



**Land at Bird in Eye Farm SANG**

**Outline Ecological Management Plan**

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## Contents

|                                                                       |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1.0 INTRODUCTION .....</b>                                         | <b>4</b>  |
| BACKGROUND .....                                                      | 4         |
| PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES.....                                           | 6         |
| <b>2.0 SANG MANAGEMENT STRATEGY .....</b>                             | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3.0 MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>                          | <b>7</b>  |
| MONITORING AND REVIEW .....                                           | 8         |
| PROTECTION OF EXISTING VEGETATION DURING CONSTRUCTION .....           | 8         |
| WILDLIFE .....                                                        | 9         |
| PROGRAMME .....                                                       | 10        |
| <b>4.0 SANG DESIGN.....</b>                                           | <b>10</b> |
| <b>5.0 SANGS OUTLINE MANAGEMENT.....</b>                              | <b>11</b> |
| OVERARCHING REQUIREMENTS .....                                        | 11        |
| <b>6.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR SANG DELIVERY, MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT</b> | <b>13</b> |
| <b>7.0 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>                                          | <b>13</b> |

**LIABILITIES:**

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

## 1.0 Introduction

### Background

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Croudace to develop a strategy to provide an outline SANGS management plan. This report provides the overarching management objectives, but does not prescribe each individual habitat management methodology which will be covered by a LEMP.
- 1.2 The site is c20.12 ha with the central grid reference TQ48402075. The site is located to the east of Uckfield town centre, south of the B2102. The site is largely managed grassland habitats with the associated Bird in Eye Farm buildings at the centre of the site. Ancient woodland is located to the south and west of the site. Further west is Uckfield, with new development around Uckfield Hospital. To the north, east and south, arable landscape is present in the form of fields, woodlands and hedgerows. The approximately red line boundary is shown in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1: Approximate location of the site, indicated by the red-line boundary.*

- 1.3 Development proposals for the site include the construction of a new housing development of up to 190 units and associated infrastructure. SANGS will also be provided as part of the development. SANGS is provided along the eastern section of the site and forms the southern and western aspect of the site. The landscape masterplan is shown in Figure 2 below.
- 1.4 The parameter plans, which show the extent of the development area and the extent of the SANGS is shown in Figure 3 below.



Figure 2: Development area and SANGS design



Figure 3: Parameter plans

## Purpose and Objectives

- 1.5 The aims and objectives of this document are to provide information regarding the outline management of the habitats which are required for the SANG.
- 2.0 SANG Management Strategy**
- 2.1 This SANGS Management Strategy sets out the proposed overall management and ecological strategy for the SANG development at Bird in Eye Farm.
- 2.2 The provision of SANG is key in provision of alternative recreational land. In summary the SANG is identified:
- SANG provision should be funded by developer contributions;
  - SANG must be provided in perpetuity;
  - Sufficient SANG should be provided in advance of dwelling completion;
  - The SANGS should provide a range of habitats to promote landscape and ecological interest;
  - The SANG should provide a range of experiences and walking routes.

- 2.3 Key measures to safeguard landscape and significant ecological features on-site include:
- Retention of existing vegetation and ecological features around the edges of the site; and
  - Safeguarding of hedgerow and tree line edges using fencing, no dig surfacing and exclusion zones during development (see separate Arboricultural Report for further details).
- 2.4 Therefore, the main objectives are:
- To maintain and enhance the existing wildlife and nature conservation interest;
  - To create additional wildlife habitats and landscape features;
  - To supplement existing trees with new tree planting to maintain the longevity of this resource and create a sense of place and different character areas within the site;
  - To maintain and reinforce the landscape and ecology structure of the site;
  - To provide new habitats to support a range of species, including bats, birds, reptiles, common amphibians, and invertebrates.
  - To provide new habitats of greater botanical interest.
- 2.5 These objectives have been supported by the baseline ecological assessment, where areas of higher ecological value have been identified and where in areas of low ecological value there are opportunities for ecological enhancements.

### **3.0 Management Responsibilities**

- 3.1 The management should be reviewed during the life of the management plan with reviews undertaken before the end of each five-year period. The revised management should include similar provisions for the long-term management of the biodiversity enhancement areas.
- 3.2 Maintenance operations should also be refined to suit:
- The needs of users;
  - The conservation of ecological interests;
  - Improvements in equipment and horticultural aids;
  - Changing legislation and sustainability requirements;
  - The completed scheme when soft landscaping including species has been confirmed;

- The detailed management recommendations for the existing trees to be retained, as set out in the tree survey report

3.3 Subject to agreement with the Council, the management will be organised and implemented by a site management organisation and representatives from residents. The developer will fund the site management company for the period of the build and when the site is completed, the management company will be responsible for the long-term management of the site.

