

Matter 10

Environmental Issues

Attached to this statement is the statement of common ground between Natural England, Gleeson Developments and Wyatt Homes demonstrating the agreement between the parties relating to the mitigation in dealing with the impact on European designated sites. The plan attached to the Statement of common Ground show an indicative SANG layout which has been agreed between the parties.

This document discusses the access provision and discusses the need for a SANG management plan which will be produced.

It is believed that this agreement between all interested parties show that the proposal is deliverable and reinforces the Council's position that the site is and appropriate sustainable allocation.

Conclusions

The land at Leigh Road is an opportunity to provide an accessible high quality mixed use development. The area scores highly in any sustainability, environmental and technical assessments. Further work has also been undertaken in relation to the ecological impact and other investigations all conclude that the site is inherently sustainable.

Critically in addition to the community benefits of the proposal affordable housing will also be provided.

We ask that the allocation is confirmed with the flexibility in the wording to enable full community engagement to ensure that this mixed use development can be developed with some local ownership.

**Statement of Common Ground:
Natural England, Gleeson Developments and Wyatt Homes
7 August 2013**

Introduction

This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared by Natural England, Gleeson Developments and Wyatt Homes to confirm agreement to the mitigation of potential adverse impacts on European-designated sites from the development allocation at 'South of Leigh Road', Wimborne. The development allocation is identified through Policy WMC6 of the Christchurch and East Dorset (hereafter 'the Council') Submission Core Strategy. The Statement is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration in the forthcoming Examination of the Submission Core Strategy.

Scope of Statement

The Statement relates to the mitigation of potential adverse impacts of increased recreation from the development allocation on the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area (SPA) and Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar. These sites lie at the following distances from the proposed development allocation; refer to appended Designated Sites Plan:

- 1.9km south-west;
- 3.0km to the east;
- 3.5km to the north-east.

There would not be any additional impacts of the development allocation on these designated sites, or on any other European-designated site.

Agreement

Parties have agreed to the principle of providing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) within the development to the south of the A31. This would accord with Policies WMC6, ME1 and ME2 of the Submission Core Strategy and legal duties placed upon the Council under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

In addition to SANGs provision, the proposed allocation under Policy WMC6 is for the following:

- 350 new homes.
- A Sports Village.
- New allotments.
- A local centre.
- Land for a First School.

The proposed area of SANGs comprises poor semi-improved grassland, marshy grassland, broadleaved woodland, hedgerows, streams and a pond; refer to appended Phase 1 Plan. The River Stour borders the area to the immediate south. There are no statutory or non-statutory designations within the proposed SANGs area.

A Plan has been included in this Statement of Common Ground to show an Indicative SANGs layout, which has been agreed in principle between the Parties. The layout would satisfy the SANGs design criteria set out in Appendix 5 of the Submission Core Strategy, refer to Table 1 below.

Primary access to the SANGs would be achieved via an existing footbridge across the A31. A secondary access would also be delivered via an underpass under the A31 to the west of the allocation. A hierarchy of surfaced and un-surfaced footpaths would be created within the SANGs to allow safe, year-round access; the footpath network would link to public rights of way and a permissive path surrounding the area. Strategic planting would be undertaken to screen the A31 in the eastern part of the SANGs and to increase visual amenity.

Natural England confirms that the proposed SANGs is adequate in terms of area, accessibility and quality. The Indicative SANGs Plan will form the basis for further statutory and non-statutory consultation and may be modified accordingly in agreement with all parties. A SANGs Management Plan will also be prepared for agreement with Natural England and the Council prior to the submission of a planning application. Long-term management will integrate agricultural management practice with SANGs use; this has been achieved successfully on other SANGs within the Wimborne area.

Table 1: SANGS design guidelines

| No | Criteria | Qualifies? | Comment |
|----|---|------------|--|
| 1 | Adequate parking on all sites unless the site is intended for use within 400m | Yes | Parking not mandatory as development would be less than 400m away. Parking would be provided in amenity/recreation area within development area to north of A31. |
| 2 | Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted. | Yes | See above. There would be direct access from car park areas to SANGS if required. |
| 3 | Easy access between development for car and the SANGS; able to safely let dog out of car into SANGS. | Yes | There would a direct, safe access to the SANGS from the development, facilitated by the central road bridge across the A31 (primary access) and western footpath under the A31 (secondary access). |
| 4 | Access points should have signage outlining the layout of the SANGS and the routes available to visitors. | Yes | These could be provided |
| 5 | Paths must be easily used; well maintained; mostly unsurfaced; and accessible all year in all weathers. | Yes | These could be provided. |
| 6 | Circular walk start and end at car park. | Yes | Numerous circular walks could be provided. These could start/end at the footbridge location (primary entrance) or, if required, from the western footpath (secondary access). |
| 7 | Circular walk of between 2.3-2.5km, including a variety of walks. | Yes | This could be provided. |
| 8 | SANGS design so that they feel safe for visitors | Yes | Woodland represents a small percentage of proposed SANGS area. All trees and shrubs (existing and proposed) could be managed so that all routes considered safe and desirable. |
| 9 | SANGs should be clearly sign-posted and advertised | Yes | This could be provided, both within the development and if necessary, within the local road network. |
| 10 | Leaflets or website advertising their location to potential users. | Yes | This could be provided. |
| 11 | Perceived as semi-natural space, without too much urban intrusion. | Yes | The site comprises predominantly of semi-natural habitats adjacent to the River Stour. The SANGS could be enhanced by native planting, including planting to screen the A31. |
| 12 | Contains a variety of different habitats | Yes | These habitats already exist within the site and could be enhanced further through planting/seeding. |
| 13 | Access unrestricted – plenty of space for dogs to exercise freely and safely off the lead. | Yes | There are no constraints to the provision of this access. |
| 14 | Site is free from unpleasant intrusions | Yes | The A31 lies immediately adjacent to the SANGS but could be screened through planting. One characteristic of the Dorset Heathlands is that they are close to urban areas, including roads. Therefore, the location of the A31 is not considered to be an over-riding constraint to SANGS delivery. |

