

Report subject	<b>Development of the Throop Nature Park (Hicks SANG)</b>
Meeting date	9 March 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The Big Plan of BCP Council includes developing 15,000 new homes within our city region which is adjacent to sensitive and vulnerable habitats, including the Dorset Heathlands which are designated areas for special protection. Any increase in footfall in those sensitive heathland areas threatens their fragile ecosystem. This is why, in order to protect those habitats, Natural England stipulates the development of SANGs whenever additional housing is being proposed which could result in more people visiting the heathlands. This is a heathland mitigation measure. A SANG is a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). It is a space provided for leisure to attract people away from the sensitive heathland.</p> <p>The purpose of this SANG is to serve as heathland mitigation to enable the commencement and occupation of large scale residential schemes of 50 units and over in Bournemouth, including the Winter Gardens site as well as others.</p> <p>This development at Throop will follow the Natural England guidelines for SANGs, providing attractive areas for walking, linking to the cycle network, and including the provision of a small car park which will be screened by vegetation from Throop Village. Additional planting will add interest and support an increase in biodiversity.</p> <p>These plans are consistent with the longer term plans for Hicks Farm and the Stour Valley Park.</p> <p>We will work constructively with the Throop and Holdenhurst parish Council to deliver the SANG.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>(a) The Cabinet approve the utilisation of</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i. £518,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) heathland mitigation resources for the implementation of the project, and</b></li> <li><b>ii. An additional £100,000 of CIL resources for those elements of the implementation which can't be</b></li> </ul>

	<p><b>funded using heathland mitigation funds;</b></p> <p><b>iii. Circa £100K of CIL resources per year (rising with inflation) for 80 years.</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	This development will reduce the environmental impact of leisure on internationally sensitive heathland ecosystems; provide additional attractive leisure space for BCP residents and visitors; increase biodiversity and bio-resilience in the Throop area; and enable the commencement and occupation of large scale residential schemes of 50 units and over in Bournemouth, as part of the Big Plan.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mark Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place
Corporate Director	Kate Langdown, Director of Environment Services
Report Authors	Martin Whitchurch, Theresa McManus
Wards	Muscliff & Strouden Park;
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. This area has been selected as being suitable for development as a SANG in order for large scale residential schemes of 50 units and over to take place within the conurbation without adversely affecting the Dorset heathlands, which are European and internationally protected sites.

## Options Appraisal

2. This parcel of 12 hectares of land is the first phase of reaching a strategic provision of 30 hectares of SANG. Options have been identified for other sites to be brought forward as SANGs and a Strategic SANG Delivery Strategy document is in production to support planning development needs, but at this time this is the only viable new SANG to serve Bournemouth.

## Summary of financial implications

3. This project has two phases : implementation and ongoing maintenance. Natural England have approved the use of £518,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) heathland mitigation resources for the implementation of the project. An additional £100,000 of CIL funding will also be required for items outside of the heathland mitigation remit.

The maintenance of the site will require an additional c. £100,000 of CIL/heathland mitigation resources annually (rising with inflation) for 80 years, including electric vehicle charging and baseline ecology surveys. The maintenance and operation budget is still to be signed off by Natural England and discussions are ongoing on this.

Budget Item	Source	2022 – 2023	2023 - 2024	Pa/ 2024 onwards
Implementation	CIL (Heathland Mitigation)	£259,000	£259,000	
Implementation	CIL	£80,000	£20,000	
Maintenance	CIL (Heathland Mitigation)			£100,000

### Summary of legal implications

- Discussions were undertaken with the legal team in early 2021 prior to the submission of the revised planning application in February 2021. The land at Throop Nature Park is owned and managed by BCP, and is available for construction works to start with no legal implications. Heathland Mitigation funds are available to allocate to the project, in line with the Heathland Mitigation SPD. No other legal implications were identified.

### Summary of human resources implications

- A new ranger will be required to manage this site. Funding for this is included in the heathland mitigation maintenance funding element.

### Summary of sustainability impact

- The sustainability of this project has been assessed using the Decision Impact Assessment tool, which resulted in an amber rating. While there is a net benefit, there are some negative sustainability impacts. These are: a potential increase in emissions with an increase in traffic; potential issues around the sustainability of the construction, and the fact that it enables further residential development in BCP.

### Summary of public health implications

- The project will provide health and wellbeing benefits for residents and visitors alike. It offers opportunities for healthy outdoor exercise and to connect with nature, both excellent for physical and mental wellbeing. However, it is unlikely to reduce health inequalities locally.

### Summary of equality implications

- A full EIA document has been completed and will be reviewed by the EIA panel on 27/01/2022.

On balance this proposal presents benefits for the vast majority of people, through increasing access to nature and providing additional opportunities for active leisure in a natural environment.

Adaptations have been incorporated into the design for those with physical disabilities as far as reasonably possible in this location and those of different ages with regard to the car parking, path widths and surfaces, and availability of benches.

Accessibility requirements will be taken into consideration as the detailed design develops including for things such as signage.

It is worthwhile noting that there may well be a small increase in local traffic arising from the park which could adversely affect local residents. However, the park also includes connectivity to the local extended cycle network which provides the opportunity for more park visitors to arrive without their cars.

### Summary of risk assessment

9. A modest number of risks have been identified, and mitigating actions which have been, are or will be taken, reduce this risk level to a manageable level, as shown below.

	Risk	Score	Summary of mitigating actions	Score
1	The Heathland Mitigation benefits are not achieved where local residents and visitors don't use the nature park.	6	Promote the site and monitor visitor's knowledge of accessibility and alternative opportunities	2
2	The project costs overrun due to unforeseen problems	4	Monitor the project against plan and manage the project risks.	1
3	Local stakeholders/residents may view the project negatively	8	Ensure local stakeholders/residents are kept regularly informed/updated particularly when works start on site. Keep the project board, local councillors and the portfolio holder updated.	4
4	Construction work has a negative impact on habitats, species or biodiversity	4	Baseline surveys carried out and ongoing monitoring as part of project. Works to involve BCP conservation team/staff at all stages.	1
5	Lack of support staff availability	4	A ranger to be appointed to manage the nature park.	1
6	Contractor costs/timescales/quality not to required standard	4	BCP staff to oversee processes and activity.	2
7	Additional visitors increase ongoing maintenance	4	Working closely with BCP operations team, review maintenance costs.	2
8	Additional visitors impact village or conservation area	6	Deploy appropriate signage and involve the ranger. Keep the BCP project board updated throughout process. Monitor visitor activity.	2

9	Heathland Mitigation funding planned to be used to support ongoing maintenance for 80 years, may be withdrawn as a result of national policy changes	6	Monitor any proposed national policy changes.	6
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### **Background papers**

Decision Impact Assessment

Equalities Impact Assessment

7-2021-7824-C – published works - available to view on the BCP Council planning application website

### **Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.