### **Monitoring and Review**

3.4 The effectiveness of the proposed management will be assessed after 5 years (covering the initial defects liability) against the management objectives set out in section 3 and adjusted accordingly. This will be undertaken by the management company. If required, advice from an ecologist where necessary, will be sought.

3.5 The various tasks contained within the management plan should, subsequently, be reviewed and revised as deemed necessary every 5 years within the overall 15-year period and then 30 year period, informed by visual inspections. All areas of the landscape scheme will be closely monitored throughout a 5-year aftercare period by a suitably competent professional so that the most appropriate management regime can be defined on an area-by-area basis. This process will identify where the existing management regime requires modification to meet management objectives, both annually and in the long term.

### **Protection of Existing Vegetation During Construction**

3.6 The majority of the trees and hedgerows around the edges of the site are retained as part of the development proposals and will be protected in accordance with the separate Arboricultural Impact Assessment report (AIA) document to comply with the provisions of BS 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - Recommendations'.

3.7 Protective fencing will be erected prior to any construction activity commencing and will be maintained until the practical completion of all building and engineering works. The protective fencing should be checked by a qualified arboricultural consultant. If for any

reason the fencing needs to be moved or altered, this will only be done under the supervision of the appointed arboriculturist.

- 3.8 Refer to the Arboricultural Method Statement for details of protective fencing and other protective measures to be undertaken during construction.

### **Wildlife**

- 3.9 To ensure that no impacts occur to badgers, hedgehogs or other small mammals during any construction activities, all contractors working on the site will be briefed regarding the potential presence of badgers.
- 3.10 All trenches and excavations will be closed overnight to prevent badgers and other wildlife from becoming trapped. Where it is not feasible to close excavations overnight, any trenches or deep pits (deeper than 0.3m) within the site that are to be left open overnight will be excavated with at least one sloping end and/or provided with a means of escape should a badger and other wildlife enter. This could simply be in the form of a roughened sturdy plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp (at an angle no more than 45 degrees) to the surface.
- 3.11 The trenches or pits will be inspected each morning to ensure no badgers/wildlife have become trapped overnight. Should a trapped badger be encountered, a suitably qualified ecologist will be contacted immediately for further advice. The storage of topsoil or other 'soft' building materials within the site should be given careful consideration.
- 3.12 Any large diameter pipes or culverts (greater than 150mm in diameter) would be blocked overnight to prevent badgers from becoming trapped or taking up residence.
- 3.13 During construction, the storage of any chemicals required for the building construction should be kept well away from any badger/wildlife activity and contained in such a way that they cannot be accessed or knocked over by any roaming wildlife.
- 3.14 The trees and hedgerows on and around the site present foraging and nesting habitat for bird species.

- 3.15 All vegetation clearance should take place outside of the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). If this is not possible, a breeding bird nest survey should be undertaken up to 48 hours prior to clearance, and a watching brief undertaken during site clearance in case any nests are missed during the initial check. If breeding birds are present then the work to these areas will be delayed until after the young have fledged.

### **Programme**

- 3.16 Supervision of vegetation removal, the ecological watching brief and all other ecological supervision and monitoring will be undertaken by an ecological consultant. The consultant ecologist will also advise on the location of habitat/wood piles; construction will be undertaken by a landscape contractor.

## **4.0 SANG Design**

- 4.1 The design of the SANG has evolved following discussions with Natural England and Wealden District Council for the previous scheme and further consultation with regards to the new scheme with WDC.
- 4.2 The site currently contains a range of natural habitats, a small area of broadleaved woodland forms the southern area of the site, the majority of the site supports compartments of grazed grassland, modified poor grassland. The southern and eastern aspects of the SANG are adjacent to the ancient woodland buffer zone (15m) and therefore support woodland edge habitat.
- 4.3 Given the ecological value of the habitats, in particular the lowland deciduous woodland and the ancient woodland edge habitat, the SANG proposals have been designed to retain these features and provide enhancements where possible, either through additional habitat creation or management.
- 4.4 A circular route will be created across the SANG area approximately 2.5km in length, in line with the guidance detailed by Natural England / WDC (August 2021), the route will follow a meandering route through open grassland and woodland. The vast majority of the circular route will comprise of mown footpath through the created habitats, including meadow grass, woodland and scattered trees.

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- 4.5 The circular route will be directly accessible from the eastern housing block as well as the southern, and links to the cycle route. Alongside ongoing management of specific habitats and route features, regular monitoring of the route itself will ensure access remains open and suitable management.
- 4.6 At least two SANG information boards should be installed at strategic points on the circular route, one near eastern access point and another towards the south of the site. The information boards will inform visitors of the circular route and additional information such as habitats and selected species. Dog waste and general waste bins will also be included nearby, in an effort to discourage members of the public from littering or leaving dog waste on the circular route.

