



Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation

Latest developments in SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces)



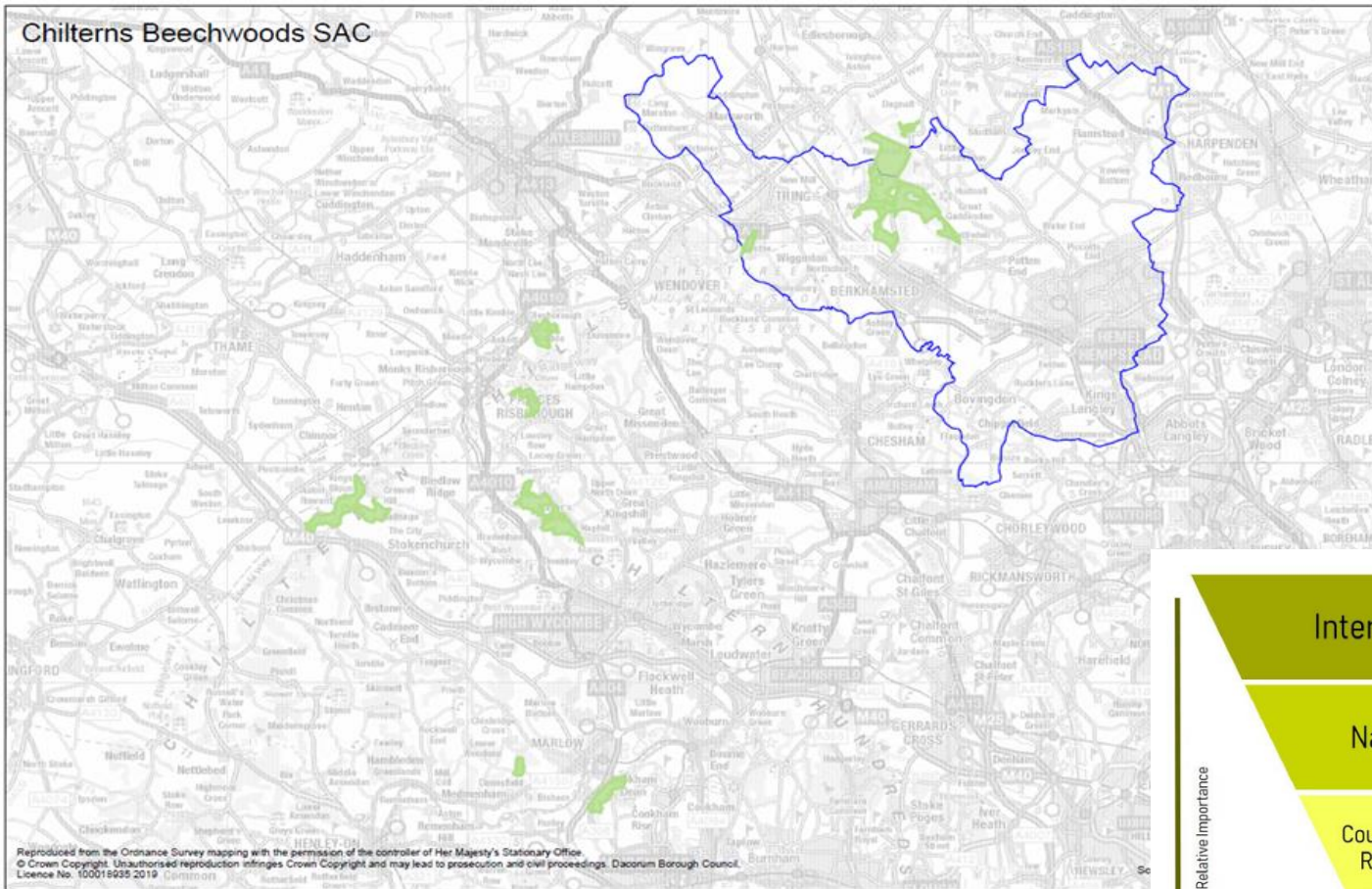
Background

- SAMMs and Gateway Solutions were covered by Alex Robinson at DEFs meeting in May 2022

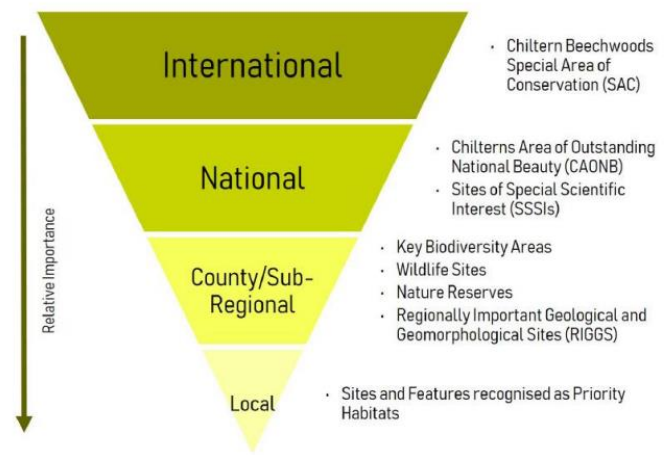
Coverage

- Requested to cover:
 - Opinion etc. surveys of current visitors to Ashridge.
 - "Draw Factors" to persuade people to visit SANGs rather than Ashridge.

