



Elmbridge
Borough Council
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Brooklands Community Park Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace Proposal

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1. Introduction

1.1 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is a network of heathland sites designated to protect the habitat of the internationally important bird species of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Elmbridge Borough Council is legally obliged to make sure that no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA will arise from new development. As a result, Core Strategy Policy CS13: Thames Basin Heaths SPA along with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Draft Developer Contributions SPD sets out a package of measures to avoid and mitigate adverse effects arising from new residential development. This provides an integrated and holistic package of on-site and off-site measures comprising:

- The provision of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANGs) to act as an alternative to the SPA provided to a standard of 8 hectares per 1,000 population and in perpetuity.
- Visitor access management and monitoring on the SPA itself

Natural England has agreed that this package of measures will ensure that harm to the SPA is avoided. Further information is provided within the IDP. The draft SPD sets out how contributions from new developments will be collected to deliver the mitigation measures.

This document sets out how the Council intends to create a SANG by enhancing an existing area of open space and increase its capacity for informal recreation to provide a suitable alternative to visiting the SPA. It provides background evidence to support the approach to collecting contributions set out within the draft SPD.

1.2 Identification of SANGs

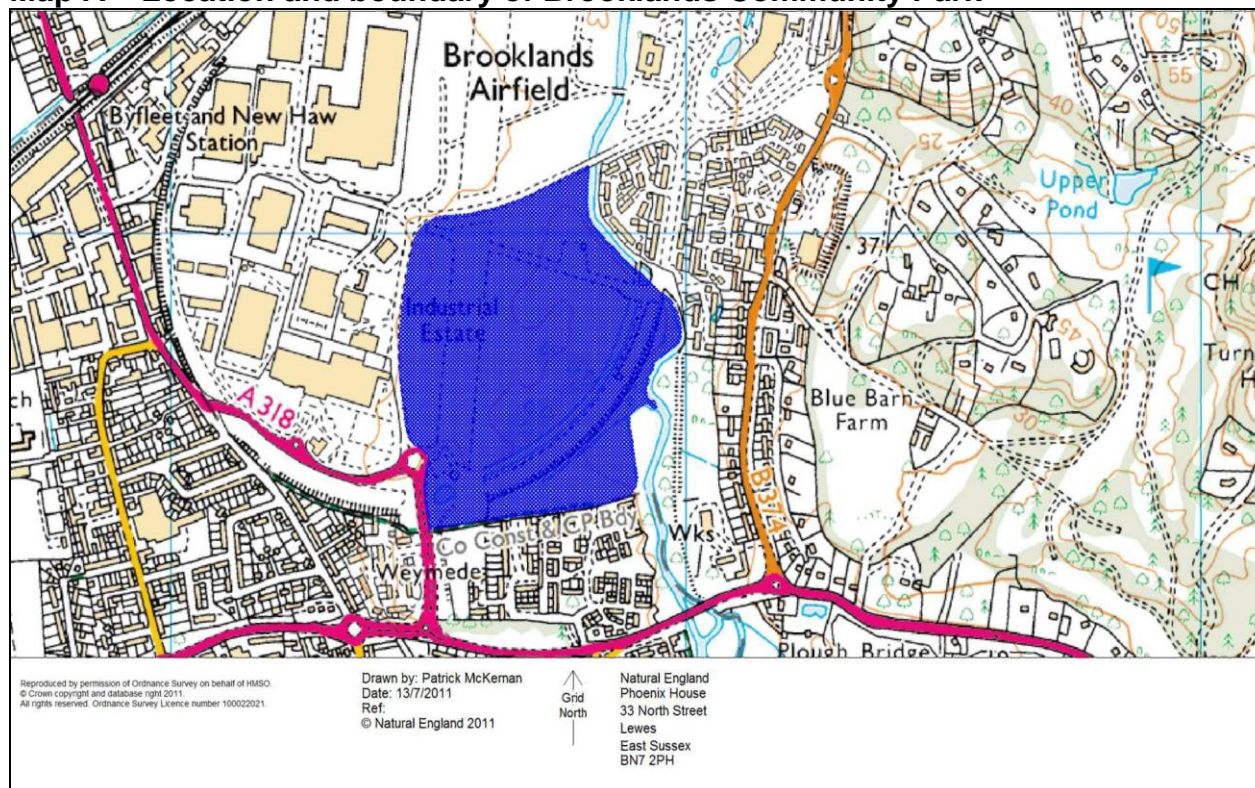
The Council identified two sites as potential SANGs as part of the work on the original Thames Basin Heaths SPA Interim Mitigation Strategy for Elmbridge in 2007. These were agreed with Natural England. This document updates this original work for Brooklands Community Park SANG to bring it in line with current practice.

