Summary and Recommendations:

Approval is sought to amend the Rushmoor Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy, to incorporate arrangements with Hart District Council (HDC) to allow development schemes within Rushmoor to utilise surplus Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs) capacity within Hart District.

Recommendations:

1. That the AMS is amended based on the draft forming Appendix I;
2. That the arrangements for developers to secure SANGs capacity in Hart District are approved based on the draft set out at Appendix II;
3. That the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Service Delivery, subject to being satisfied that the location, capacity and costs of the SANG provision offered are suitable to support the needs of development in Rushmoor, is authorised to approve and publish the final versions of the documents contained in Appendices 1 and 2, following discussion and agreement with Natural England.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to facilitate the allocation of additional SANGs capacity to development projects within Rushmoor, and to agree the necessary corresponding changes to the Council’s AMS.

1.2 This is a key decision as it has implications for continuation of the Council’s ability to grant planning permission for, and ensure the delivery of, new housing across the whole of the Borough.

2.0 Background

2.1 Existing SANGs capacity to which the Council has access in order to mitigate net new residential development\(^1\) in the Borough is almost exhausted. Rushmoor is a compact urban authority, and opportunities for identifying or securing new SANGs, which provide suitable catchments, are limited. It is critical that Rushmoor obtains access expediently to surplus SANG mitigation within Hart District, initially at Bramshot Farm, in order to avoid a situation whereby net new housing delivery in the

\(^1\) Excluding the Wellesley development, which has a “bespoke” SANG solution.
Rushmoor ceases to come on stream. Identifying and securing adequate SANG capacity to mitigate the net new residential development identified for delivery in the Draft Submission Rushmoor Local Plan, over the period to 2032, is also a prerequisite to ensuring the successful adoption of the Local Plan during 2018.

2.2 Analysis of the latest information available in terms of housing need within Rushmoor², alongside an understanding of the potential capacity to deliver net new residential development over the period of the emerging Local Plan to 2032, resulted in a formal request to Hart for capacity to mitigate 1,500 net new houses using surplus SANG capacity in Hart District. Subsequently, agreement has been reached to allocate surplus SANG capacity in Hart, to enable the delivery of 1,500 new homes in Rushmoor.

2.3 In order to formalise this arrangement, and to satisfy the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate in respect of our emerging Local Plans, a “Memorandum of Understanding” will be signed between the authorities to effect this joint working arrangement.

3.0 Details of the proposal

3.1 In order to finalise and implement the arrangements for sharing SANG capacity with HDC, the details need to be incorporated into a revised AMS. The arrangement reflects the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

3.2 The signing of the MOU will facilitate the mitigation of developments of 10 or more new residential units within the catchment shown at Appendix III, and developments of fewer than 10 units throughout the rest of the Borough (which do not need to fall within a set SANG catchment).

4.0 Alternative options

4.1 Currently, there are no immediately available alternative options for additional SANG capacity. The alternative to the proposal is to cease granting planning permission for new housing until other capacity becomes available.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 It is proposed to submit the draft revised AMS and allocation arrangement to Natural England for comment in order to ensure it is satisfied that the requirements of the Habitats Regulations would be met. On receipt of agreement from Natural England, it is anticipated that the update to the AMS and supporting documents will be approved by the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Service Delivery.

² As assessed through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2016, available to view here: http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/newlocalplan
6.0 Implications of decision

6.1 Failure to implement the proposal carries the risk of constraining the delivery of new housing, reducing income from the New Homes Bonus, and rendering the Council unable to deliver its Local Plan target for new housing. This will be the subject of discussion at the Local Plan Examination, expected in Spring 2018, and will need to be addressed to ensure that the Local Plan is found “sound” in this regard.

Legal Implications

6.2 The arrangement must be consistent with both planning law and European law.

Financial and Resource Implications

6.3 Other than the risk of non-delivery, there are no financial implications other than the need for effective training and staff resources to administer the arrangement.

Equalities Impact Implications

6.4 There are not considered to be any Equalities Impact Implications arising from the decision.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The proposal will facilitate continuity in the delivery of net new residential development in Rushmoor. It will secure an update to the existing AMS and continue to secure income from the New Homes Bonus.

Appendices:
I  Draft revisions to AMS
II  Draft arrangements for developers
III  Map of Bramshot Farm SANG and catchment within Rushmoor

Background documents:
Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Habitats Regulations 2010
Rushmoor Local Plan
Rushmoor AMS

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