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Waverley Borough Council

Appropriate Assessment Proforma

Case Officer:

1. Proposed Development Background

1.1 Planning Application Number: **[WA/2020/0558.]**.

Address: [The Old Mission Hall, Hookstole Lane, Farnham].

Description: [Outline Application with all matters reserced for erection of 24 apartments with underground parking following demolition of existing bungalow, the Old Mission Hall (revision of WA/2018/1879)].

1.2 The scheme will deliver [24] net new dwellings.

1.3 The scheme will deliver [...0...] new employment/ industrial space.

1.4 The proposal is located within:

- 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA
- 5km of the Wealden Heaths I SPA

Proforma number	
B1	The scheme is for residential development. [Go to B3]
B2	<i>The scheme is for non-residential development.</i> <i>[Go to TBH2, THFC2, and WH2]</i>
B3	<i>Does the scheme result in a <u>net</u> increase in housing?</i> <i>[Residential includes hotel and visitor accommodation]</i> Yes – [You will need to start at TBH1, THFC1, WH1 and NE 1] <i>No – [You will need to start at TBH2, THFC2, WH2 and NE1]</i> <i>Nb. If the scheme is for mixed development you will need to complete all questions</i>

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2. Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

2.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) consists of a number of fragments of lowland heathland scattered across Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. It is predominantly dry and wet heath but also includes area of deciduous woodland, gorse scrub, acid grassland and mire, as well as associated conifer plantations. Around 75% of the SPA has open public access being either common land or designated as open country under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The SPA consists of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Three of the SSSIs are also designated as part of the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC), though these parts of the SAC lie outside of Waverley Borough.

2.2 Only around 80ha of the SPA lies within Waverley Borough, comprising around 10% of the Bourley and Long Valley SSSI. This SSSI extends into the adjoining local authorities of Hart and Rushmoor.

2.3 The location of the SPA has resulted in the area being subject to high development pressure. Natural England published a Draft Delivery Plan for the SPA in May 2006, partly in response to the European Court of Justice ruling of October 2005. This is updated by the 'Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Delivery Framework' published by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board in January 2009. These documents aim to allow a strategic approach to accommodating development by providing a method through which local authorities can meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 through avoidance and mitigation measures.

2.4 The SPA is designated for its population of breeding:

- Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*;
- Woodlark *Lullula arborea*; and
- Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*.

2.5 Recreational Pressure

2.6 The most detailed consideration of the link between relative recreational pressure on European sites and damage to interest features has been carried out with regard to the SPA.

2.7 After extensive research, Natural England and its partners produced the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework which made recommendations for accommodating development while also protecting the interest features of the European site. This included the recommendation of implementing a series of zones within which varying constraints would be placed upon development. The zones relating to recreational pressure extended to 5km (as this was determined from visitor surveys to be the principal recreational catchment for this European site). At distances from the SPA of 400m-5km the Delivery Framework advises that development projects should be required to contribute toward provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and toward access management to the SPA. Waverley's Thames Basin Heaths SPA Avoidance Strategy (2016) also identified that '*Large-scale residential proposals (more than 50 dwellings) within the 5 km – 7 km zone may also be capable of affecting the SPA and may require an Appropriate Assessment.*'

2.8 The geography of Waverley means that recreational pressure presents a significant potential pathway of impact. Over 6% of the borough is occupied by SPAs designated for their heathland breeding birds. Waverley contains a population of 118,700, with 72% located in four main settlements; Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh. In terms of the major settlements within Waverley, Farnham, Godalming and Haslemere all lie partly within 5km of heathland SPAs.

2.9 Urbanisation

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2.10 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework also made recommendations concerning aspects of urbanisation (particularly predation of the chicks of ground-nesting birds by domestic cats). This impact zone was determined to be 400m from the SPA boundary. The delivery plan concluded that the adverse effects of any development located within 400m of the SPA boundary could not be mitigated in part because this was the range over which cats and people could be expected to roam as a matter of routine and there was no realistic way of restricting their movements, and as such, no new housing should be located within this zone.