2. Site Description

2.1 Location

Brooklands Community Park, is an entirely new public facility comprising 24ha of a re-creation of the original dry acid grassland habitat, with a woodland area around the south-west arc of the boundary. Within the site 2ha is given over to formal recreation provision. The site is located close to the borough boundary with Woking to the west of the urban area of Weybridge.

Map A – Location and boundary of Brooklands Community Park



The park has been brought into being by a planning obligation (Section 106 Agreement) in relation to development of a larger site by Daimler/Chrysler for their Mercedes Heritage and Technology Centre.

The Section 106 Agreement Vision for the Community Park states:

“This extensive area of former motor racing track, airfield, and colonising woodland will be cleared of building structures, (except the Byfleet Banking and Cherry Lands Nursery), made safe, and its landscape and habitat rejuvenated. The former airfield landing strip and taxi-ways together with the Byfleet Banking will remain intact, repaired and resurfaced where necessary. New public access and play facilities will be provided to ensure it can play its part as an important community facility.

The extensive areas of semi-natural grassland and emerging native woodland, and its proximity to a beautiful river, provide a strong influence on the existing character. These

combine with the Byfleet Bank motor-racing track and the former landing strip to provide a large, but discrete, space and a landscape character of unique quality. This design aims to work with these unique qualities through extensive grassland and woodland treatment to improve their qualities for public access and wildlife habitat and to ensure that a robust and attractive green framework will be provided.

The distinct open character of the former airfield will be maintained and views to the Byfleet Bank will be enhanced. All this will be complimented by minimal interventions in this landscape to provide public access and play facilities consistent in design and character with these large wide and open spaces.”

The site is located within the Green Belt and an Area Liable to Flood. It is also designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)¹. The entire area is now owned and managed by the Council.

2.2 Physical characteristics, landscape and wildlife

Of the total 24ha available, 2ha is given to formal recreational provision eg playground, multicourt, skate area & off road cycle area. The remaining 22ha comprises a re-creation of the original dry acid grassland habitat, with a woodland area around the southwest arc of the boundary, which has been opened up to give views of the Brooklands Racetrack, and walkways through. There is also a woodland area further to the south, accessible by foot from Oyster Lane. A water compensation area (River Wey flood alleviation) has been provided in the central area, giving a shallow hollow (approx 1m deep) in an otherwise level topography, which may flood in times of high rainfall, so leading to a wetland habitat.

The site is dominated by dry, acidic grassland which is characterised by drought-stressed grassland growing on well drained gravel and sand, which heats up quickly in the sun. The grass tends to grow very sparsely. At first sight, the grassland may look uninteresting but it is home to a wealth of rare and unusual plants and animals. Wildflowers such as Sheep’s Bit, Hoary Cinquefoil, Yellow Rattle, Common Centaury and Smith’s Pepperwort provide nectar for butterflies, including the Small Copper and Common Blue.

Grassland is an excellent habitat for bees and wasps and a total of 142 species can be found on the site. Not all species of bee live in hives, in fact the vast majority are solitary and nest in the soil. They make their nest burrows in bare, or lightly vegetated ground, and have strong mandibles for burrowing into the earth. The patchy grassland is perfect for solitary bees.

The woodland is deciduous secondary woodland made up of a number of species including Oak, Birch and Pine. The woodland has had no formal management and will require thinning works to develop an understory and associated ground flora.

¹ Elmbridge Proposals Map, July 2011 – www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/policy

2.3 Car parking and access

There is one car park located in the southwest corner of the park, adjoining the Young Children's Play Area. It is a surfaced car park with capacity for 30 cars.

There are existing paths offering more formal circular routes utilising existing areas of hardstanding and grass paths.



3. Potential as a SANG

3.1 Potential designated SANG area

Of the total 24ha available, 2ha is given to formal provision eg playground, multicourt, skate area & off road cycle area. It was agreed with Natural England that the areas of formal provision be excluded from the overall SANG capacity.