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

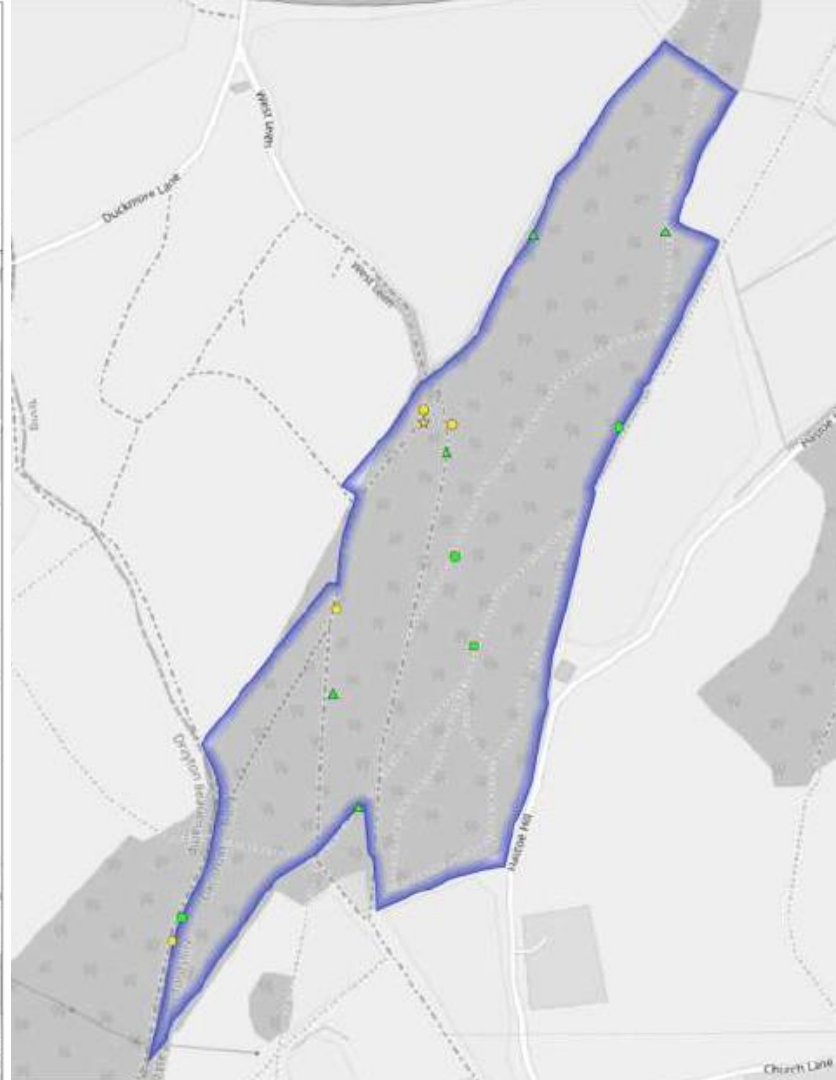
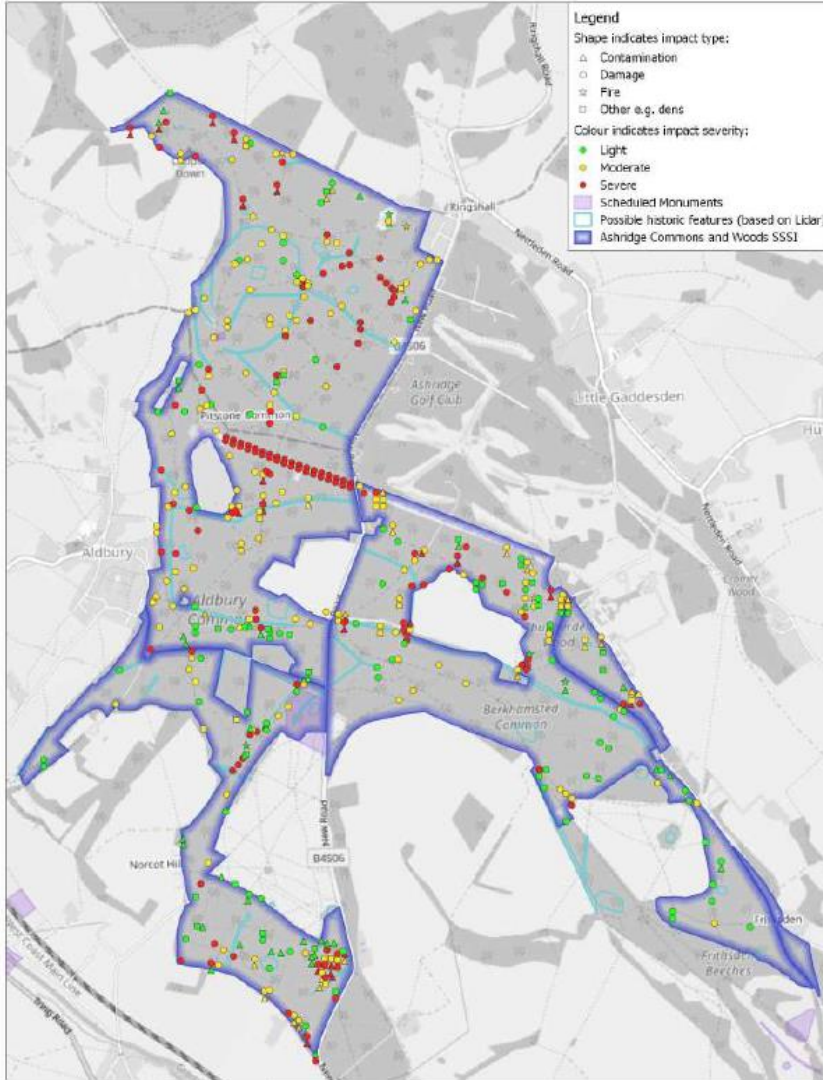


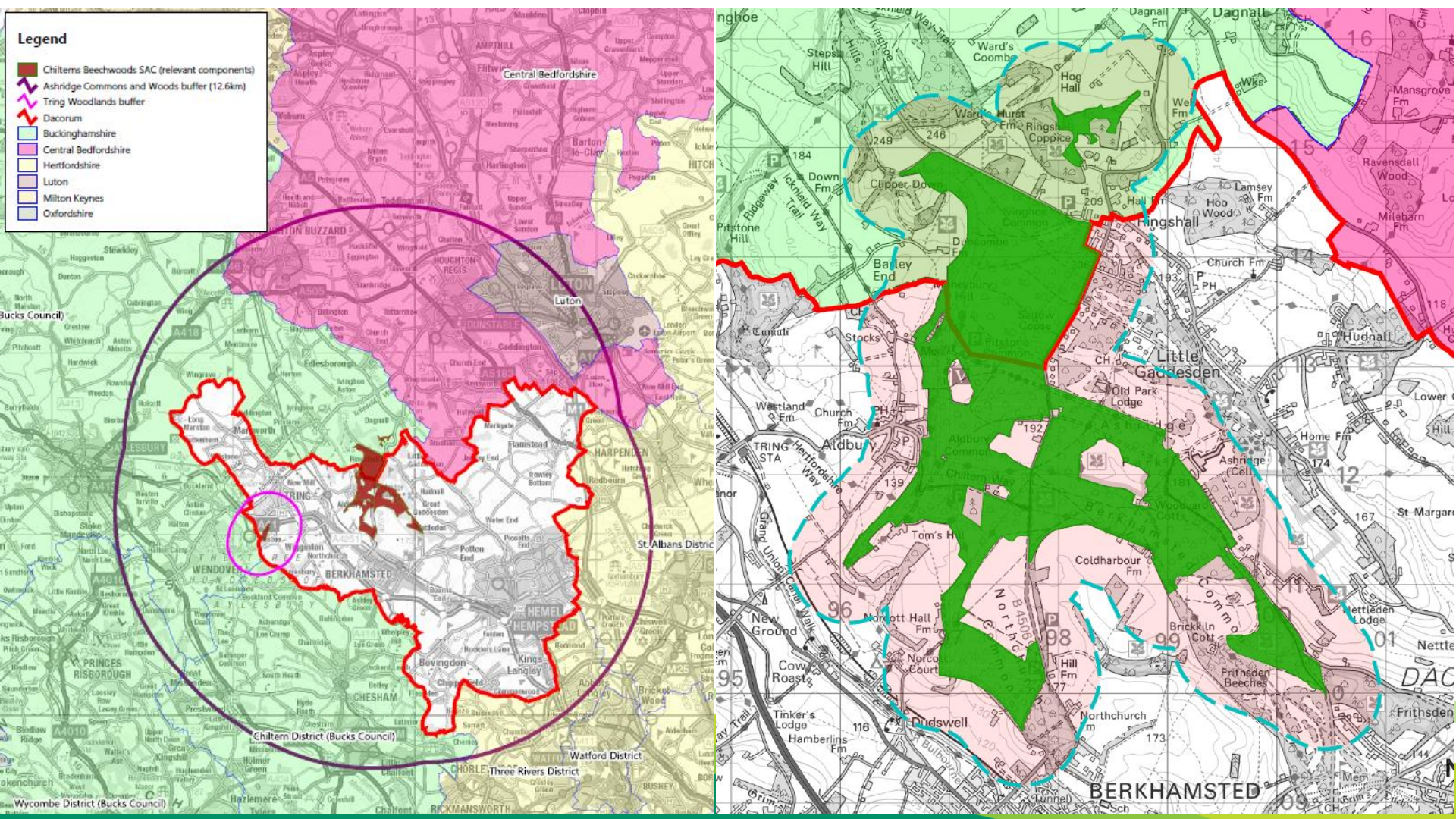
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Type of impact	Impact	Relevant activities	Further details
Damage	Vegetation wear	All	Results in changes to vegetation composition, loss of species and structure
	Soil compaction	All	Health implications for trees through reduced water uptake, root damage i.e. verge parking
	Erosion	All	Soil loss and can include wear of historic environment features such as wood banks which add to the biodiversity importance
	Removal of deadwood	Den building	Implications for invertebrates
	Vandalism	Anti-social behaviour	Can include graffiti, damage to signs, infrastructure etc.
Contamination	Dog fouling	Dog walking	Resulting in eutrophication. Urine and faeces an issue.
	Litter	All	Risk of contamination depending on composition
	Invasive species	All	Can be spread on clothes, fur and even deliberately
Fire	Increased fire incidence	Barbeques, camp fires, arson, cigarettes	Risks from a range of activities, with scope for major incident
Other	Harvesting	Fungi harvesting/wild food collection	
	Damage to visitor infrastructure	All	Detracts staff time from conservation management
	Challenges to achieving grazing	All	Ability to graze sites can be compromised by high levels of access through conflicts between users
	Changes to public perception	All	Access results in demand for visitor infrastructure and opposition from established visitors to changes in site management





