



**Suitable Alternative Natural  
Green Space Provision**

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**Woodsford Farms, Crossways, West Dorset**

**December 2012**

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Woodsford Farms control three sites at Crossways, which are allocated for development within the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Pre-Submission Local Plan. These three sites are located within the 5km zone of the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA). A plan showing the three Woodsford Farms sites at Crossways and the location of the Heathlands is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To provide certainty that the draft Local Plan can deliver housing at Crossways, Natural England submitted representations to the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation advising that the Local Plan should identify the Suitable Area of Natural Green Space (SANGS) that will be needed to provide the level of mitigation required. Natural England outlined that the SANGS need to be appropriately related to the housing allocated and provide reasonable certainty that they will have the capacity to be of sufficient quality to reduce the levels of existing recreational effects on the SPA.
- 1.3 To support the emerging Local Plan, we have identified a SANGS land area of search that is controlled by Woodsford Farms and can provide sufficient and appropriate SANGS provision to mitigate future housing development on the Woodsford Farms sites at Crossways. Within the identified area of search, specific details such as the extent and design of the SANGS would be determined and agreed through the masterplan and planning application process in due course. The report also suggests SANGS policy wording, which could be incorporated into Policy CRS1: Crossways.
- 1.4 The structure of this report is:  
Section 2: Sets out the detail of the proposed SANGS land area of search  
Section 3: Sets out proposed policy wording changes to draft Policy CRS1  
Section 4: Conclusions.

**2. Proposed SANGS Land Area of Search**

- 2.1 The area of land north of the railway line is in the ownership of Woodsford Farms. Consequently it is available to provide sufficient and appropriate SANGS to mitigate housing development on the Woodsford Farms sites. This area of land is situated immediately north of Woodsford Fields site, in close proximity to Crossways and the three Woodsford Farms sites allocated for development.
- 2.2 The land identified has a potential total area of approximately 50ha. A location plan showing the extent of the land is provided in Appendix 2. The majority of the land is currently used as arable farmland. There is also an area of woodland within the land to the east. The topography of the land is undulating.
- 2.3 Using the Natural England draft SANGS guidance standard of 8ha. per 1,000 population, Table 2.1 shows that housing development on the Woodsford Farms sites would require the minimum of 10ha. of SANGS land. The total area of the land identified is therefore more than sufficient to meet the Natural England minimum size standard.

**Table 2.1: Woodsford Farms minimum SANGS requirements**

Site	Dwellings (approximate based on the West Dorset SHLAA)	SANG required (Ha.) (8ha. per 1,000 population)
Site 1: Woodsford Fields	400	7.0
Site 2: Land to the west of Frome Valley Road	170	3.0
Site 3: The Hanger site	0 (site is allocated for employment use)	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>10</b>

- 2.4 With an appropriate funding mechanism in place, the identified land has the potential to provide a SANGS which could be used to mitigate wider housing development at Crossways and beyond. For example Site 3 (the Hanger site) is currently allocated for solely employment use within draft Policy CRS1. We recommended within our representations to the Pre-Submission Local Plan that to provide masterplanning flexibility and to enable the local community to properly consider and decide where certain types of new development should go the draft policy should be amended to allocate mixed-use development on the Hanger site. Table 2.1 clearly demonstrates that in addition to Site 1 and 2, the identified SANGS land

area of search also has sufficient capacity to mitigate the impacts of a mixed-use development on Site 3.

- 2.5 The Natural England guidance requires a choice of safe walking routes of at least 2.5km in length, with both shorter and longer routes of at least 5km. The land identified is of sufficient size and location to provide a comprehensive network of safe walking and cycling routes of at least 2.5 and 5km in length. The land is currently accessed off Frome Valley Road and has sufficient space capacity to provide an appropriate off-street car-parking area and a visitor information area.
- 2.6 Through our on-going dialogue with Natural England and the Dorset Wildlife Trust we have identified the land has significant potential to provide a comprehensive and attractive mix of natural and semi-natural landscapes, habitats and vegetation. There is an existing mature woodland in the eastern section of the land; an area of semi-improved grassland in the south eastern corner. A drainage ditch runs through the centre of the site which could be used to create aquatic or semi-aquatic habitats. To maintain an agricultural landscape and habitat, the use of the northern section of the land could be retained in arable use, but with a network of footpaths incorporated. The south western area of land could provide natural open-space.
- 2.7 Our own research of dog-walking habits of existing residents at Crossways<sup>1</sup> and our on-going discussions with Natural England and Dorset Wildlife Trust has identified the importance of also providing a network of shorter localised walking routes for dog-walkers (walks of up to 20 minutes). These shorter walking routes and other green infrastructure can be appropriately designed and incorporated into the masterplan for Crossways and the Woodsford Farms sites in due course. This network of shorter routes can be designed to link into the SANGS land to provide new and existing residents with a comprehensive and safe network of short, medium and long walking routes.
- 2.8 This report demonstrates that the identified SANGS land area of search to the north of the Woodsford Fields site can provide the level of mitigation required for housing development on the Woodsford Farms sites at Crossways. The area of land is well related to the Woodsford Farms sites and Crossways. The total area of the land identified has the potential to accommodate a SANGS of sufficient quality and size to significantly reduce the existing levels of recreational use of the Heathland SPA.