Site	Size (ha)	Amount of site that should be used as mitigation	HA for use as mitigation
Brooklands Community Park	24	90%	22

Brooklands Community Park is located within the 5km catchment of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA . The Delivery Framework² allows for SANGs of 20ha to have a 5km catchment for contributing sites (Appendix 1).

Natural England has specified the characteristics needed by SANGs³. The ones relevant to sites over 20ha describe three categories, 'essential' to be required by all SANGs, 'important' to be included in the total suite of SANGs in any one area whilst each SANG should have at least one of the 'desirable' features. Brooklands Community Park fulfils or could fulfil, following enhancements, all the 'essential' and 'important' features of a SANG.

3.2 Visitor survey and assessment of current use

A visitor survey was not undertaken as the site was newly provided in 2006 and therefore it was agreed with Natural England that it was not necessary to establish existing use and to assume 100% capacity.

3.3 Potential capacity

The Delivery Framework seeks a minimum standard of 8 hectares for each 1,000 person population increase that should be allocated to SANG (equivalent to 0.008ha per person).

Table 1: Mitigating capacity of SANG

Area (ha)	Capacity to mitigate (people) (8ha/1000)*
22	2,750

Therefore it is estimated that the site has the capacity to mitigate for 2,750 people if enhancements are implemented (22 ha of potential SANG). This is equivalent to approximately 1,104 new dwellings.

² Delivery Framework – www.surreyheath.gov.uk

³ SANGs criteria – www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/policy

3.4 Proposals

The following improvement works were identified and agreed with Natural England⁴ as being necessary for the site to be designated as a SANG:

Improvement Works Identified by Natural England	Elmbridge Council Agreed Action
Qualifying site area - the entire area of developed sports facilities on site, including the cycling lanes and the former tarmac contained within them, be removed from the total SANGS calculation, and that the remaining area of the site that has more likely potential as SANGS be recalculated. No further development of artificial structures or pavements on this portion of the site should be permitted.	Of the total 24ha available, 2ha will be given to formal provision eg playground, multicourt, skate area & off road cycle area. The remaining 22ha will comprise a mix of dry acid grassland habitat and woodland. There are no present intentions for further development as the emphasis is for an open site.
Car Parking - appears adequate. The need for any additional car parking should be assessed on a regular basis, and additional capacity provided, if necessary. Suggest that a reasonable area for the potential future expansion of car parking facilities be reserved.	There is one car park located in the southwest corner of the Community Park, adjoining the Young Children's Play Area. It is a surfaced car park with capacity for 30 cars, with possible extensions on to reinforced grass areas to the south (20 cars) and the northwest (10 cars), giving an ultimate capacity of 60.
Signage - adequate signage advertising the site and the presence of a car park must be presented and be clearly visible from the roundabout leading to the parking area. In addition, an information board containing a map of the site and a description of its recreational, historic and nature conservation features should be provided in the car park itself. Similar signage should be provided at any other formal entrance to the site, including formal entrances for visitors on foot.	All on-site signage detailed below has been agreed as part of the planning process and S.106 agreement, and will not be funded by SANGS contributions. On-site signage – two information/interpretation boards (pedestrian/vehicular entrance Sopwith Drive, pedestrian entrance Wellington Way); five directional fingerpost signs located throughout the site e.g. 'Riverside Walk', 'Byfleet Banking'; four advisory signs 'Responsible Dog Owners', 'Skate Park' and 'Playground' (standard for recreation areas). Road signage - three directional signs on the A3/A245 junction roundabout; directional signs on six roundabouts on road system surrounding Brooklands Community Park.

⁴ Thames Basin Heaths SPA Interim Mitigation Strategy for Elmbridge – www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/policy