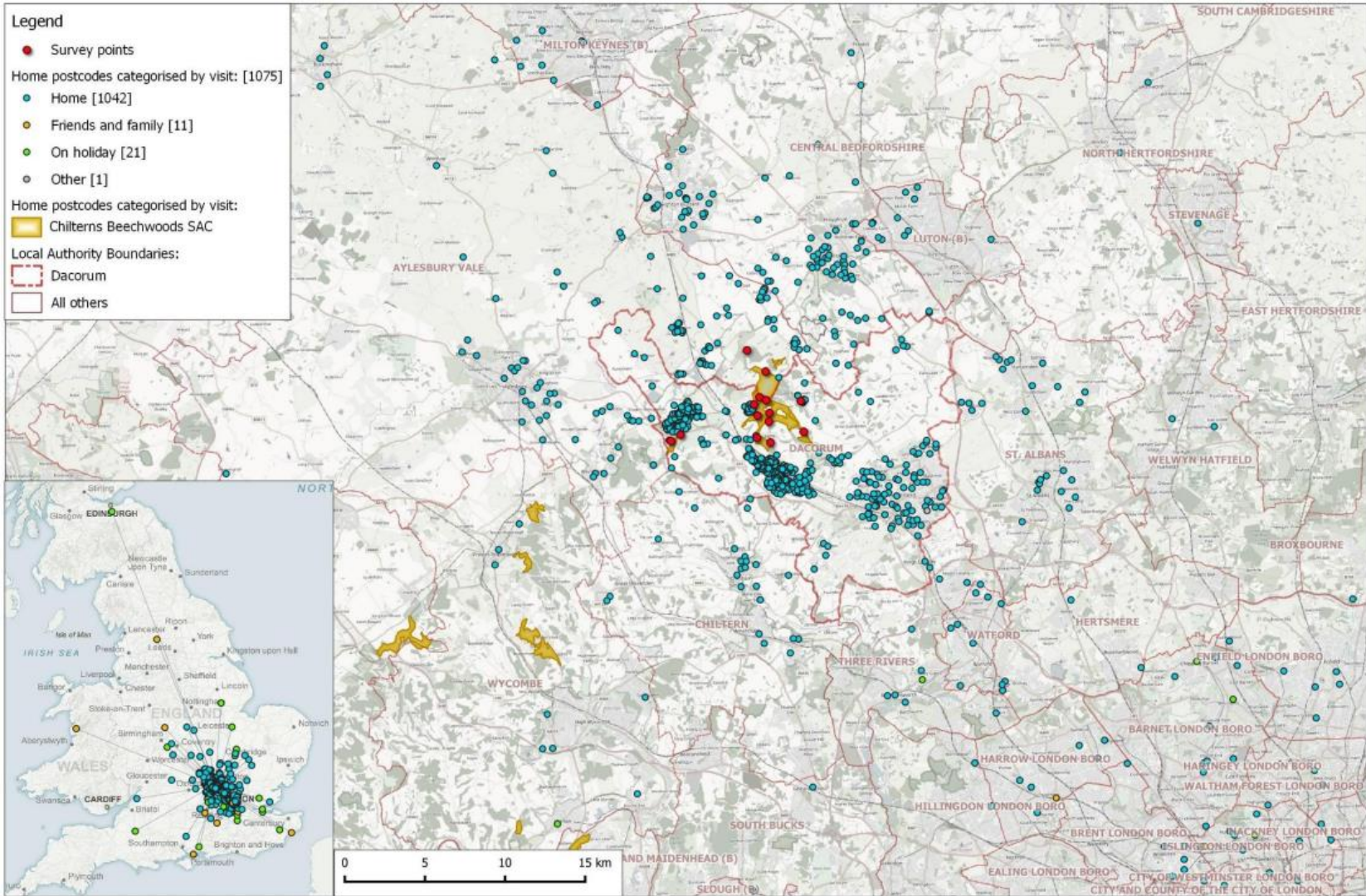
Opinion/surveys of current visitors to Ashridge





Legend

- Survey points
- Home postcodes categorised by visit: [1075]
 - Home [1042]
 - Friends and family [11]
 - On holiday [21]
 - Other [1]
- Home postcodes categorised by visit:
 - Chilterns Beechwoods SAC
- Local Authority Boundaries:
 - ▭ Dacorum
 - ▭ All others





	n	Dacorum District	Aylesbury Vale (Bucks Council)	Central Bedfordshire	St. Albans District	Chiltern District (Bucks Council)
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Tring Woodlands SSSI (survey points 11 & 12)

Easter	30	26 (87%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Summer Holidays	50	43 (86%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
Summer Term Time	52	43 (83%)	8 (15%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	132	112 (85%)	15 (11%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)

Ashridge (survey points 1-10)

Easter	187	115 (61%)	18 (10%)	19 (10%)	5 (3%)	5 (3%)
Summer Holidays	286	164 (57%)	34 (12%)	23 (8%)	11 (4%)	4 (1%)
Summer Term Time	373	208 (56%)	50 (13%)	46 (12%)	8 (2%)	9 (2%)
Total	846	487 (58%)	102 (12%)	88 (10%)	24 (3%)	18 (2%)

Survey points 1-12

Easter	217	141 (65%)	21 (10%)	19 (9%)	5 (2%)	6 (3%)
Summer Holidays	336	207 (62%)	38 (11%)	23 (7%)	11 (3%)	6 (2%)
Summer Term Time	425	251 (59%)	58 (14%)	47 (11%)	8 (2%)	9 (2%)
Total	978	599 (61%)	117 (12%)	89 (9%)	24 (2%)	21 (2%)