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<sup>1</sup> Broadway Malyan undertook a dog-walking survey of users of Tadnol and Winfrith Heath and the walking habits of existing Crossways residents in 2010. A copy of this survey has previously been provided to West Dorset District Council, Natural England and Dorset Wildlife Trust.

- 2.9 Identifying the SANGS land area of search shown within Appendix 2, on the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Proposals Map will provide the certainty required that housing on the Woodsford Farms sites at Crossways is deliverable against Policy ENV2 ii) over the lifetime of the Local Plan. Within the identified area of search specific detail such as the extent and design of the SANGS would be determined and agreed between Natural England, West Dorset District Council and Woodsford Farms as part of the masterplanning and planning application process.

### 3. Proposed Policy Wording

- 3.1 We understand the landowner of the other main allocated site at Crossways is also in the process of identifying an area of land for SANGS provision to mitigate the draft Local Plan allocation to the south of Warmwell Road. With this in mind, our suggested policy wording reflects the fact that the proposals map is likely to show more than one SANGS land area of search at Crossways.
- 3.2 The exact quantum and distribution of housing development on each of the allocated sites is to be determined through a detailed masterplanning process. Until the housing numbers are determined specific detail, such as the extent of the SANGS provision required and design cannot be agreed. We have therefore proposed a criteria based policy approach, which can be used to test the suitability of potential land for SANGS and also provide the basis for the masterplanning and planning application processes.
- 3.3 Our suggested policy changes are shown as red tracked changes within the box below. Our suggested changes only relate to SANGS land provision and have been made to the draft Policy CRS1 as contained within the Pre-Submission Local Plan.

#### **CRS 1. LAND AT CROSSWAYS**

- i) Crossways will have a significant level of growth over the plan period. This will include at least 7.2ha of employment land and between 1,200 to 1,500 new homes on land shown on the proposals map, through the development of:
- land to the north (to be developed primarily for housing with some small-scale employment and community uses),
  - land to the south-east (to be developed for a mix of housing, employment and community uses), and
  - land to the south-west (to be developed for employment uses as a key employment site).
- ~~ii) The development will be required to provide large-scale alternative natural green space and related measures to avoid any additional increase in recreational pressure on the European Heathland Sites.~~
- ii) ~~iii)~~ The amount of housing, jobs and community infrastructure will be balanced as far as practicable. Any development that would undermine the delivery of key infrastructure

needed for this level of growth will not be permitted.

- iii. ~~iv~~) The use of district heating networks will be examined and if practicable made a requirement of the development.
- iv). ~~v~~) The development will be guided by a masterplan prepared by West Dorset District Council working with Crossways Parish Council, Purbeck District Council, Moreton Parish Council, Owermoigne Parish Council, Knightsford Group Parish Council and the Warmwell Parish Meeting. The masterplan will include detailed guidance on:
- the appropriate mix of uses in each area
  - the movement network – how different areas should be connected by routes and spaces, including links to the station and improved road access to Dorchester
  - infrastructure needs (including community facilities) – how these will be met as key sites are brought forward in relation to the phased delivery of growth
  - important local buildings / landmarks – how these should be provided / safeguarded
- v) Within the areas of search shown on the proposals map, Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space will be agreed and provided as mitigation on the European Heathland Sites. As part of any masterplan and planning application process the Council will work with Natural England, landowners and stakeholder to agree the extent of SANGS provision for each development comprising new homes. SANGS must provide:
- a minimum of 8 hectares of SANG land per 1,000 new occupants
  - a choice of safe walking routes of at least 2.5km in length, with both shorter and longer routes of at least 5km
  - adequate car parking with good information about the site and the routes available
  - an appropriate mix of landscape, vegetation and habitats to create attractive natural or semi-natural environment
  - link into a wider network of footpaths, green infrastructure and public open space.

