will link into the wider network. Details of this will be submitted by conditions.

Neighbour Four:

1. The bulk of the proposed SANG is located in a flood risk area. And therefore unavailable for use during flooding.

**Officer Comment:** The extended SANG is connected to the existing South of M4 SANG suite. This provides a number of alternative walking routes away from areas during flooding. It is acknowledged that some sections of the paths will be unusable for short durations during flooding. However this is acceptable given the duration of these events.

2. The SANG will result in an artificially created open space and no longer will have the existing farmland character.

**Officer Comment:** The application site will remain countryside, with limited works to ensure limited visual intrusion. It will also be made available for public use and enjoyment.

## APPLICANTS POINTS

- None

## PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	<b>CP1</b>	Sustainable Development
	<b>CP3</b>	General Principles for Development
	<b>CP6</b>	Managing Travel Demand
	<b>CP7</b>	Biodiversity

	<b>CP8</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	<b>CP11</b>	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	<b>CC01</b>	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	<b>CC03</b>	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	<b>CC07</b>	Parking
	<b>CC09</b>	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	<b>CC10</b>	Sustainable Drainage
	<b>TB21</b>	Landscape Character
	<b>TB23</b>	Biodiversity and Development
	<b>TB25</b>	Archaeology
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	<b>BDG</b>	Borough Design Guide
	<b>SoM4 SDL</b>	South of the M4 Strategic Development Location

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### **1.0 Background and Site**

1.1 A full planning application for the SDL allocated site at Land to the South Of Cutbush Lane for 249 dwellings has been received by the Council (181499). Local objections have raised concerns with both applications. However only material considerations relating to this application for a change of use to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) have been considered.

1.2 The application site is approximately 21.7ha in size and has predominantly been in agricultural use. Arborfield Road is located to the north of the site and the River Loddon to the east.

1.3 The proposal essentially seeks to extend the existing Langley Mead SANG which was approved via appeal and opened to the public in 2015. The existing 18.3ha SANG is at capacity and therefore the application is required to support future residential development proposed at Cutbush Lane, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP8.

1.4 The SANG extension is proposed to be undertaken in two (or more) phases. Phase 1 will provide just over 4ha of SANG to serve the proposed development coming forward at Land South of Cutbush Lane and North of Arborfield Road.

1.5 Phase 1 provides a surfaced route from Langley Mead to the proposed car park on Arborfield Road enabling long circular routes to be undertaken. A small loops is also provided within Phase 1.

1.6 Phase 2, which would be undertaken should the southern half of Cutbush area come forward represents the remainder of the proposed SANG area (17.7ha). It is proposed that the grassland diversification works are likely to take place in one phase, with the necessary physical infrastructure to enable maintenance

of the grassland. The infrastructure required to enable public access (such as path, benches, limited signage) will then come forward as the site is opened for public access.

## **2.0 Principle of Proposed Development:**

- 2.1 The application submitted by the applicant is specifically for a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Therefore, this must be assessed against national and local planning policy and also Natural England's Guidelines for the Creation of Suitable Accessible Green Space.
- 2.2 The primary purpose of a SANG is to provide an alternative space for informal recreation primarily for resident of new developments thus reducing the pressure of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). SANGs are intended to provide mitigation for the potential impact of residential development on the SPA by preventing an increase in visitor pressure, in particular dog walking and the harm that this can cause to the special biodiversity of the site. The introduction of a SANG in this location as a means of mitigation could contribute towards conserving the SPA as required by saved South East Plan Policy NRM6 and Core Strategy Policies CP7 and CP8, and as supported by the Secretary of State's decision on the Shinfield West appeal (APP/X0360/A/11/215140).
- 2.3 Core Strategy Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy states that proposals that contribute and/or promote creation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside are generally acceptable in principle subject to the impact on the rural character of the area. The site is currently countryside and will remain so although it is acknowledge some minor works, footpaths and planting, will be required to facilitate its use as open space. Therefore, the change in land use does not conflict with the objectives of the development plan. The proposal provides wider public benefit in that it would improve public access to the countryside, and it would not be harmful to the rural location.
- 2.4 The proposed use of the land for accessible green space is acceptable and in accordance with local plan policies CP7, CP8 and CP11. However as the use of the land is specifically for a SANG it must meet the criteria as set out in the Natural England Guidance.
- 2.5 Appendix 2 of the guidance sets out the essential requirements the proposal "must have":
  - i. 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 (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 the SANGs and the SPA.
  - ii. It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3-2.5km around the SANGs.
  - iii. Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
  - iv. The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANG is intended to cater for.
  - v. The SANGs must have a safe route of access on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpaths/s
  - vi. All SANGS with car parks must have a circular walk which starts and finishes at the car park

- vii. SANGs must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users; they must not have any tree and scrub cover along parts of the walking routes.
- viii. Paths must be easily used and well maintained but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming urban in feel.
- ix. SANGs must be perceived as semi-natural spaces within little intrusion of artificial structures, except in the immediate vicinity of car parks. Visually-sensitive way markers and some benches are acceptable.
- x. All SANGs larger than 12ha must aim to provide a variety of habitats for users to experience.
- xi. 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.
- xii. SANGs must be free of unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works, smells etc.)
- xiii. SANGs should be clearly sign-posted or advertised in some way.
- xiv. 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

2.6 Natural England are satisfied the proposal meets the above criterion and provide no objection to the proposal on these grounds.

