

# Agenda Item 5.

<b>Development Management Ref No</b>	<b>No weeks on day of committee</b>	<b>Parish of</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Listed by:</b>
170264	20/20	Wokingham	Wescott	Scheme of Delegation

**Applicant Location** Gladman Developments  
Land East Of Finchampstead Road, **Postcode** RG40 3HE  
Wokingham

**Proposal** Full application for the proposed change of use of land to Suitable Alternative natural greenspace (SANG) with associated landscape works and parking.

**Type** Full  
**PS Category** 6 – Major (All other Developments)  
**Officer** Ashley Smith

**FOR CONSIDERATION BY** Planning Committee on 14/06/17  
**REPORT PREPARED BY** Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

## SUMMARY

The application proposes the change of use of 11.23 hectares of undeveloped land on the eastern side of Finchampstead Road to a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

The proposal is considered acceptable in highway, character, drainage and amenity terms and is considered capable as acting as a SANG and providing an informal leisure facility. The proposal therefore accords with the policies contained within the Development Plan and national planning policy as such this application is recommended for approval.

The application is brought before the committee as it is a major development recommended for approval.

## PLANNING STATUS

- Countryside
- Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (5km and 7km)
- Mineral Site Consultation Zone
- Aerodrome Safeguarding for wind turbines

## RECOMMENDATION

**That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:**

**Time Frame:**

1. The Development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of

three years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: In pursuance of s91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by S51 of the Planning & Compensation Act 2004)*

**Landscaping and SANG Details:**

2. Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:

- Means of enclosure/boundary treatments
- Details of vehicle and pedestrian access, circulation areas & hard surfacing materials
- minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, dog waste bins refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc).
- Details of path surfacing materials
- Maintenance access points and routes
- Details of benches/seating
- Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.
- Details of biodiversity enhancement areas (preferably including an area of meadow restoration)

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

*In the interests of amenity and to ensure the SANG is of sufficient quality to mitigate any future local development . Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 (and TB06 for garden development)*

3. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 10 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

*Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area.*

*Relevant policies: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

**Plan numbers:**

4. This permission is in respect of the following drawings:

Drawing No	Title
<i>Full schedule of all relevant plans to be included in Member's update.</i>	

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
*Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.*

**Drainage Conditions**

5. The car parking area as well as the route through the SANG should be of permeable construction and development should not begin until details of both constructions have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.  
*Reason: This is to prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10*

**Transport Conditions**

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted details of a lockable height barrier shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The lockable height barrier shall be implemented in accordance with such details as may be approved before first use of the SANG hereby permitted, and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the lifetime of the development.  
*Reason: In the interests of security, highway safety, to ensure proper usage of the site. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

7. No part of the SANG hereby permitted shall be occupied/used until vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The vehicle parking and turning space so-approved shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any purpose other than vehicle turning.  
*Reason: To provide adequate off-street vehicle parking and turning space and to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear in the interests of road safety and convenience and providing a functional, accessible and safe development and in the interests of amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.*

8. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted details of secure and covered bicycle storage/ parking facilities for visitors to the SANG shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The cycle storage/ parking shall be implemented in accordance with such details as may be approved before first use of the SANG hereby permitted, and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other

purpose.

*Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.*

## **9. Protection of trees**

- a) No development, other operation or works to trees shall commence on site until a revised and updated Tree Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement which provides for the retention and protection of trees (including those adjacent to Finchampstead Road), shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details as so-approved (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme)
- b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.
- c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

*To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

10. Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

*Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21*

## PLANNING HISTORY

No relevant planning history on this site.

An outline application has been received on the adjacent land for 250 houses this application has yet to be determined and has the reference **170261**.

