

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Interim Mitigation Strategy

The District Council's Cabinet Member for Planning has now agreed a SAMM Interim Mitigation Strategy. This will apply to planning applications proposing a net increase in residential dwellings within a 7km zone around Ashdown Forest. It will enable those planning applications that have been held in abeyance since summer 2012 and future applications to mitigate their impact on the Forest in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.

This decision was communicated to District Councillors in the MIS bulletin 33a on the 23rd August 2013. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Planning Committees were briefed on this issue before affected planning applications began to be reported to Planning Committees in September.

This Briefing Note is intended as a reminder for District Councillors and a briefing for Town and Parish Councillors on the background to this decision.

The Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area is an internationally important habitat classified because of the presence of breeding populations of Dartford warbler and European nightjar. The Forest is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation for its heathland habitat and Great crested newts.

Residential development proposals within 7km of the Ashdown Forest are likely to have a significant effect, alone and in combination with other housing proposals, on the special conservation features of the Ashdown Forest. The potential impacts arise from the possibility of increased recreational pressure resulting from occupiers of new housing who may wish to visit the Ashdown Forest.

Natural England has previously advised that all planning applications proposing a net increase in residential dwellings within the 7km zone around the Ashdown Forest will be required to mitigate their effects of increased recreational pressure in the form of providing a financial contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

However, Natural England has since advised us that, in the interim before the SANG is in place, the level of development coming forward in the short term may be successfully mitigated by SAMM alone.

As a result of this revised advice, the Council has agreed a SAMM Interim Mitigation Strategy which is supported by Natural England. It sets out the interim SAMM tariff and the amount payable (depending on the number of bedrooms in the dwelling). A Unilateral Undertaking made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will enable the applicant to contribute towards the SAMM Interim Mitigation Strategy.

For most affected planning applications, it will now not be necessary to undertake a full Appropriate Assessment if a financial contribution towards the SAMM Interim Mitigation Strategy is provided.

To view the SAMM Interim Mitigation Strategy, including the interim SAMM tariff, please see the Mid Sussex District Council website: www.midsussex.gov.uk/8716.htm.

For further information on the SAMM Interim Mitigation Strategy, please contact Development Management on 01444 – 477566 or Planning Policy on 01444 – 477053.