### **3.0 Landscape Character**

- 3.1 Core Strategy Policy CP1 and CP3 and MDD Policies CC03 and TB21 seeks to ensure development does not have a detrimental impact on the landscape character and its features, and enhances the high quality of the environments in the borough.
- 3.2 The Landscape and Trees Officer has been consulted as part of this application and confirms additional planting will need to be considered to help restore the existing landscape features of the Loddon River Valley character area.
- 3.2 A revised masterplan drawing was therefore submitted to introduce additional planting of
  - i. Hedgerows trees in association with the proposed new hedgerow on the northern boundary of the site and around the SANG car park.
  - ii. Hedgerows trees in association with existing hedgerows in the site
  - iii. Deciduous woodland/copses including wet woodland in small areas adjacent to the River Loddon and on the western boundary of the SANG with the settlement edge of Shinfield.
- 3.4 The Landscape and Trees Officer is now satisfied with the proposal but seeks a condition to be applied to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the landscape proposal. It is also noted that the proposal also helps contribute to the Council's aspiration for a Loddon Valley river footpath.

### **4.0 Flooding and Drainage**

- 4.1 Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDD Policies CC09 and CC10 establish that new development should avoid increasing and where possible reduce flood risk (from all sources) by first developing in areas with lowest flood risk, carrying out a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) where required and managing surface water in a sustainable manner.
- 4.2 These requirements are reinforced by South of M4 SPD Design Principle 1c(ii) which requires provisions of a comprehensive system for water management,



which takes account of existing features and includes proposals for effective sustainable urban drainage (SUDS), measures to avoid flood risk.

- 4.3 As with the existing Langley Mead SANG the application site lies within Flood Zone 2 and 3. To allow for continuous public access, a path would need to be maintained above flood level. Whilst in parts of the site the path would have to be raised, careful design and landscaping should ensure that during non-flood periods the raised path does not result in an obtrusive alien feature in the landscape. This has been suitably incorporated into the parts of the existing Langley Mead SANG.
- 4.4 The proposed SANG extension will join into the existing suite of SANGs across the South of the M4 SDL. It has been noted that concerns have been raised with respect to land and some of the footpaths flooding and not being usable. However it is considered, the extent of the available open space for use would provide adequate and alternative areas for walking during times of flooding. Moreover, that the duration of these flood events mean that for the majority of the year the paths would remain usable. The expected usage during times of flood is also expected to be low and users of the proposed SANG, who continue to use this area during flooding would have other open available to them on the site and nearby and would be expected to exercise common sense and caution if they use this SANG
- 4.5 The application has been assessed by the Flood Risk and Drainage Officer who has no objection to the proposed change of use, subject to details of the car park, to be submitted

## **5.0 Ecology**

- 5.1 Core strategy policy CP7, carried forward by MDD Policy TB23, requires appropriate protection of species and habitats of conservation value. Design Principle 1b(i-ii) is concerned with protection of ecological habitat and biodiversity features, together with mitigation of any impacts that do arise.
- 5.2 The Ecology Officer was consulted as part of this application and is broadly in agreement that the proposed restoration of a less intensive form of agricultural land management is likely to have a significant positive effect on the local area. It is considered that the proposed layout and management plan has the potential to provide an even greater benefit to biodiversity with some minor changes. This can achieved via further details through condition. However the scheme is acceptable in principle from an ecology position.

## **6.0 Archaeology**

- 6.1 Core Strategy Policy CP3 and MDD Policy TB25 require the archaeological impact of development to be taken into consideration.
- 6.2 Berkshire Archaeology were consulted as part of this application and potential archaeological issues have been identified. Cropmarks, indicating possible archaeological remains have been observed on aerial photographs within the proposed site. An archaeological evaluations recorded the presence of numerous ditched features, some of which were dated to the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. Recent archaeological monitoring of the sewer upgrade within the site also confirmed the presence of features, some of which were thought to be associated with post-medieval field boundaries, but one of which was also dated to Roman period

- 6.3 Given the archaeology known to exist within the proposal site, all below ground excavations should be archaeological monitored to ensure that any remains that are disturbed are suitably recorded. A pre commencement condition is therefore recommended requiring the applicant or their agents to implement a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposed change of use application to enable the extension to existing Langley Mead SANG provides the opportunity to build on the benefits of the existing SANG in terms on ecology and recreation. Resulting in a high quality alternative natural greenspace for existing and future residents of Shinfield and the surrounding areas.
- 7.2 The design and layout is considered acceptable by Natural England and accords with the specific SANG requirements outlined in this report. Overall the proposal is considered to accord with National and Local Policy, in particular; Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP7, CP8 and CP11, Managing Development Delivery Policies CC01, CC03, CC07, CC09, CC10, TB21, TB23 and TB25 and the South of the M4 SDL SPD.