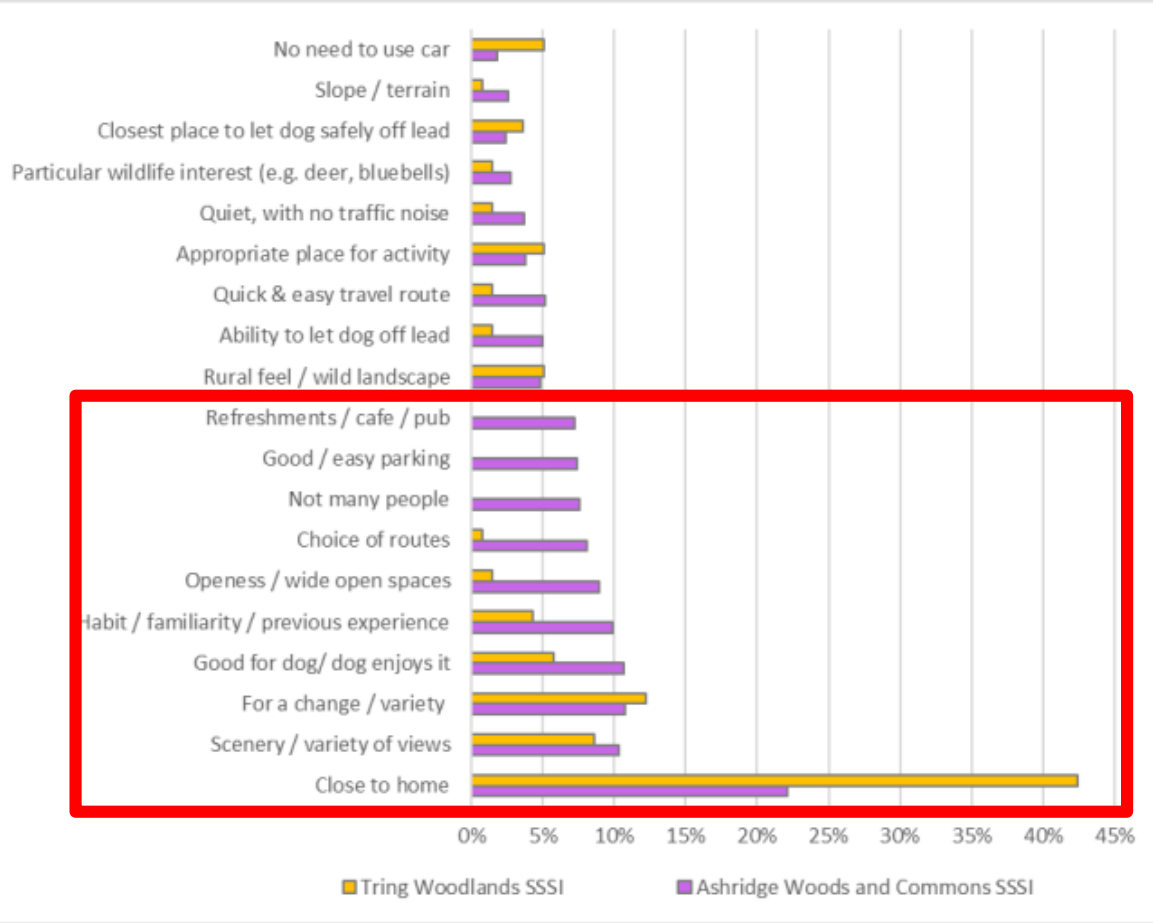


Figure 18: Reasons for visiting the interview location rather than another site. Percentage of interviewees shown separately for the Tring Woodlands SSSI survey points (11 & 12) and Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI (1 – 10).



Implications of the Footprint Ecology Report

- The report is evidence that adverse impacts are being felt on the SAC site and recommends that mitigation is required, principally:
- **Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)** – this is a suite of measures relating to the SAC site itself.
- **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)** to provide open space to draw visitors away from the site. This will be delivered by developers as part of their development but the Council will need to work with partners to deliver a strategic solution.
- Investigation of a '**Gateway**' solution – outside of the SAC designation.
- **A 'no development zone'** for most types of proposals extending c.500 metres from the boundary of the SAC.

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)





SAMM for Ashridge Estate

- Veteran trees
 - Root protection barriers and protective mulching
 - Selective tree felling along rides
 - Next generation] veteran and notable tree root protection barriers and protective mulching
- Rides and path mitigation
 - Ride widening (Targeted as agreed with NE)
 - Establishment of thick rideside vegetation
 - Soil decompaction
 - Track/path surfacing and maintenance.
- Access management infrastructure
 - Temporary (seasonal) ride closures, and signs / hurdles etc
 - Temporary signage
- Access management
 - Access interpretation, signage and waymarking, inc. electronic interpretation
- Communications (Infrastructure and Parking)
 - Active visitor guidance to indicate which locations / car parks are available.
Mitigating against parking abuse & unwanted vergeside parking



SAMM for Ashridge Estate cont.

- Access management infrastructure
 - Provision of cycling infrastructure*
 - Provision of dog waste bins (and litter bins)
- Staff (National Trust)
 - Delivery Officer x 1
 - Ranger posts
- Staff (Local Planning Authorities)
 - Shared SAC Officer
- Visitor infrastructure and parking
 - Protection of roadside verges and control of unauthorised parking
- Monitoring
 - Visitor counts
 - Visitor interviews
 - Ecological impact surveys
 - Veteran trees, health, condition and checks
- Spatial Plan
 - Production of prioritised spatial plan to guide monitoring and adaptive management



The total cost of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring is **£18,275,510**

Table 3: Apportionment of SAMMS to each authority

Council (Administrative Area)	SAMMS apportionment	Cost per dwelling
Dacorum Borough Council	£9,420,290	£913.88 per dwelling
Central Bedfordshire Council	£1,626,536	£182.49 per dwelling
St. Albans City and District Council	£212,123	£828.61 per dwelling
Buckinghamshire Council (North and Central)	£6,998,025	£566.23 per dwelling
Buckinghamshire Council (East)	£18,536	£87.03 per dwelling



Table A1: Table of SANG Costs for Bunkers Park and Chipperfield Common

SANG Enhancement Works	Description	Cost over 80 years
Information and Interpretation	Signage at - entrances; access points with site information and route maps; interpretation signs at key features; waymarking and directional signs. Site leaflet.	£882,480.94
Access	Works to access roads and car parks; highway signage; cycle storage; new gates; drainage works; route improvements.	£5,850,475.02
Site Furniture	Bins, picnic benches and seating.	£163,158.73
Habitat Management	Works to trees, hedgerows, glades, meadows and ponds as identified.	£2,483,407.12
Total		£9,379,521.81
Additional Management, Maintenance and Monitoring	Additional staffing, machinery and equipment to ensure sites are managed, maintained and monitored to appropriate standard.	£5,934,718.29
Contingency (5%)		£765,712.01
Total Cost of SANG Measures		£16,079,952.11

SANG capacity at Bunkers Park and Chipperfield Common: 3782 dwellings.

SANG charge per dwelling: £4,251.71.

How is the relevant on the ground examples of development?

Mitigation Guidance



Development Types

Use Type/Class	Screening Determination	
	500m Avoidance Zone	Zone of Influence
Dwelling Houses (C3) <i>Any net new additional dwellings</i>	Screened In	Screened In
Dwelling Houses (C3) <i>Extension or residential 'Granny' annexe</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends if it functions as a separate unit to the main dwelling.</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends if it functions as a separate unit to the main dwelling.</i>
Dwelling Houses (C3) <i>Replacement dwellings</i>	Screened Out	Screened Out
Residential Institutions (C2/C2A) <i>Accommodation and care to people in need of care, including Nursing Homes, hospitals and secure institutions</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends on the type of scheme proposed, the level of mobility of residents and potential for parking to be used by visitors to the SAC.</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends on the type of scheme proposed, the level of mobility of residents and potential for parking to be used by visitors to the SAC.</i>
Residential Institutions (C2) <i>School, college or training centre</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends on the type of scheme and its functional relationship to the SAC</i>	Screened Out
Hotels (C1) <i>A hotel, boarding or guest house</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends on offer and type of users expected</i>	Case by Case <i>Depends on offer and type of users expected</i>
House in Multiple Occupation (C4 / Sui Generis) <i>This also includes managed student accommodation.</i>	Screened In	Screened In
Holiday Dwellings (Sui Generis) <i>Self-contained holiday accommodation, caravan and touring holiday accommodation</i>	Screened In	Case by Case <i>Depends on offer and type of users expected</i>
Gypsy and Traveller Pitches (Sui Generis) <i>Net new pitches that are either temporary or permanent.</i>	Screened In	Screened In
Residential Boat Moorings ()	Screened In	Screened In
Café/Shop/Visitor Centre/Museum ()	Case by Case <i>Depends on offer and type of users expected</i>	Screened Out

Application types affected

Application type (where they include the qualifying development set out in table 3.1)	Affected by the restrictions	Comments
Full Planning Permission	✓	
Outline Planning Permission	✓	
Applications for reserved matters	✓	
Applications for the discharge of conditions	✓	This applies to pre-commencement conditions only.
Applications for prior approval / permitted development rights	✓	
Applications subject to appeal	✓	The Secretary of State, with PINS, is the “competent authority” for determining planning appeals.
Applications for minor amendments	✓	
Lawful Development Certificates	✗	
Pre-application advice	✗	