## SUMMARY INFORMATION

### For Commercial

Site Area	11.23 Hectares
Existing use	Undeveloped rural land
Proposed use	Use Class D2 – Assembly and Leisure
Public Open Space proposed	11.23 Hectares
Existing parking spaces	Nil
Proposed parking spaces	10

## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Highways	No objection, subject to conditions
WBC Environmental Health	No objections or conditions recommended.
WBC Trees and Landscapes	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to conditions
Natural England	No objection, to the SANG as a standalone development
Wokingham Town Council	“Objection on the grounds that this application has been made to support an unsustainable development.”  (Officer note application must be considered on its own merits)
Ward Members	Cllr Whittle and Cllr McGhee-Sumner sent the following comments:  “The proposal outlined in the above planning application falls within Wescott Ward. As the Town and Borough Councillors representing the residents of Wescott Ward we are very supportive of their objections to this planning application.  The application is for a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). However, the area is already an open field, water meadow, grassland and trees.  More important is that the proposed SANG only covers approximately one third of the total area currently open field, water meadow, grassland and trees.  Apart from being an area of green that breaks up the mature houses along the Finchampstead Road, this area also acts as an important “sponge” to absorb surface water.

	<p>The report from Lees Roxburgh Limited highlights that there is currently a high risk of flooding from surface water to the north of the SANG. The residents of Luckley Wood can testify to this.</p> <p>If the proposed development of 250 dwellings goes ahead the area of open field, water meadow, grassland and trees will be reduced by two thirds and the surface water from the “concrete jungle” of the development will flow into the surrounding areas. With an already high risk of flooding from surface water identified by Lees Roxburgh Limited the situation will be exacerbated from the water flow coming from the proposed development and increase the frequency of flooding as the much reduced area of grassland will not be able to cope.</p> <p>We are opposed to the substantial reduction in area of grasslands and are concerned that the SANG will not be able to accommodate the additional surface water flowing from the proposed adjoining development. Increased flooding risk will result to the detriment of existing residents.</p> <p>For all of the above reasons we believe that this application should be rejected.”</p>
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## REPRESENTATIONS

An outline application has been received on the adjacent land for 250 houses this application has yet to be determined and has the planning reference number **170261**.

410 Letters of objection/comment have been received. However the overwhelming majority of these letters covers both these sites. Objection in these letters primarily focus on the housing and concerns that the SANG might enable the housing (Officer note; this is not reasonable grounds to object to the standalone application):

Issues pertaining to the housing application are not summarised below, these will be considered in the assessment for that development.

The following Planning issues were raised about the SANG:

- Land should be left in its’ natural state. One of the few untainted areas around Wokingham. Land was part of an unsuccessful village green Inquiry.
- SANG is not necessary in isolation/Sufficient SANG in the area already.
- SANG would be out of character with countryside and would introduce unnecessary paraphernalia to the countryside
- Unsustainable location
- Poor Drainage at the site
- Access is unsuitable
- Traffic impact unacceptable
- SANG is located in the Countryside and will have and unacceptable landscape and

visual impact

- Will remove strategic gap between settlements
- SANG will affect outlook/residential amenity
- Impact on vegetation
- Impact on Ecology from the development of the site for SANG
- Potential impact on trees

## **APPLICANTS POINTS**

The proposal for the site is for a change of use of the land to provide a new area of publically accessible open green space to act as a SANG to the nearby Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), to mitigate potential impacts which could arise from new residential development generating additional use of the SPA. The SPA is located approximately 4km to the south east of the site boundary at its closest point.

The proposals will provide significant biodiversity enhancements compared to the existing status of the site, both in terms of the habitats present and the opportunities that the proposal presents for species such as nesting and foraging birds, foraging bats, reptiles and mammals. The proposal will also facilitate biodiversity benefits associated with the Thames Basin Heaths SPA given that it will not only divert potential future use associated with proposed housing but it will also divert existing use of the SPA by existing residents close to the SANG site.

## **PLANNING POLICY**

### National policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)  
National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

### Saved South East Plan Policy

NRM6: Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area

### Wokingham Borough Core Strategy:

CP1: Sustainable Development  
CP2: Inclusive Communities  
CP3: General Development Principles  
CP6: Managing Travel Demand  
CP7: Biodiversity

### MDD DPD Local Plan:

CC02: Development Limits  
CC04: Sustainable Design and construction

CC06: Noise  
CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks  
CC07: Parking  
CC09: Flood Risk  
CC10: Sustainable Drainage  
TB08: Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards  
TB21: Landscape Character  
TB23: Biodiversity and development

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### **Preliminary Matter:**

1. An outline application has been received on the adjacent land for 250 houses. This application has yet to be determined and has the reference 170261. The housing application in particular has received a significant amount of objection. This is a separate planning application and must be determined on its own merits.

