

Appendix 4: Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS)

Background

The Sherwood Forest area isn't currently pSPA/SPA, but the threat to breeding Nightjar and Woodlark from recreational activities is still a significant factor affecting these species. Nightjar and Woodlark are European Annex 1 birds protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Annex 1) & the EC Birds Directive and the Bern Convention (Appendix II).

Studies have shown that urban development close to bird habitat is closely related to lower bird numbers, which can be attributed to an overall increase in recreational disturbance. An increase in residential development is likely to increase visitor access to core areas supporting these species. Disturbance is mostly associated with people wandering from main paths and allowing dogs to wander off leads. It is also associated with areas that have a higher number of access paths and access points (e.g. car parks and foot/cycle access points). For relevant references, please see Appendices 1 and 3.

In the absence of a standard national or county-wide risk based approach to this issue, this Appendix outlines Mansfield District Council's approach. It builds upon a collection of sources including: national planning guidance (PPG17 and PPS9); MDC Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) Note 3: Recreation Provision on New Residential Developments; IPG 11: Green Infrastructure; MDC Citizen's Panel results; relevant research, established guidance from other established SPAs, and consultation advice from Natural England. This approach is based on the most relevant information available when written.

Why SANGS?

The creation, enhancement and promotion of suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANGS) is one strategy for buffering (mitigating) recreational pressures on important bird areas. The degree to which this is possible depends on the design, location, size, accessibility and overall quality.

The concept of SANGS originates from the Thames Basin Heath SPA planning requirements put in place in order to provide appropriate avoidance measures for diverting visitor pressures away from sensitive bird areas.

For the purposes of this 'Risk-based Approach', SANGS are generally defined as areas of informal (and some formal) open space (See paragraph 5.10 of IPG 3) providing a recreational resource and a suitable recreational alternative to publicly accessible sites within the Sherwood Forest area supporting Nightjar and Woodlark.

How to Apply SANGS Approach

1. Upon screening the development in accordance to the main Decision Tree, the development fits within the following categories of Likely Significant Effects (LSE) boxes:
 - a. '5' & possibly '3' if tourism related: Residential or hotel/camping caravan development within 1km of draft possible future SPA boundary (core bird areas).
 - b. '8' & '9' & possibly '3' if tourism related: Residential or hotel/camping caravan development within 5km draft possible future SPA boundary (core bird areas).
 - c. '6' : Major residential development (10 dwellings or more) greater than 5km of the draft possible future SPA boundary (core bird areas).
2. Next consult Cartology.Net or relevant resources if this not available (see bottom of page). View the development site in relation to the information:
 - a. Publicly Accessible Greenspace (PAG) of unrestricted public access
 - b. Public Rights of Way
 - c. Long-distance trail networks
 - d. Draft boundary of the possible future SPA (core bird areas)
 - e. Please also see *SANG Design Elements* below for determining if sites might meet SANG criteria/advice on improving nearby resources and/or creating new SANGS.
3. Is there a possible SANG located closer to the proposed development than to the core bird areas OR are there smaller PAG sites nearby which are currently linked together by access routes that could meet SANG criteria? See IPG 3 on how to measure distance. If no, go to step 4 below.
 - a. Does the site contain areas of semi-natural habitat and/or tree coverage?
 - b. What is the overall quality of the site? How could this be improved?
 - c. Seek on or off-site contributions through 106 agreements, to minimise likely significant effects.
4. If no to 3, could access be improved to link existing separate sites together or create new greenspace that meets SANG quality, either on its own or in combination with existing sites?
 - a. See below and IPG 3 and IPG 11.

SANG Design Elements

Greenspace design is fundamental to its success as a viable SANG. Design elements should consider:

- ☺ The identification of existing and new SANGS should seek to avoid sites of high nature conservation value, such as SSSIs and the 'indicative Nightjar and Woodlark ICA/IBA area', which are likely to be damaged by increased visitor numbers. If SANGS are combined with habitat creation mitigation measures (e.g. heathland), it is important that appropriate access management measures are designed into the proposed SANGS.
- ☺ A SANG may be created by linking together and/or enhancing existing Green Infrastructure assets (see IPG 11). This will involve creative design, thus, providing good quality, multifunctional greenspace. Enhancement refers to improving both the functionality and quality of existing areas. Improved and newly created greenspace should serve the individual proposed development site, as well as the existing housing sites within the immediate area (e.g. provide connections between sites).
- ☺ New openspace provision, as noted in IPG 3, should consider incorporating the following SANG design elements:
 - Include semi-natural spaces such as wildflower meadows, trees, ponds, etc.
 - It should be large enough to include a circular walk (2km) around the site, or link into a larger Green Infrastructure network.
 - Ideally located within easy walking distance (400 to 800m) of the developments. Paths must be accessible and well-maintained.
 - The accessibility of the site must include access points appropriate for the particular visitor use the SANGS is intended to cater for. Car parking provision should be considered.
 - SANGS must be designed so that they are perceived to be safe by users. This includes designing in natural surveillance and easily maintained.
 - SANGS must be free from unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment works smells, etc).

Local Trends in the Use of Publicly Accessible Greenspace

A recent survey of residents in the district (Citizen Panel Sept 2010; 504 respondents), helps give a local perspective with regards to access of greenspaces in and around the district. Some key points to consider with relation to greenspace access and design include:

- When comparing visits between informal and formal provision, the figures were similar (410 parks & rec / 434 informal natural greenspace & countryside). Therefore, both equally valuable and actively used resources. 97% of respondents agreed that it is important that them and their families have access to natural greenspace.
- More people access parks and recreation grounds, pitches, play area and small greens by foot and the open countryside and country parks by car. The former most likely to be more accessible by foot. The results are mixed when considering those who live close to these areas (i.e. have access to greenspace within walking easy distance); about half as many people who go by foot, choose to drive to a park and recreation ground. Quality and ease of access may be a factor. The top 3 most common barriers to using greenspaces included: fear of anti-social behaviour, uncleanliness and poorly maintained equipment.
- Woodland/heathland sites: Of those who visited these, the most visited areas incl. Sherwood Forest Park, Sherwood Pines and Vicar Water Country (ranging between 80-55%); this is not surprising as these areas are well serviced in terms of facilities, e.g. café, car parks. The visitor catchment was evenly distributed around the district (with Vicar Water slightly more from eastern side). Those visiting smaller sites such as Oak Tree were more localised. Clipstone Forest catchment was widespread even though only visited by about 27% of respondents.

Related Mapping Resources

- Publicly Accessible Greenspace (of unrestricted public access): consult Development Control/Planning Policy
- Public Rights of Way: consult Nottinghamshire County Council
- MDC long-distance trail network: consult Development Control/Planning Policy
- Draft boundary of possible future SPA (core bird areas): See Mansfield District Council website under 'Planning' → 'Development Control and Planning Enforcement' pages.