Visitor surveying

SANG capacity calculation

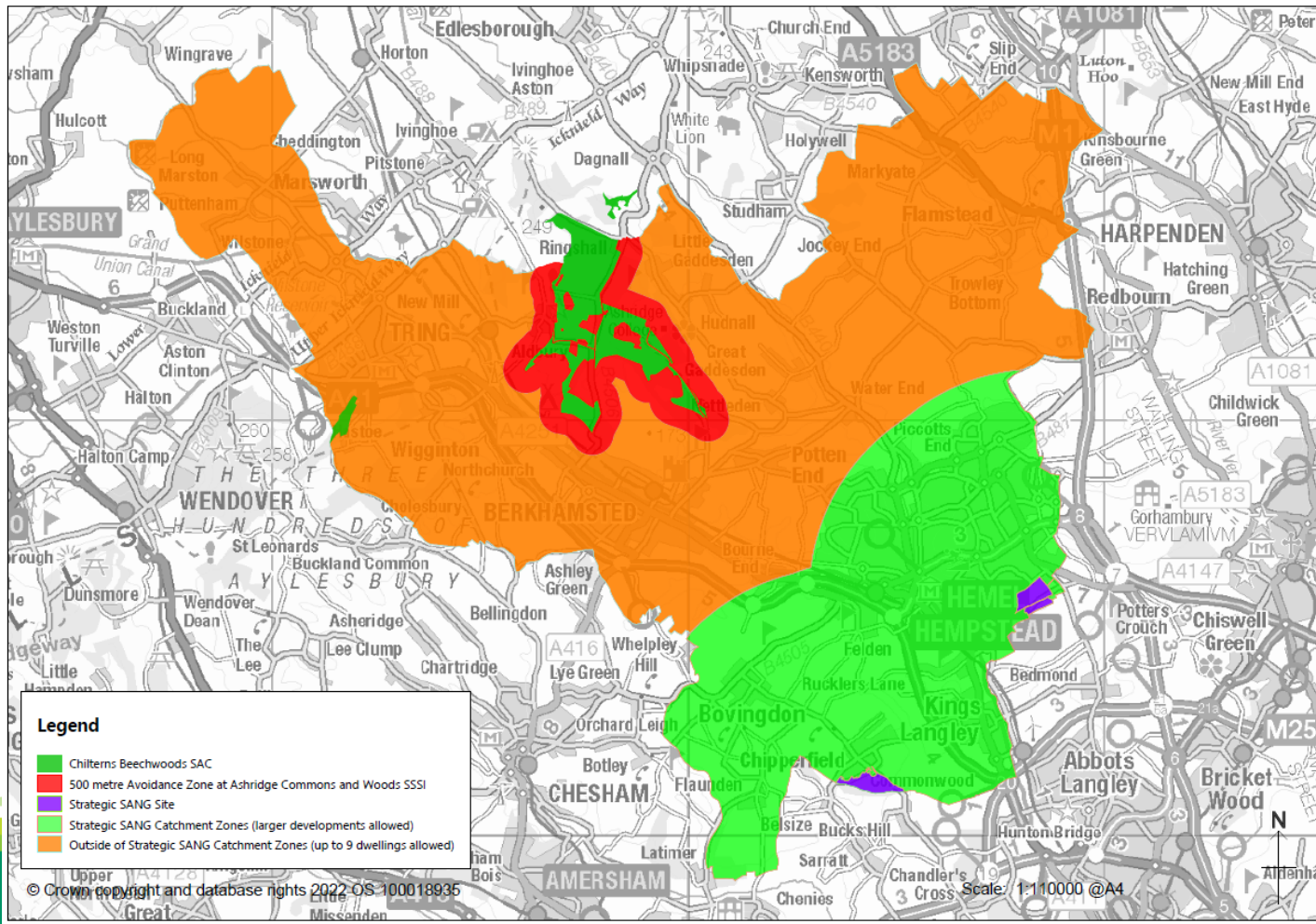
3.5.46. When determining the capacity of an existing open space with the potential to become a SANG, the following calculation should be used.

A. Total visits per annum to SANGs	B. Equivalent no. of visitors p.a	C. Estimated Area (ha)	D. Capacity to Mitigate	E. Residual Mitigation Capacity	F. Residual area of SANG capacity available	G. SANG capacity (equivalent no. of dwellings)
Average visitors a day x 365	$A / 114^{11}$	00.00ha	$C/8 \times 1000$	D - B	$E/1000 \times 8$	$E/2.4$

SANG Catchment Zones Map for Dacorum

The catchment of SANG will depend on their particular characteristics and location, and also their location within a wider green infrastructure network. As a guide:

- i. *SANG of 2-12ha will have a catchment of 2km*
- ii. *SANG of 12-20ha will have a catchment of 4km*
- iii. *SANG of 20ha+ will have a catchment of 5km*
- iv. *If no car park is proposed the catchment may be only 400m*





Preferred SANG owners/managers

Natural England emphasised the importance of securing long term and stable ownership of SANGS. A suggested order of preference is as follows:

1. Local Council (Borough or County) or Parish Council;
2. Via a charitable trust such as: the Land Trust, RSPB, Woodlands Trust, City of London Corporation or possibly the National Trust (if any have interest in such land); and then
3. Privately owned or a management company (with step in rights for the Council if any private owner goes into liquidation)



Options for development affected by the partial moratorium

Any majors outside of the SANG catchment (which could be 2km, 4km or 5km depending on green spaces site size) have limited options (as we remain in a partial moratorium for majors within the 'orange area'):

- wait for a Council-led solution
- explore whether a neighbouring authority might have an acceptable SANG solution
You would need to understand:
 - if they sell SANG spaces outside of their admin area
 - Would the scheme be in a defined SANG catchment
- find your own on-site (or off-site) solution – as long as it is within the right SANG catchment distance from your proposal. Be aware:
 - who would land manage or own the site and
 - what the minimum guidelines for SANGs are (see Natural England and Dacorum guidance).
- find a third party solution via a charitable trust, green space manager, major developer/development which overprovides or rural estate.
- Longer term there will be Local Plan solutions for the rest of the Borough
- There also *could be* other third party schemes developed i.e. Gateway or SANG around Ashridge Estate which *might* be able to rely on larger than 5km catchments. No certainty or timescales that a positive outcome can be secured/delivered.

Draw Factor for a SANG





Table 17: Top 11 alternative sites as named by interviewees for survey points at Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI (1-10) and Tring Woodlands SSSI (11 &12), considering all named (1st, 2nd and 3rd).

Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI survey points	Number (%) of all named sites	Tring Woodlands SSSI survey points	Number (%) of all named sites
Ivinghoe Beacon	123 (7)	Tring Park	82 (23)
Tring Park	93 (5)	Ashridge	38 (11)
Dunstable Downs	82 (5)	Wendover Woods	29 (8)
Wendover Woods	78 (5)	Reservoir	22 (6)
Canal	61 (4)	Canal	19 (5)
Northchurch Common	46 (3)	Ivinghoe Beacon	13 (4)
Ashridge Monument	42 (2)	Dancers End	10 (3)
Pitstone Hill	38 (2)	Tring reservoirs	9 (3)
Pancake Woods	33 (2)	Wilstone reservoir	7 (2)
Ashridge	32 (2)	Ridgeway	6 (2)
Tring reservoirs	30 (2)	Aldbury	6 (2)

