

## RE-APPRAISAL OF RECREATION MITIGATION PROJECTS - FAWLEY

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Cabinet agree to the revised recreation mitigation project for the Fawley area, as follows to replace projects fa1 and fa3:

Ref	Location	Summary Description	Provisional Cost Estimate
Fa1R	Land west of Gang Warily	Off-lead dog exercise and activity area and recreational walking routes	£100,000 plus design, management and maintenance costs

### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 All new residential development within New Forest District has a potentially harmful impact on the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site (New Forest European sites) and the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar site/Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC/Solent Maritime SAC (Solent Coastal European sites). To enable the planned residential development to proceed the Habitats Regulations require that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to ensure that the proposed development does not have a harmful impact on the protected sites. One of the potentially harmful impacts is recreational pressures.
- 2.2 In the Mitigation Strategy for European Sites: Recreational Pressure from Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in 2014 the Council set out a portfolio of projects and measures which would be implemented as part of a package of measures to mitigate the recreational impact of development for the period up to 2026 (as planned for in the Core Strategy 2009 and the 2014 Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management.) These projects provide mitigation for sites of less than 50 dwellings where on-site provision of mitigation land is not feasible. The projects include the provision or enhancement of natural recreational green spaces and walking routes which offer an attractive and convenient alternative to a visit to the New Forest.
- 2.3 The overall approach to mitigation of recreational impacts on the New Forest arising from new development has been found sound by the Inspectors who undertook the Local Plan Review Examination. However, with the much higher levels of planned development and the extended plan period of the Local Plan Review 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy, there is a need to review of the supplementary planning guidance on recreational mitigation which supports Local Plan Review Policy ENV1. A provisional draft of the revised guidance was published and consulted on in June 2018. Since this document was published other information has emerged which will influence the content of the revised mitigation guidance.
- 2.4 Firstly, we have experience that has been gained from the implementation of some projects. Secondly, the results of the 2018/2019 New Forest Visitor Surveys, are

available, providing up to date information about how the protected sites in the New Forest are used for recreation. This information will enable us to refine and improve the effectiveness of our mitigation projects.

- 2.5 However, while a review of some of our proposed projects is needed, it is essential that we continue to deliver projects to ensure we are providing the mitigation required to enable residential development to take place. A timetable for the review of recreational mitigation projects and the updated supplementary planning document for recreational mitigation will be the subject to a separate report.
- 2.6 This report relates to the proposals for recreational mitigation in the Holbury, Fawley and Blackfield area.

### 3. ISSUES

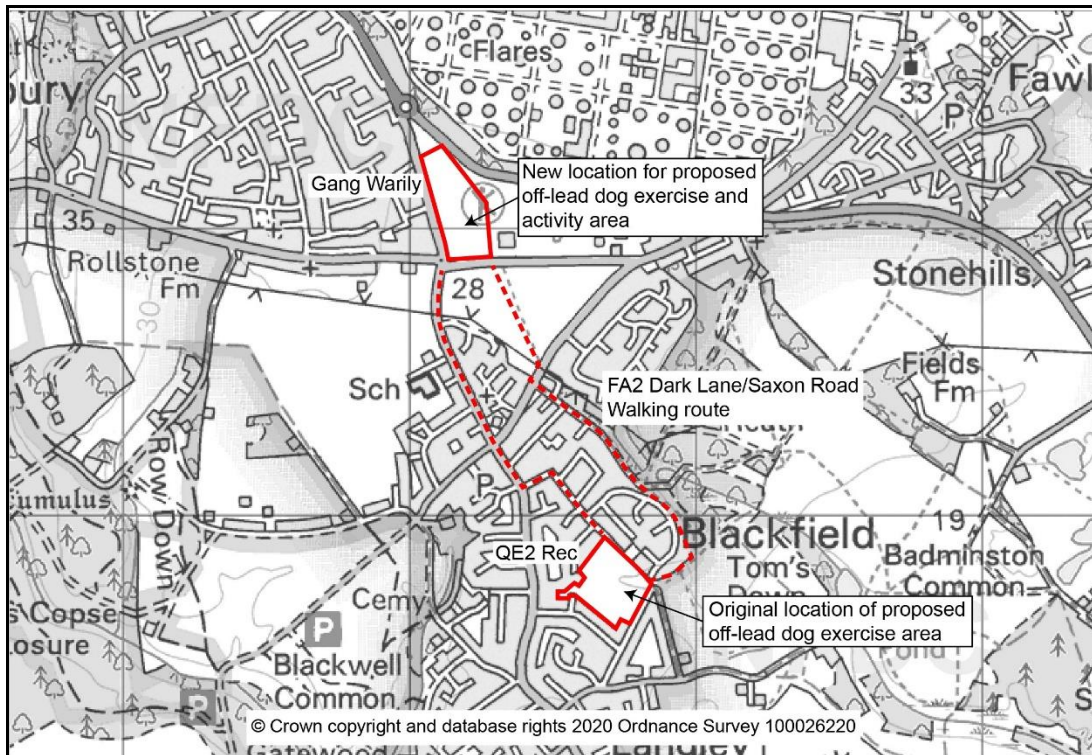
#### The Projects

- 3.1 The Recreational Mitigation Strategy SPD adopted in 2014 identified three projects in Fawley Parish which between them would mitigate the impact of an estimated 5000 potential visits to the international protected nature conservation sites of the New Forest arising from new residential development in that area between 2006 and 2026. (Some 295 dwellings).
- 3.2 These projects were:

Ref	Location	Summary Description	Provisional Cost Estimate
fa1	Queen Elizabeth II Recreation Ground	Off-lead dog exercise area	£50,000
fa2	Dark Lane /Saxon Road Walking Route	Improvements to footpath and footway and improved signing	£30,000
fa3	Church Lane	Provide surfaced footpath route and enhance existing space for young people	£50,000

- 3.3 Preliminary work was commenced on project 'fa1', which would see the installation of an all-weather walking route and dog activity area at Queen Elizabeth II (QE2) recreation ground with links to the wider footpath network (fa2). The QE2 recreation ground is owned by Fawley Parish Council and is primarily a sports ground with a pavilion building. The site also includes a children's play area and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). Available 'unused' space within the recreation ground is limited and Fawley Parish Council expressed some concerns regarding the active encouragement of dog walkers to this sports site. The limited available space to accommodate a dog activity area would restrict the attractiveness of such a facility in this location.
- 3.4 Lessons have also been learnt from a similar project at King George V Recreation Ground in Totton, regarding the need to avoid or minimise potential conflicts between user groups within a recreation area.

- 3.5 The prospect of an alternative location for the dog activity area has been put forward by Fawley Parish Council, namely the site of the old pitch and putt course to the west of Gang Warily. (See location plan below.)



- 3.6 This alternative site is less constrained, has additional facilities including car parking close-by associated with Gang Warily Recreation Centre, and still connects to the same network of local footpath routes. An overriding benefit would be to create a new area of informal open space in Fawley, that, due to its more central location, would be attractive to a wider catchment of existing residents and therefore potentially have an enhanced role and performance in deflecting visits away from the protected habitats of the New Forest.
- 3.7 It is suggested that the recreational mitigation projects for Fawley Parish be amended, by replacing the project for a dog activity area at the QEII Recreation Ground (fa1) and improvements at the Church Lane open space (fa3), with a single larger project at Gang Warily. This project would continue to link in with project fa2 which will provide enhanced walking routes through Blackfield. The projects on the QEII Recreation Ground and on the open space at Church Lane will not be pursued. The Church Lane project – to surface a footpath route and enhance existing space for young people - while of benefit to the local community, is unlikely to be as effective as a mitigation measure as the project now proposed.

### Targeted Mitigation

- 3.8 The next section explains the importance of providing an effective project in Blackfield.
- 3.9 The results of the New Forest Visitor Survey 2018-19 (published Spring 2020) have provided increased understanding of the pattern of recreational impacts on the internationally protected habitats of the New Forest (Special Protection Area/ Special Area of Conservation) arising from people visiting the New Forest for recreational purposes. Dog walking activity is very much focussed around the peripheral areas of the SPA/SAC. Dog walkers were the most regular visitors, with 41% of dog walkers indicating they visited on a daily basis and a further 14% of dog walkers indicating they

visited more than once per day. The eastern part of the New Forest is very well used by local dog walkers as a convenient place to exercise their dogs. The on-site visitor surveys<sup>1</sup> showed a clear and striking pattern of high levels of use of the New Forest by local people, particularly dog walkers, on the eastern edge, around Hythe and towards Fawley in particular, with many of the visitors choosing their nearest car park within the SPA/SAC/Ramsar site as a starting point for walking a dog. Projects specifically targeted in providing alternative attractive facilities for dog walkers in the Fawley area will therefore have significant potential for reducing recreational pressures on the New Forest within this area.

## **Review of mitigation projects**

- 3.10 When the Mitigation Strategy for European Sites Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in 2014 was drafted, estimates of the costs of each mitigation project were included. These estimates are now six years old, and experience in implementing projects to date has shown these cost estimates to be generally optimistic. Potential additional costs for the long-term management and maintenance of the projects was not factored in. (In most case the land where projects are proposed is already under some form of public management). A reappraisal of the schedule of mitigation projects in the 2014 SPD is required. This will be based on experience to date, and reconsideration of the effectiveness, performance and cost of the identified mitigation projects. Work will be done to ensure a 5-year rolling programme of projects for implementation is sustained. To ensure the programme of projects is responsive to changing circumstances and opportunities, the programme of specific projects will no longer be embedded in the SPD but reported on separately.
- 3.11 However, while this review is undertaken it continues to be of utmost importance to the enabling of development within the District, that we continue to deliver and have in place the required recreational mitigation measures.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 To enable work to progress on the recreational mitigation projects in Fawley, agreement is sort to revise the recreational mitigations projects proposed in Fawley Parish, as outlined in this report, by the replacement of projects fa1 and fa3 with a new project for a dog activity area and walking route at on the land west of Gang Warily. The budget of in total £100,000 previously assigned to projects fa1 and fa3 (funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy) should be allocated to this new project together with appropriate additional funding for design, implementation and management fees.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Reallocation of Community Infrastructure Levy funds from other projects.

## **6. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 No direct implications

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The revised project will provide a facility which will result in the reduction of recreational pressures on sites of international importance to nature conservation

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<sup>1</sup> Recreational use of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar: Impacts of recreation and potential mitigation approaches, Footprint Ecology 2020

## **8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None

## **9. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None

## **10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

10.1 I support the recommendations for the reasons set out within the report.

### **For further information contact:**

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### **Background Papers:**

**Published papers only**