Improvement Works Identified by Natural England	Elmbridge Council Agreed Action
<p>Footpaths - a new path should be created through natural woodland terrain to the south and east of the Byfleet Banking, which would be more attractive to potential SPA users rather than the existing path which is immediately adjacent to residential development and would create an acceptable walking circuit around the site. The network of paths should be well maintained but remain unsurfaced.</p>	<p>The Council will provide an additional path and clearance within the woodland to improve access and visual effect. The works will include culverts, making up ground, revetment works where required, surfacing material and woodland thinning. The Park offers both formal and informal paths – the existing hard surfaced areas eg runway and track provide a formal footpath network, whilst the grassland areas comprise largely informal paths with gravel surfacing to SUSTRANS standard.</p>
<p>Visual Attractiveness - the open gap along Wellington Way at the northwest corner of the site, through which a large scale complex of commercial buildings are visible, be planted with appropriate vegetation that lessens their visual impact.</p>	<p>Although visible on entry to the car parking area, the commercial building complex is not visible from all aspects of the site, and having regard to the requirement within the planning application and the S106 Agreement to retain as open site the “Brooklands Airfield”, it would not be appropriate to introduce additional planting at the north west corner of the site.</p>
<p>Natural Features - conservation management techniques should be employed to further enhance and develop the natural features of the site, including management of the acid grassland habitat pursuant to a conservation mowing scheme. In addition, the long term plan for the site should seek to maintain the seasonal pond created from the winter/spring overflow of the River Wey, a key feature of interest for the site.</p>	<p>Conservation management techniques will be employed to further enhance and develop the natural features of the site, including management of the acid grassland habitat pursuant to a conservation mowing scheme. A water compensation area (River Wey flood alleviation) has been provided in the central area, giving a shallow hollow (approx 1m deep) in an otherwise level topography, which may flood in times of high rainfall, so potentially leading to a wetland habitat.</p>
<p>Dogs - that dogs will be freely permitted anywhere on the site off their leads, with the exception of the children’s play and fenced sport areas, is critical to the site’s suitability as a SANGS and this must be maintained as such for the long term. The voluntary poop and scoop scheme to be introduced on the site is acceptable, so long as it is a voluntary measure only and any relevant signage is not presented in a manner that threatens enforcement measures.</p>	<p>Agreed, but may be subject to possible further legislation as with any other open SPA re poop scoop scheme.</p>

Improvement Works Identified by Natural England	Elmbridge Council Agreed Action
<p>Publicity - an information leaflet should be distributed to new homes in the area and be available at the car park and other entrance points on the site. Additional advertising for the site, including on Elmbridge's website and/or in local Borough publications, should be taken forward as soon as practicable.</p>	<p>Agreed. Publicity has already been given to the Brooklands Community Park in the Summer 2006 edition of 'The Elmbridge Review', the official Borough Council magazine, which was distributed in July to households across the Borough, and other outlets including libraries, police stations and day centres. Further publicity is programmed for the September edition of 'The Elmbridge Review'. Separate publicity is also programmed, including local newspapers, the Council's website, and lamppost banners. In addition a specific information leaflet will be produced (3,000 run in colour) to be made available for local estate agents and for distribution to new homes in the area, and to be available at the car park and other entrance points on the site following completion of enhancement works.</p>

3.5 Costs

The costs of bringing the site up to a standard to be used as SANG are detailed below. This covers one-off set up costs. The maintenance and management of the sites has also been considered. Calculations are based on an estimate that assets will need to be replaced every five to ten years and on the Council's experience of managing similar sites. An annual allowance of 6% of set-up costs is made for the ongoing maintenance of the site and replacement of assets. The costs of managing the site in perpetuity covers a period of 125 years⁵. This covers costs over and above existing maintenance of the site which is funded through the original S106 contribution.

Works	Unit cost	Quantity	Total cost
Access			
Clearance within the woodland and creation of a footpath, including the design of scheme, tender preparation and contract supervision fee	£30,000	1	£30,000
Repair of subsidence ⁶	£30,000	1	£30,000
Extension and surfacing of car park	£35,000	1	£35,000

⁵ Perpetuities and Accumulations Act 2009 – www.legislation.gov.uk

⁶ Item not included in original work schedule for SANG. This is to repair recent damage that has occurred.

Information and interpretation			
Road signage	£1,000	2	£2,000
Fingerposts	£300	8	£2,400
Site promotion (publicity)	£5,000	1	£5,000
Other			
Visitor surveys	£5,000	1	£5,000
Provision of CCTV to encourage safe use and assist in the reduction of fear of crime	£40,000	1	£40,000
TOTAL SET-UP COSTS			£149, 400

Annual maintenance & replacement of assets - **£8,964**

Maintenance & replacement of assets in perpetuity⁷ - **£1,120,500**

Total cost of SANG delivery - £1,269,900

3.6 Administration

Details of monies received and spent, and work undertaken will be included within the Council's Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR). The Council is also required to report to Natural England quarterly on capacity of new development in their area allocated to SANG.

⁷ Annual maintenance & replacement of assets multiplied by 125 years.

Appendix 1 – Brooklands Community Park SANG catchment and Thames Basin Heaths 5km buffer