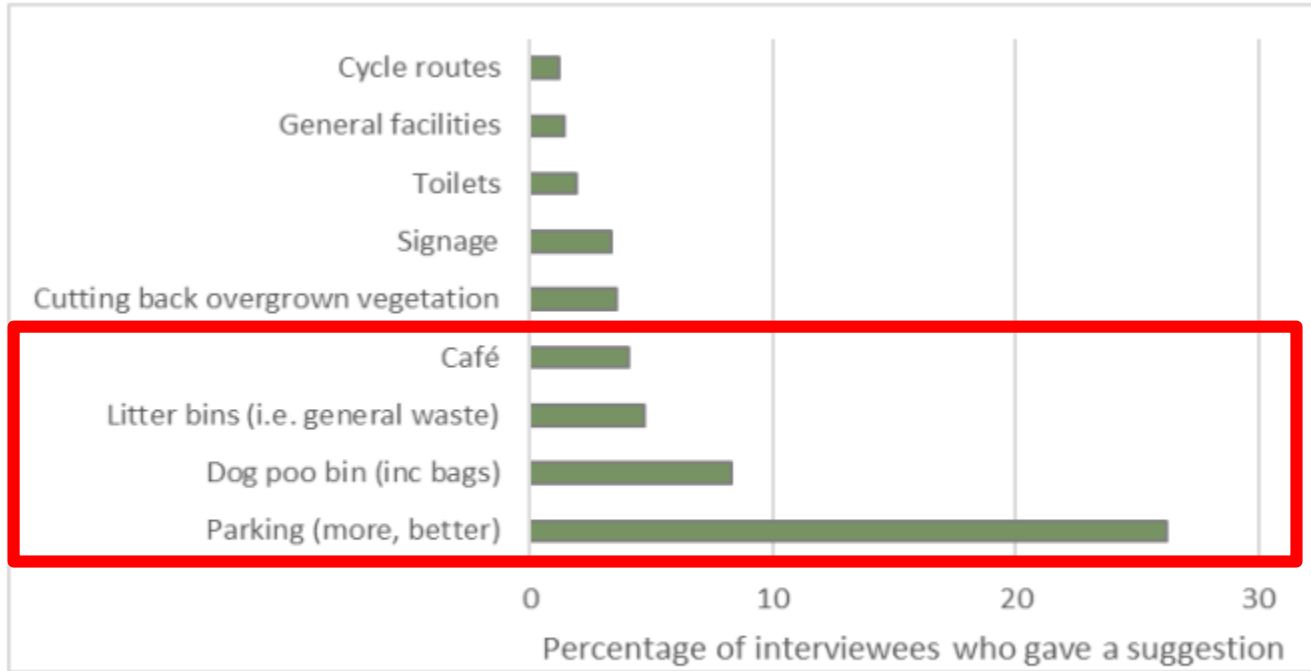


Figure 22: Responses to the request for any improvements to other alternative sites they visited. Figure is derived from the total of 395 interviewees who gave a suggested improvement.

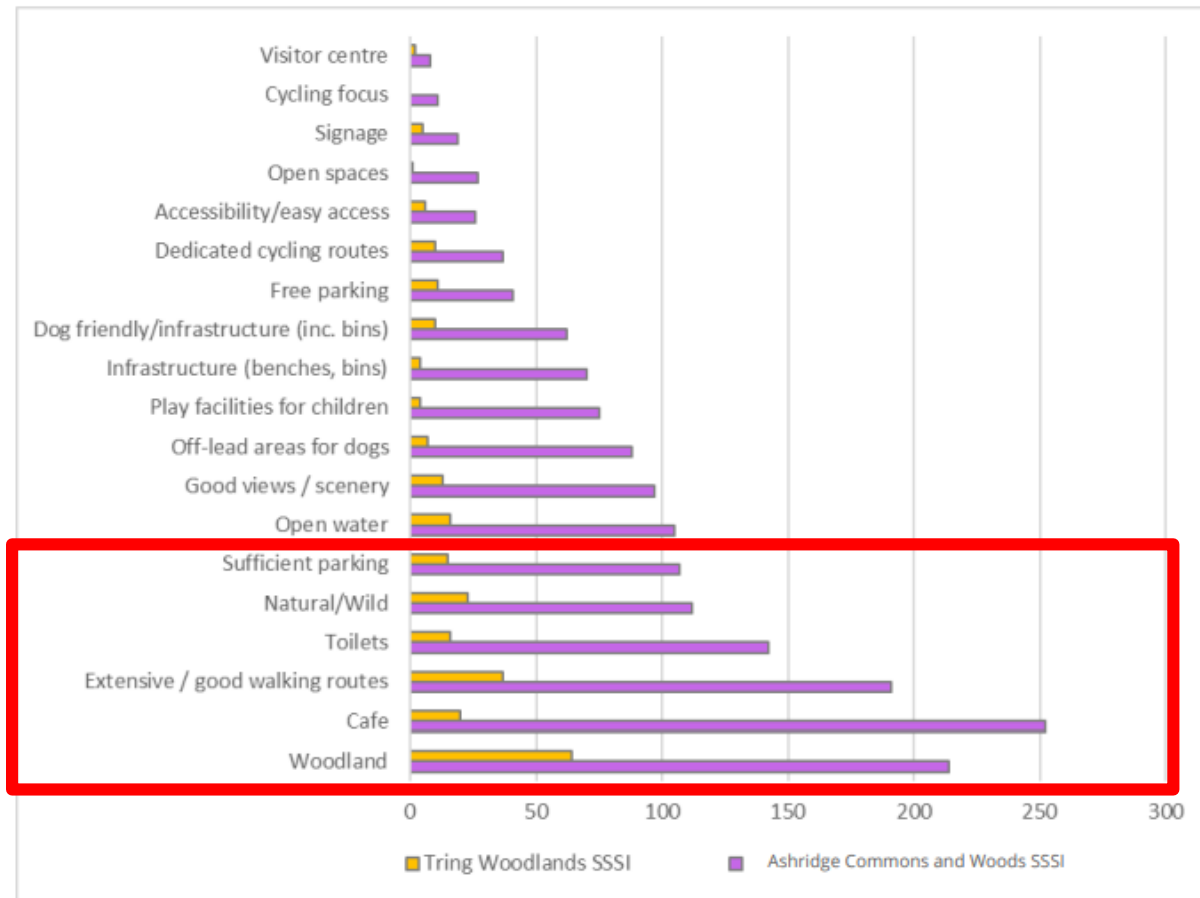


Figure 23: Number of interviewees and features they would like to see at a new country park or area of greenspace. Suggestions with less than 10 interviewees not shown.


Natural England SANG Guidance

Natural England SANG Guidance

Must/should have – these criteria are essential for all SANG:

1. **Parking** on all sites larger than 4ha (unless the site is intended for use within 400m only)
2. Circular walk of **2.3-2.5km**
3. Car parks **easily and safely accessible** by car and clearly sign posted
4. **Access points** appropriate for particular visitor use the SANG is intended to cater for
5. **Safe access route** on foot from nearest car park and/or footpath
6. **Circular walk** which starts and finishes at the car park
7. **Perceived as safe** – no tree and scrub cover along part of walking routes
8. Paths easily used and well **maintained** but mostly unsurfaced
9. Perceived as **semi-natural** with little intrusion of artificial structures
10. If larger than 12 ha then a **range of habitats** should be present

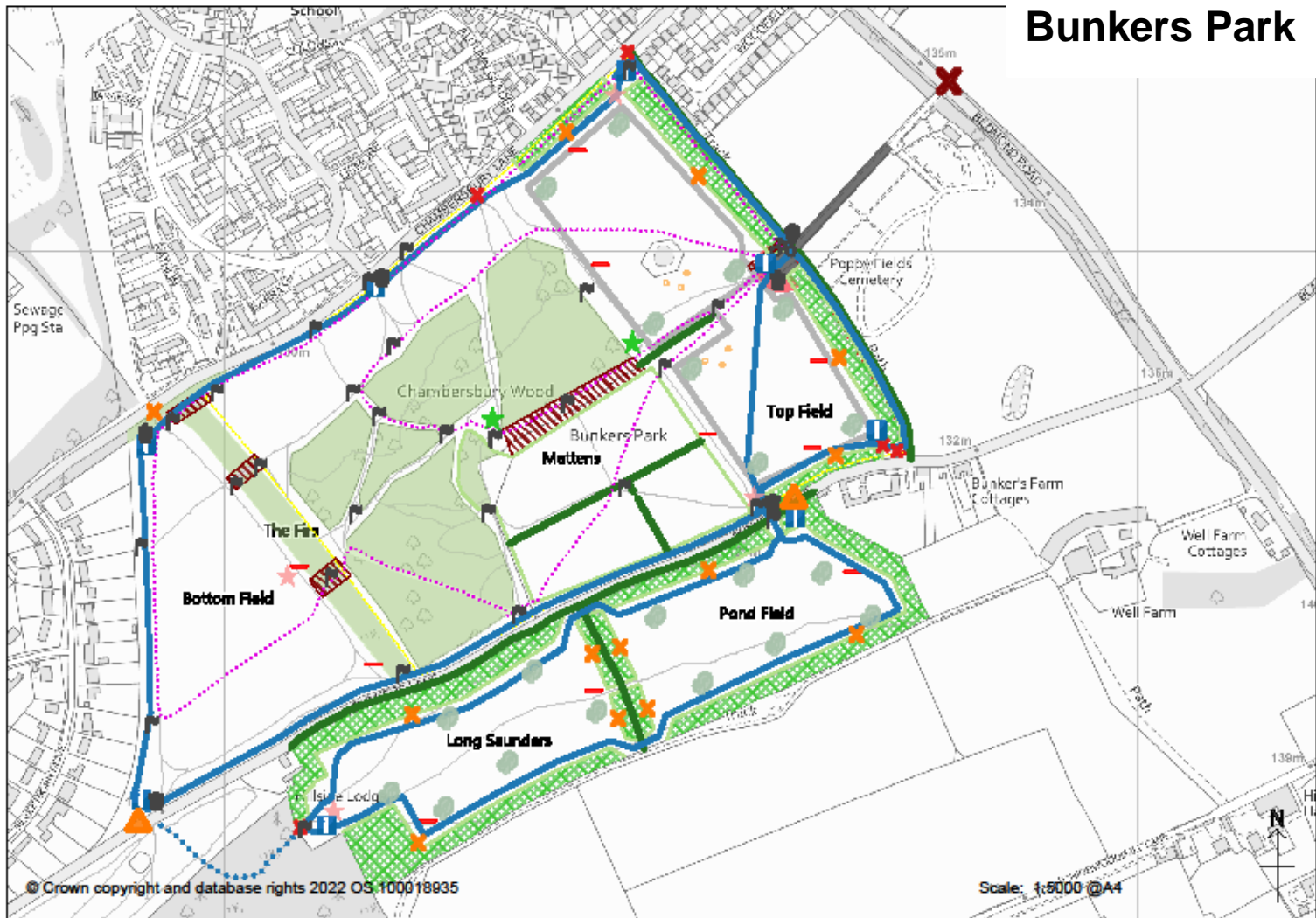
Natural England SANG Guidance cont.