### **SANG Capacity**

- 4.7 The site has a total area of 8.69ha. At 190 units, 2.4 people per unit a total increase in population of 456, where SANGS requirement is 8ha per 1000 increase in population, the SANG land at a minimum would be 3.65ha. It can be seen that the SANG land provided is over double what would be required.

## **5.0 SANGS Outline Management**

### **Overarching Requirements**

- 5.1 All areas of planting/vegetation should be cleared of litter at least once a month to keep the site clean and tidy.
- 5.2 The requirement for watering should be assessed regularly during long, dry periods (typically during the summer months between April and September) to ensure that all areas of new and existing planting are maintained in good health and vigour. Trees, shrubs, and hedge planting should be watered regularly and in response to weather conditions.
- 5.3 Any damaged shoots/branches are to be pruned back to healthy wood. Plants are to be pruned in accordance with good horticultural practice to maintain healthy well-shaped specimens.

- 5.4 As part of turfing and seeding, when newly turfed and seeded areas reach 50mm they should be lightly rolled and cut to a height of 40mm. All arisings shall be removed. Any bare patches shall be made good at this time. Lawn areas should then be cut at appropriate intervals during the growing season to maintain a 40mm high sward. Watering, weeding and repair of all erosion and settlement with reseeding or turfing shall be undertaken as required to establish a uniform and healthy stand of grass.
- 5.5 Replacement planting should be carried out in November or February/March, avoiding the winter frosts. Replacement seeding should be carried out in spring or autumn.
- 5.6 Table 1 below sets out the recommended management schedule to be adopted following initial establishment of the SANG.

**Table 1: Outline Management Prescriptions**

| Objective                                                        | Target Area/<br>Habitat/ Feature                                 | Proposed management                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Provision of informal recreation areas                           | SANG infrastructure (eg signage, waymarkers and dog waste bins). | Features to be reviewed in year 2, followed by subsequent review on 5-year cycle, repairs/replacement to be made as and when necessary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                                  | Circular route (grassland)                                       | Annual inspection of circular route to identify the need for any remedial works.<br>Sections within grassland to be mown on monthly basis from March to September inclusive.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                                  | Woodland                                                         | Annual inspections of woodland and trees in close proximity to circular route. Management to be taken to ensure ease of access and prevent any health and safety risks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                                  | Dog exercise pond                                                | Removal of litter to maintain and enhance aesthetic value.<br>Annual mowing of vegetation along banks in September to retain access.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Management of habitats and features for biodiversity enhancement | Wildlife ponds                                                   | Review of pond planting every other year starting from year 2 or when suitably established.<br>Annual checks to ensure barrier planting intact and no invasive plant species present in pond.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                                  | Woodland                                                         | Cutting or removal of limbs that may present health and safety issues. Retention of fallen deadwood to provide habitat for saprophytic invertebrates and fungi.<br>Where permissible on health and safety grounds, standing deadwood to be left intact.<br>Periodic thinning of the canopy in selected areas to encourage growth of woodland ground flora, may be necessary to fence areas off to prevent deer browsing in subsequent years.<br>Timber from management to be used to create log piles across the site or left in-situ. |

|  |           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Grassland | Areas to be left to grow tall and rough, to be cut on 2 – 3-year cycle following establishment. A maximum of one third of each grassland compartment should be cut in any one year. Cutting should take place in late summer, September/October. |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## **6.0 Arrangements for SANG delivery, maintenance and management**

- 6.1 Planning applications for residential development which seek to rely on the SANG as part of their SPA Avoidance / Mitigation package would need to ensure that the SANG is deliverable and that the SANG can be maintained in perpetuity.
- 6.2 The initial capital works shall be implemented and funded by the developer and would be delivered prior to first occupation of development which relies upon capacity at the SANG as part of its SPA avoidance / mitigation strategy.
- 6.3 It is expected that the ongoing funding and management of the SANG would be undertaken through funding by a management company or the SANG to be transferred to the council with a commuted sum for ongoing management.
- 6.4 The details of ongoing management of the SANG (delivered in perpetuity) would be outlined and secured via an appropriately worded Section 106 legal agreement.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

- 7.1 The site has been subject to various ecological surveys to ensure that protected species and local wildlife have been considered as part of the scheme. The SANGS plans have been designed to ensure the ecological value of the site.
- 7.2 The outline SANGS management plans have included overarching aims and objectives of SANGS and provides proposed management.

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