

SUBJECT:	Development Management Guidance Note for Burnham Beeches		
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team-	Director of Services	
	Prepared by	-	Head of Sustainable Development

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to request Members to adopt this Guidance Note for use in development management.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 2.1 The Guidance Note links directly to Core Policies 1, 9 and 13 of the Council's Adopted Core Strategy.
- 2.2 The Core Policies and this Guidance Note directly support the objective within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan to support and maintain a sustainable environment.

3. Background

- 3.1 Burnham Beeches was designated a national nature reserve (NNR) in 1993 and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in 2005. This is a European designation also known as a Natura 2000 site. The UK is bound by the terms of the EC Habitats Directive, the aim of which is to conserve natural habitats and wild species across Europe by establishing a network of sites known as Natura 2000 sites. When preparing an application for certain plans and projects, developers should consider the potential effects on protected habitats. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to assess potential impacts of a plan or a project upon a European site through a process known as Habitat Regulations Assessment or HRA. It is the responsibility of the developer to provide the necessary information where appropriate.

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1 Core Policy 1 of the Core Strategy states that
Further development at Farnham Common will be managed, to avoid a cumulative adverse impact on Burnham beeches. The mechanisms to achieve this will be set out in the Development Management DPD
- 4.2 Core Policy 9 Natural Environment of the Core Strategy states that
The conservation and enhancement of Burnham Beeches SAC and its surrounding supporting biodiversity resources, will be achieved through restricting the amount of development in close proximity to the site, and ensuring that development causes no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC. Further details on mechanisms for achieving this will be given in the Development management DPD.
- 4.3 Core Policy 13 Environmental and Resource Management of the Core Strategy states that
The Council will seek to ensure the prudent and sustainable management of the District's environmental resources by: protecting and enhancing water quality. Particular regard should be had to maintaining the integrity of Burnham Beeches SAC.
- 4.4 South Bucks, City of London (owners of the publically accessible part of the Beeches) Natural England and Environment Agency have been working together to produce

evidence based planning policy to be included in the forthcoming Development Management Local Plan (DMLP). The City of London and South Bucks have jointly funded two evidence based studies - visitors' survey and hydrology. This development guidance note stems directly from the hydrology report and it is suggested should be treated as interim guidance until the DMLP is adopted.

5. Hydrology

- 5.1 The Hydrology study commissioned from WHS has identified 4 catchment areas from the 4 streams which flow into Burnham Beeches and has determined the importance of these streams to the ecology of the beech trees and the mire. Previously only the Withy stream catchment had been identified. Increasing urbanisation could have a detrimental impact on this hydrology which could be ameliorated by adopting simple measures. These measures include avoiding certain construction practices and implementing Sustainable Drainage Systems known as SUDs.
- 5.2 Currently the Local List specifies that applications within the Withy stream catchment area are not validated unless accompanied by a hydrology report. The new measures as set out in the Guidance Note no longer require individual hydrology reports. However unless applicants submit details of the SUDs measures that are appropriate for their site the applications will not be considered valid. This change to the local list is considered a minor change which can be made under previous delegation to the Head of Sustainable Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. It is categorised as a minor change as the new requirement is less onerous than the previous requirement to commission an independent hydrology report.
- 5.3 There is currently insufficient evidence to constrain development in Farnham Common although there is concern that increasing numbers of visitors, particularly those who walk with dogs, are having a detrimental impact on some of the features within the SAC. The results of the recent visitor survey and other evidence being compiled by the City of London will be examined by Natural England so see if further measures should be taken in the future. These will be considered in due course as further work is done for the Development Management Local Plan.

6. Resources, Risk and Other Implications

- 6.1 None.

7. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members of the Sustainable Development PAG advise the Portfolio Holder to recommend that Cabinet approve the new Guidance Note for Development Management purposes.

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Background Papers:	Development Management Guidance Note. Maps.