### **Principle of Development:**

2. The proposal is for use of the land for informal recreation. Policy CP11 states that proposals that contribute and/or promote recreation 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, the use of the land as a SANG will improve nature quality and promote public access to the site and as such is not considered harmful to the countryside.
3. The primary purpose of a SANG is to provide an alternative to the sites for informal recreation within the Special Protection Area and thus it would contribute towards conserving sites of international nature conservation importance (European Sites), as required by saved South East Plan Policy NRM6 and Core Strategy Policies CP7 & CP8.
4. The site is located in the countryside to the south of the major Development Location of Wokingham. To meet the requirements for a SANG public access would be provided through a network of footpaths alongside the management and provision of the open space and vegetation. Thus the proposal will improve the management of the countryside and biodiversity, protect and enhance woodland and provide opportunities for access to the countryside for informal recreational on the urban fringe, in compliance with saved South East and NRM6, and Core Strategy Policy CP8.
5. The use of the land for informal recreation and the associated ancillary development area acceptable in principle in the Countryside subject to the detail discussed below.

### **Impact on countryside & character:**

6. Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3, require new development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Policy CP11 requires development to maintain the quality of the environment in the countryside. Proposals should respect the landscape character of the area, retain and protect existing landscape features such as trees and woodland and provide for appropriate landscaping, which should generally consist of locally native species.

7. The site extends to 11.23 ha and is located to the south of the residential area of Luckley Wood to the south of Wokingham. It is accessed from Finchampstead Road which is located to the west of the site. The eastern boundary of the site is formed by the North Downs railway line.
8. The site currently comprises areas of grassland, woodland and scrub, and is situated to the north of Wokingham Family Golf Course. The site is served by an existing access track leading from Finchampstead Road to the west. The access track also serves the nearby golf course. As the proposal seeks to utilise the current access to the site no significant visible urbanisation will be apparent from public view points along the Finchampstead Road.
9. The proposed design of the SANG includes the retention and enhancement of habitats which are already present within the site, including rough grassland, wet grassland, a stream, woodland and scrub. New areas of native hedgerow and scrub planting are also proposed in the site to add further interest. A new car park for use by visitors is proposed to the west of the site, and would be accessed via the existing track leading from Finchampstead Road, further to the west. The car park would be well screened from public view points by mature vegetation. The SANG proposals also include the provision of some lengths of boardwalk over the stream running through the site and areas of wet ground to ensure the circular route remains passable, as well as provision of information boards, crossing points, way markers and bins.
10. The proposal will retain the rural verdant feel of the site; and the paraphernalia associated with the development is proportionate and to be expected to support the recreational activities at a SANG. Conditions 2 & 3 ensure landscape and SANG quality is maintained and that vegetation at the site is maintained. As a result there are no concerns with regards character and urbanisation of the countryside and the proposal is considered compliant with Core Strategy Policy CP11.

**Impact on Neighbours:**

11. Built development would be limited to the construction of the car park and footpath network, so the main impact of the proposal on occupants of nearby dwellings would be from increased activity at the site.
12. The access road serving the site already exists and serves Wokingham Family Golf Centre as well as a small number of dwellings. There would be a limited increase in movements to the site and the nearest residential property is approximately 130m from the proposed car park. Similarly the nearest properties to the SANG are at Luckley Wood and are located some 40m from the northern boundary of the site. No lighting has been proposed as part of the proposals. Given the separation distances involved and the nature of the use at the site it is considered that the proposal would not cause any harm to residential amenity.

**Ecology:**

13. The intention is that the proposed public open space would be used as a SANG. As such the proposal would assist in mitigating the impact on the Special Protection Area as required by Saved South East Plan Policies NRM6 together with Core Strategy policies CP7 and CP8.