2.11 Thames Basin Heaths SPA: Appropriate Assessment: Recreational Pressure/ Urbanisation

Proforma number	Question
TBH1	<p>The proposed residential scheme is to provide a <u>net</u> increase in residential development that is located between:</p> <p><i>[Please select one of the three options below]:</i></p> <p>1. 0 to 400m from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.</p> <hr/> <p>2. 400m to 5km from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.</p> <p>All development that is to provide <u>net</u> new residential development within 5km of the SPA must provide one of the following¹:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The scheme will provide appropriate contributions (in accordance with the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Avoidance Strategy (2016) towards the provision of SANG identified by the Council.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i. Is there sufficient SANG capacity in the correct place available for allocation?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">– There is sufficient capacity at Farnham Park SANG</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Subject to securing the provision of the SAMMs tariff and an appropriate contribution it is concluded that the development will not affect the integrity of the SPA either alone or in combination with other plans and projects in relation to urbanisation and recreational pressure effects.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>[Go to TBH2.]</i></p> <p><i>Nb. All SANG must be provided to standard SANG standards² and must be agreed with Natural England prior to occupation and must be provided in perpetuity.</i></p>

2.12 Thames Basin Heaths SPA: Appropriate Assessment: Additional Impact Pathways

¹ See Local Plan Part 1 Policy NE3: Thames basin Heaths SPA and the Council's Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy for full detail.

- ² A minimum of 8 hectares of SANG land (after discounting to account for current access and capacity) should be provided per 1,000 new occupants.
- Developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should not be required to be within a specified distance of SANG land provided it is ensured that a sufficient quantity of SANG land is in place to cater for the consequent increase in residents prior to occupation of the dwellings.

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If over 400m from the SPA:

Owing to the distance of the development from Thames Basin Heaths SPA, the proposed development will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site due to any other additional impact pathways such as noise, atmospheric pollution or light (separate to urbanisation and recreational pressure).

TBH3	<p>[Please select one of the below]</p> <p>ii. The competent authority is content that the documentation provided by the applicant is sufficient to demonstrate that the proposed development will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site (separate to urbanisation and recreational pressure)</p> <p><i>[It is concluded that the development will not affect the integrity of the European site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects in relation to additional impact pathways (i.e. not including urbanisation and recreational pressure effects)]</i></p>
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3. Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons) Special Protection Area and Ramsar site

- 3.1 Within Waverley Borough the Wealden Heaths Phase I Special Protection Area (SPA) overlap other European and International sites, namely Ramsar (Thursley and Ockley Bogs Ramsar site) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Thursley, Ash, Purbright and Chobham SAC) components, which are entirely contained within the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA. All of the European designated sites within Waverley are underpinned by the Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 3.2 These commons together incorporate a heath and valley mire complex. Thursley Common is a National Nature Reserve managed by Natural England and Frensham and Witley Commons are managed by the National Trust. A large part of the site is owned by the MoD (Hankley Common and Ockley Common), being regularly used for military activities and informal recreation. All components of this SPA lie within Waverley Borough.
- 3.3 This extensive site represents some of the finest remaining heathland on the Lower Greensand in Southern England. The valley mire on Thursley Common is regarded as one of the best in Britain. The site is of national importance for its bird, reptile and invertebrate populations.
- 3.4 Hankley Common has the most extensive tracts of dry heath, but the habitat is also well represented on the other Commons. Peatland is of greatest value on Thursley Common, but on the other commons is less extensive but still important. The site is one of the richest for birds in Southern England. Breeding birds specifically associated with the heathland include woodlark, Dartford warbler, and nightjar.
- 3.5 Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA is designated for its breeding populations of:
- Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*;
 - Woodlark *Lullula arborea*; and
 - Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*.
- 3.6 Thursley and Ockley Bog Ramsar site is designated for:

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- The site supports a community of rare wetland invertebrate species including notable numbers of breeding dragonflies.
- It is one of the few sites in Britain to support all six native reptile species. The site also supports nationally important breeding populations of European *nightjar* *Caprimulgus europaeus* and woodlark *Lullula arborea*.