11. **Access unrestricted** – plenty of space for dogs to exercise freely and safely off the lead
 12. **No unpleasant intrusions** (e.g. sewage treatment smells etc)
 13. Clearly **sign posted** or advertised in some way
 14. Leaflets or website **advertising** their location to potential users
 15. Can dog owners take **dogs** from the car park to the SANG safely **off the lead**
 16. Gently undulating **topography**
 17. Access points with **signage** outlining the layout of the SANG and routes available to visitors
 18. **Naturalistic space** with areas of open countryside and dense and scattered trees and shrubs. Provision of open water is desirable
 19. **Focal point** such as a viewpoint or monument within the SANG
- 

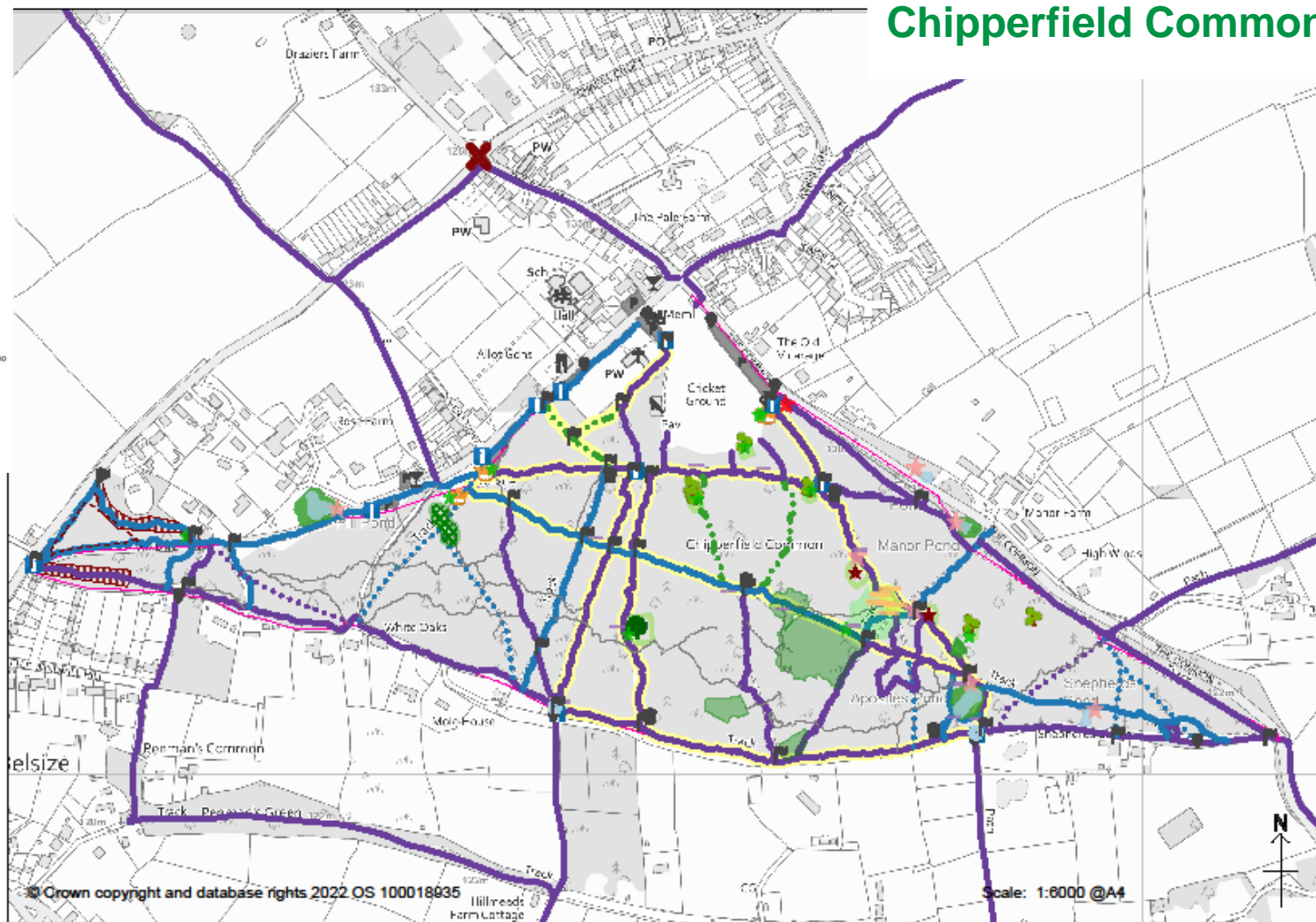
Chilterns Beechwoods SANG examples

Bunkers Park

- Key**
- Road resurfacing
 - Highway Leisure signage
 - Highway crossing improvements
 - Cycle storage
 - Specimen tree
 - Picnic benches
 - Existing Byeway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)
 - Existing Desire line
 - Existing marked footpaths (Long route: 2.2km; Short route: 1km)
 - Proposed boundary footpaths (North¹: 2.6km; South²: 2.4km)
 - Easy Access Route (North¹: 760m; South²: 700m)
 - Removal of permissive bridleway (1.6km)
 - Potential Long Deans link
 - Woodland
 - Rewilding area
 - Hedge laying and management:
 - New surfacing (steps/boardwalk/gravel)
 - Drainage improvements
 - Fencing around Mattens and rewilding areas
 - New pedestrian gate
 - New field gate
 - Litter bin
 - New bench
 - Signage**
 - Welcome arrival signage
 - Fingerpost
 - Entrance sign with map
 - Feature information board
 - Tree signage
- ¹ Car park to car park
² Car park to and around Pond Field and Long Saunders and back again
³ Around north of Top Field
⁴ Around south of Top Field



Chipperfield Common



(Part of) Gadebridge Park where no formal recreation is provided

Land East of Tring

22/01187/MOA

SANG Precedent images:



In a wide open space



Attenuation (filtering with plants)