14. Core Strategy Policy CP7 requires the impact on wildlife to be considered when assessing development proposals. The nature conservation value of sites should be taken into account when assessing proposals for development and, where appropriate, the creation and future management of new wildlife habitats and corridors should be secured. The proposal will provide new habitats and management of existing habitats, so would comply with these policies, this is further secured by condition 2.
15. The development would increase footfall to the site however this is mitigated by increase mitigation measures and improvements to the quality of habitats. Subject to final details of biodiversity enhancements being agreed as part of condition 2 the Borough Ecologist is satisfied that the proposal would not adversely affect biodiversity at the site and the proposal would bring long term benefit to biodiversity in the area. Natural England has raised no objection to the proposal as a standalone SANG.
16. Should any housing be approved at a future stage which is dependent on the capacity of this SANG then further details of management of the SANG and a mechanism for securing its upkeep would need to be secured via a legal agreement for that housing application. This is not however required for this standalone SANG application.

**Access and movement:**

17. The proposal seeks to utilise an existing access. The Highway Authority considers that the proposal will not cause any significant impact upon the local highway network and that total vehicle movements for the SANG would be relatively limited. The SANG is well located near to an existing Major development location and can be accessed by local residents on foot, this is considered to be a sustainable location for a use of this type.
18. The proposal would utilise an existing access of acceptable quality for the level of use and this is considered to be satisfactory by the Highway Authority who has no significant concerns over the very limit increased intensity of use of the access caused by the proposal.
19. The proposal includes a new 10 space car park specifically dedicated to use of the SANG. The detailed arrangements for the design and operation of the car park area and bicycle parking are secured by conditions 7 and 9.

**Trees and Landscape:**

20. The development utilises the existing access to the site and as such does not lead to the loss of trees at the entrance to the site. The same tree report was submitted with this application is the same as the report submitted with application 170261 (Which would have greater impact upon trees) and as such a revised report is required prior to the commencement of development, to clarify that all trees along Finchampstead Road are to be retained as part of the SANG development (condition 9).
21. Within the SANG the proposal will lead to maintenance of vegetation as well as additional planting to create habitats and enhancements. The Landscape Architect and Borough Ecologist have both reviewed the scheme and are satisfied with the proposals subject to the Landscape and Ecological conditions above.

**Flood risk and drainage:**

22. The Drainage Officer has reviewed the Lees Roxburgh Flood Risk Assessment 6086/R3, for the SANG, dated January 2017. It is noted that there will be no built development within the SANG area except for a car parking area and a walkway routes through the site.
23. The site lies within flood zone 1, where the probability of flooding is low. However it is recognised that historically parts of the land particularly adjacent to Luckley Wood have had some surface water drainage issues.
24. Having reviewed the information, the drainage officer is satisfied that the SANG development would not cause additional drainage issues or unacceptably increase flood risk in the vicinity, subject to condition 5 requiring the hard surfaces of the car park to be of a permeable nature.
25. Whilst it is noted that there have been pre-existing issues particularly at Luckley Wood with regards surface water drainage this proposal would not worsen the existing situation and as such a reason for refusal could not be substantiated on these grounds.

**Mineral extraction consultation zone:**

26. The proposed development is located in an area of the Borough where extraction of minerals could be possible. The Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire sets out the approach to planning for minerals which states that Local Planning Authorities will oppose development that would cause the sterilisation of minerals deposits, unless:-
- the mineral deposit is of no commercial interest
  - it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for development
  - there is likely to such strong environmental or other objection that extraction of minerals would be unlikely to be permitted
27. The proposal is for the development of a SANG. It is considered unlikely that the site would be used for commercial extraction given its constraints and surrounding residential uses, however in any case the land would remain undeveloped and as such this would not preclude mineral extraction from happening in the future.

**CONCLUSION**

The application proposes the change of use of 11.23 hectares of undeveloped land on the eastern side of Finchampstead Road to a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

The proposal is considered acceptable in Highway, character, drainage and amenity terms and is considered capable as acting as a suitable SANG. The proposal therefore accords with the policies contained within the Development Plan and national planning policy as such this application is recommended for approval.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Service	Telephone	Email
Development	0118 974 6428 / 6429	development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

Management and Regulatory Services		
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