3.7 Recreational Pressure

- 3.8 Around Thames Basin Heaths SPA the scale of existing residential development within 5km is already high and there are long-standing concerns about the impact of new residential development on the SPA. However, the same pattern of historic development intensity does not apply to the Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons) SPA, which applies a 5km catchment for the purposes of comparison. The number of dwellings within 5km is an order of magnitude smaller around the Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons) SPA. Moreover, the scale of new housing expected within 5km the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA is much smaller than that expected around the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This means that a) the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA is currently under much lower pressure from residential development than the other two SPAs and b) the expected future change in development density is also much lower.

Paragraph 16.28 of the Local Plan Part 1 states: *'In addition, if a housing proposal is capable of affecting the Wealden Heaths Phase I and II SPAs beyond 400 metres from the site, it will be considered on a case-by-case basis as to whether a project-specific Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required (this should be assessed at the HRA Screening Assessment stage). The requirement is likely to vary depending on the size of site, the 'in-combination' effects and its distance from the SPA.'* In these instances Natural England may require consultation.

3.9 Urbanisation

- 3.10 The delivery of large amounts of new development within 400m of a European site designated for nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler could result in adverse effects on the integrity of that site. Around Thames Basin Heaths SPA the scale of existing residential development within 400m is already high; as such, it was considered that a policy specifically prohibiting further net residential development within 400m was required, otherwise historic development patterns indicated that a large amount of further residential development would come forward in that zone, exacerbating the existing situation. However, the same pattern of historic development intensity does not apply to the Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons) SPA. The number of dwellings within 400m is 400-500% smaller around the Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons) SPA, even adjusted for the greater size of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
- 3.11 The Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons) is a smaller SPA than the Thames Basin Heaths, but is also un-fragmented, consisting of four very large blocks of habitat. In general this means that its designated bird populations are much less vulnerable to edge effects than the designated bird populations of the Thames Basin Heaths.
- 3.12 This means that a) the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA is currently under much lower pressure from residential development immediately surrounding the site than the Thames Basin Heaths SPAs and b) there is a much lower likelihood of anything other than small quantities of further residential development coming forward within the 400m zone, thus rendering a policy completely prohibiting net residential development within that zone unnecessary; rather, the likely scale is such that impacts can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as applications come forward.
- 3.13 Natural England request that the number of new dwellings being granted permission within 5km of the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA is monitored. This is also reflected in Local Plan Part 1 paragraph 16.28.

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3.14 Wealden Heaths Phase I (Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons) SPA and Ramsar site: Recreational Pressure/Urbanisation

Proforma number	Question
THFC1	<p>The proposed residential scheme is to provide a <u>net</u> increase in residential development that is located between:</p> <p><i>[Please select one of the three options below]:</i></p>
	<p>Between 400m and 5km from Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA and Ramsar site</p> <p>The Local Plan does not outline a quantum of net new dwellings within this distance from Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA and Ramsar site.</p> <p><i>[Move to THFC2]</i></p>
	<p>The proposal would not result in any increase in residential dwellings and as such, would not result in increased recreational pressure or urbanisation.</p>

3.15 Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA and Ramsar site: Appropriate Assessment: Additional Impact Pathways

Owing to the distance of the development from Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA and Ramsar site, the proposed development will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site due to any other additional impact pathways such as noise, atmospheric pollution or light (separate to urbanisation and recreational pressure).

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4. Natural England Consultation

- 4.1 In accordance with Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Natural England must be consulted upon this HRA before the application can be consented.

Proforma number	Delete the following as appropriate:
NE1	1. Natural England has concurred with the conclusions of this HRA; 2.
NE2	If Natural England has not concurred with the conclusions of this HRA further discussion with Natural England, further assessment or further detail may be required before the application can be consented. This is a decision to be made by Waverley Borough Council as competent authority.