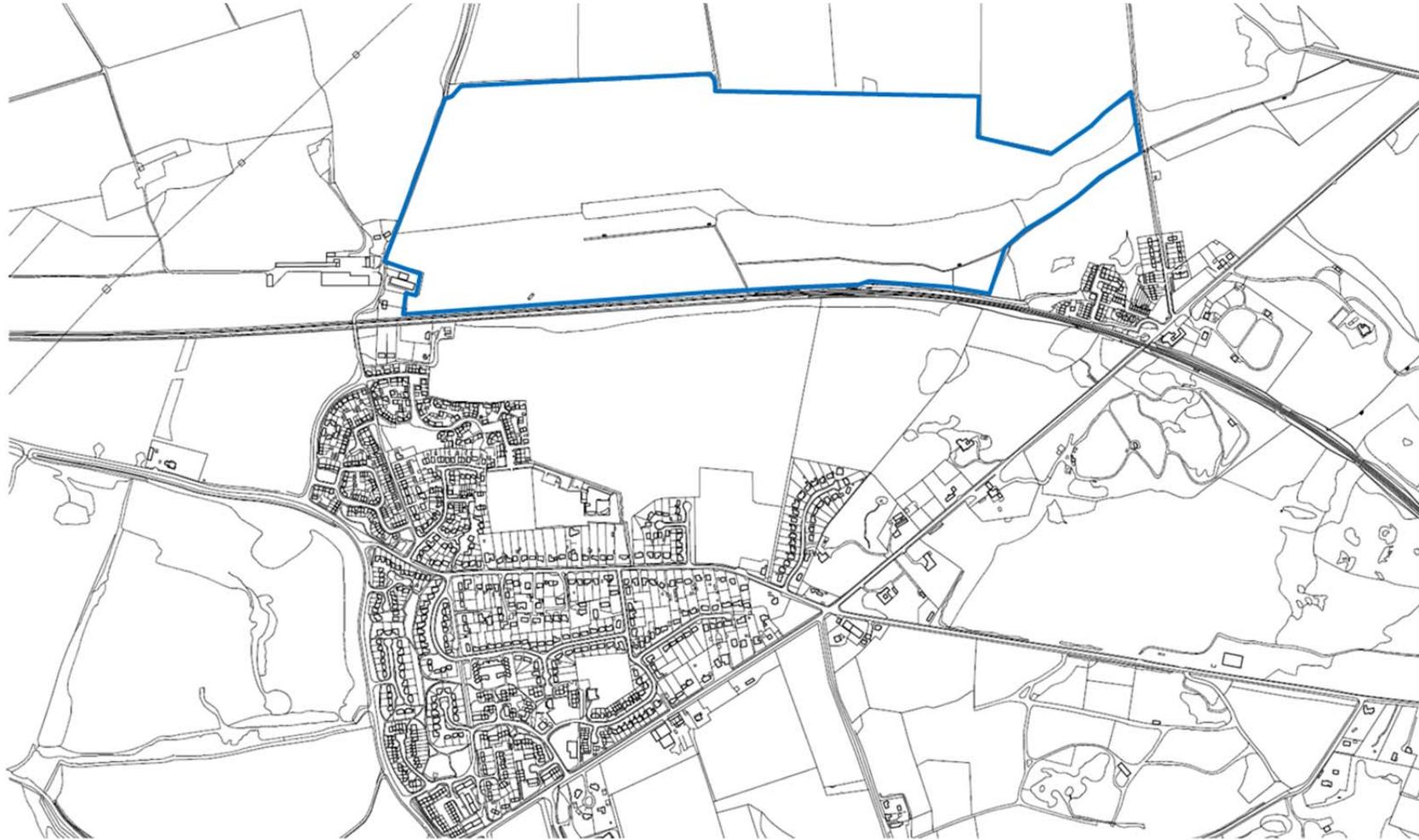
**4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 In response to Natural England's representations to the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Pre-Submission Local Plan we have identified a SANGS area of search that is controlled by Woodsford Farms, which could provide SANGS provision to mitigate future housing development on the Woodsford Farms sites at Crossways. Within the identified area of search, as set out within Appendix 2, specific details such as the extent and design of the SANGS would be determined and agreed through the masterplan and planning application process in due course.
- 4.2 Using Natural England's draft SANGS guidance, which has been used to successfully deliver SANGS land within the Thames Basin Heaths area, we have suggested policy wording changes to Policy CRS1: Crossways.
- 4.3 In the lead up to the Local Plan examination, which is timetabled for July 2013, we will continue to work with Natural England, Dorset Wildlife Trust, West Dorset District Council and other stakeholders such as Crossways Parish Council to provide an illustrative masterplan for the Woodford Farms sites and SANGs land. This indicative masterplan and SANGS will help support the Local Plan through the examination process and can also be used to inform the comprehensive masterplanning of Crossways in due course.

**Location of Tadnoll and Winfrith Heath SPA and the three Woodsford Farms sites at Crossways**



**Proposed SANGS land area of search for housing development on land controlled by Woodsford Farms, Crossways**



 SANGS Land Area of Search