Woodland counter



A place to meet



Choosing a vista



Connectivity



Meander through the meadow



Bio-diversity



-  Site Boundary
-  Proposed SANG: 27.0 hectares
-  9.5 hectares of open space which may be converted into additional SANG in the future if appropriate
-  Existing vegetation retained and reinforced including hedgerows
-  Proposed native woodland planting and tree belts with native shrub, scrub and understorey planting
-  Crushed gravel SANG footpath
-  Informal woodland walk/ secondary mown grass paths to provide alternative routes
-  Infiltration Basin and Pond Features with proposed marginal planting
-  Flowering Meadow Mix including proposed ornamental shrub planting
-  Semi natural and natural open space including wildflower grassland and long grassland
-  Amenity Grassland
-  SANG Car Park
-  External Furniture including bins, bench, interpretation boards, signage

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
(SANG) - The Box Moor Trust

Other neighbouring LPA SANG solutions

Central Bedfordshire

- *Studham Common*
- *Linslade Woods*
- *Sundon Hills*
- *Tiddenfoot CP*
- *Southern Meadows*
- *Grovebury Quarry*
- *Bridge Meadow*
- *Cottage Bottoms Fields*
- *Blows Downs*
- *Sundon Landfill site*
- *Land at former Stanbridge RAF*

[Meetings \(azeusconvene.com\)](https://www.azeusconvene.com)

[Important information regarding current and proposed residential proposals in Southern Central Bedfordshire | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

St Albans City and District

- *Jersey Farm*

[Chilterns Beechwoods SAC | St Albans City and District Council](#)

[Agenda for Policy Committee on Thursday, 16th March, 2023, 7.00 pm | St Albans City and District Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

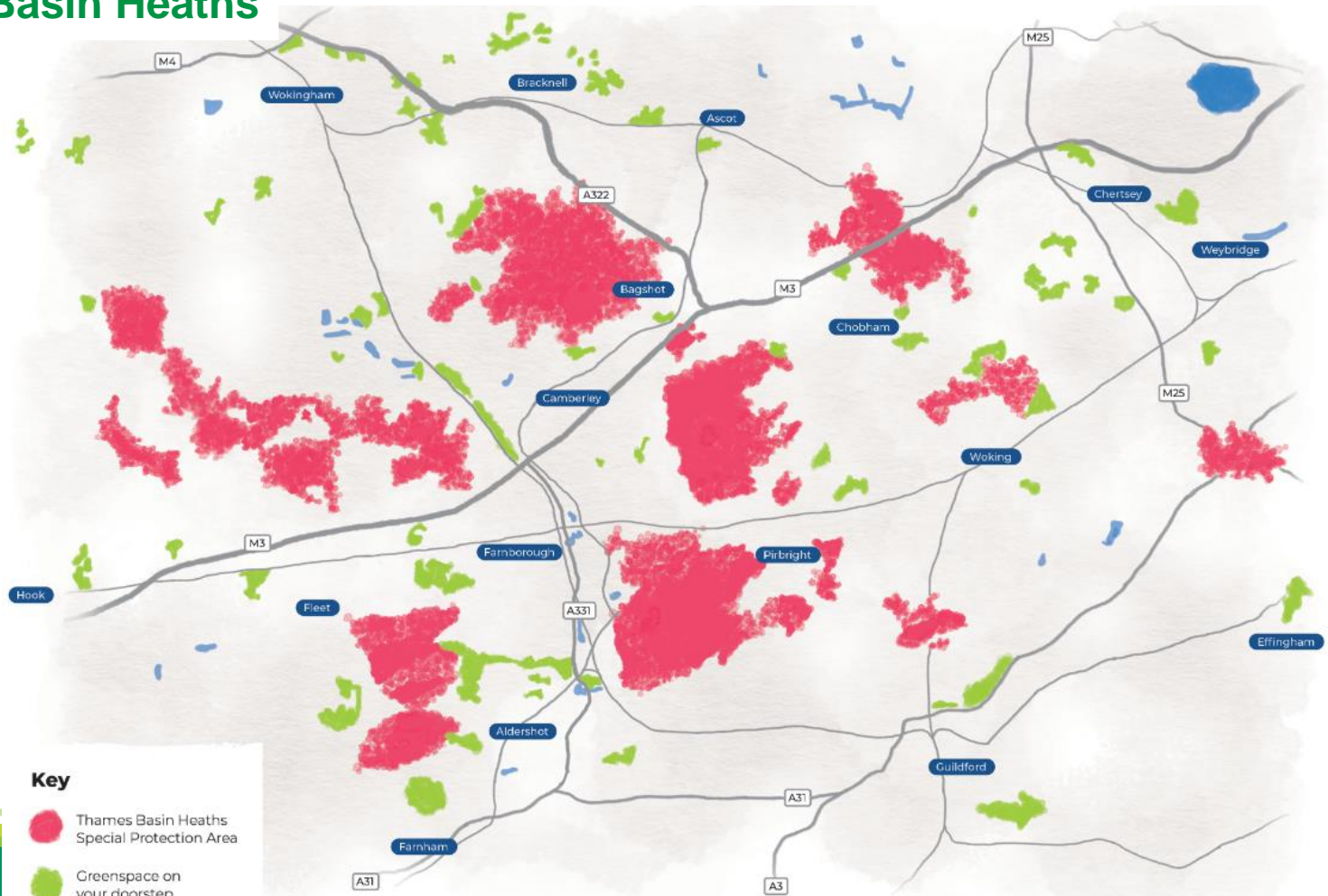
Buckinghamshire

Exploring options

[Development in the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Well-established SANG example

Thames Basin Heaths



Gateways



A gateway site is an innovative and emerging concept with regards to avoidance and mitigation measures at Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI. The purpose of a Gateway is similar to that of SANG, to create an attractive alternative to Ashridge that deflect users away from there, reducing recreational pressures as a result.

A key difference between SANG and a gateway site is that the latter needs to be well related to the existing Ashridge Estate and importantly on land outside of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. A gateway site should provide equivalent attractions and facilities sufficient to draw people away from more sensitive areas within Ashridge Estate that suffer the most from substantial recreational damage.

An example of this would be the honeypot location of Monument Drive which draws the majority of visitors from the surrounding area. If sufficient visitors were drawn to a nearby gateway site, it is likely that substantially less damage would occur.



A gateway site would need to demonstrate with reasonable certainty how visitors would be drawn away from the site, rather than encouraging more visitors through the provision of more facilities and attractions. With this, it is likely that further interventions within the protected parts of Ashridge Estate would likely need to occur in tandem.

Depending on the scale and location of a gateway site, it could serve as an alternative to SANG delivery that could serve one or more of the Councils within the Zone of Influence.

Gateway sites are expected to be a medium-term project, which will be worked upon once SANG and SAMMS are secured. The Councils will continue to work together with the National Trust and Natural England on exploring options for gateway sites alongside the delivery of SAMMS and SANG. Further guidance may be provided on this through a future review of this strategy.



Any Questions?

The bottom of the slide features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy lines in various shades of green, ranging from a light lime green to a dark forest green, creating a sense of movement and depth.



Finding Out More

- **Our Website** - <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/sac>
- **Footprint Report** - https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/dacorum-recreation-evidence-base-200322.pdf?sfvrsn=fbe079e_0
- **Natural England's advice letter** - https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/chilterns-beechwoods-letter-natural-england.pdf?sfvrsn=38e079e_2
- **Detailed FAQs** - https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/hra-detailed-faqs.pdf?sfvrsn=d08e079e_2
- **Interactive Mapping** - <https://dacorumbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=a59b90f9d66f44828d802b867e6c4276>
- **Chilterns Beechwoods SAC Topic Paper** - [Evidence base for the new single local plan \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/chilterns-beechwoods-sac-topic-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=1)



Finding Out More cont.

- **Natural England's SANG Guidance** – originally drafted for Thames Basins Heath but applied to the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC also. Available at:
<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/natural-England-sang-quality-guidance.pdf>.
- The Chilterns Beechwoods **SAC Mitigation Strategy** which also contains a list of criteria for SANGs to meet:
<https://democracy.dacorum.gov.uk/documents/s36836/Appendix%20A%20-%20Draft%20Mitigation%20Strategy%202.pdf>. Please see electronic pages 26 to 34.
- **Management Plans** for Bunkers Park and Chipperfield Common are available at:
[Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\) - Mitigation Strategy \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk)