

Technical Note

Project:	Berewood: Phase 8	Date:	9th July 2025
Subject:	On-site green space provision	Author:	Jeff Picksley MCIEEM

1.0 Background

- 1.1. Bloor Homes have submitted a reserved matters application (RMA) for 185 residential units with associated infrastructure and landscaping which has a resolution to grant subject to the completion of an updated Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) by the Development Manager.
- 1.2. Natural England commented on the reserved matters application on 20th June 2025 seeking confirmation that the RMA complies with the Bird Aware Solent Revised Strategy. The shadow Habitat Regulation Assessment¹ that supported the RMA noted the extensive provision of open space (over 100ha) that is being delivered as part of the wider outline permission and concluded this is sufficient to ensure no significant effects on Portsmouth Harbour Special Protection Areas (SPA)/Ramsar and Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA/Ramsar.
- 1.3. The approach adopted for Phase 8 is consistent with all previous RMA's for housing submitted under the outline planning permission. Although the outline planning permission pre-dates the Bird Aware Solent Strategy the original outline application considered the potential for off-site impacts on Portsmouth Harbour SPA/Ramsar and Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA/Ramsar arising from recreational activity. The green space provided through the outline application was recognised as reducing recreational pressures on these sites sufficient to satisfy the tests of the Habitats Regulations.
- 1.4. Nonetheless, this note has been prepared on behalf of Bloor Homes to explain the provision of green space at Berewood and how this has been brought forward to mitigate the impact of increased recreational pressures on the Portsmouth Harbour and Chichester Harbour Habitats Sites. It provides the

¹ Aspect Ecology, 2024. Berewood, Phase 8, Havant.Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment (including an Appropriate Assessment).

information sought by Natural England and demonstrates compliance with Bird Aware.

2.0 Habitat Regulations Assessment of the outline application

- 2.1. In March 2011 UE Associates undertook a Habitat Regulations Assessment² of the outline application to assist Winchester City Council (WCC) and Havant Borough Council (HBC) to test whether Berewood would have on likely significant effect on protected sites. This assessment was undertaken in accordance with legislative requirements relevant at that time.
- 2.2. The assessment included consideration of the potential for the 2550 residential units to generate additional visits to the protected sites along the Solent (Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA/Ramsar and Portsmouth Harbour SPA/Ramsar). Information submitted by the applicant identified that the proposal would result in a small increase in the number of visitors to both these sites.
- 2.3. The HRA evaluated the proposed mitigation embedded in the outline application which included: the creation of 2 new community nature reserves, the retention and enhancements of 5 SINCs, provision of formal parks and connecting green corridors and provision of three circular dog walks within over 100ha of green infrastructure.
- 2.4. Both Councils accepted that impacts linked to additional visits to the protected sites were likely to be 'de minimis' in the absence of the proposed mitigation. The provision of green infrastructure embedded in the scheme would further reduce this risk.

3.0 Habitat Regulations Assessment for RMAs

- 3.1. SPAs and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) receive statutory protection under the Habitats Regulations. The most recent amendments to this legislation reflect the changes set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. The 2019 regulations detail the amendments required to the 2017 regulations following the end of the transition period in December 2020.
- 3.2. Together, SACs and SPAs comprise the National Site Network (NSN) and are protected through the planning process. Under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations, the competent authority (in this case Havant Borough Council) is

² UE Associates, 2011. Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment for the Proposed Newlands Development, West of Waterlooville. For Winchester City Council and Havant Borough Council.

responsible for assessing whether land use plans or proposed developments could adversely affect a site forming part of the NSN. This requires a process known as a HRA and extends to include RMAs where there is a material change in relevant circumstance and/or they generate additional considerations to those within the HRA undertaken to determine the original outline application.

- 3.3. Government has issued policy statements relating to the special status of Ramsar sites. This extends the same protection to Ramsar sites as that afforded to SPAs and SACs through the Habitat Regulations.
- 3.4. The development of Solent Bird Aware and its adoption by local authorities represents an additional consideration for the Council to consider when undertaking an HRA of the RMA submitted for Phase 8.
- 3.5. The HRA requires two tests under Regulation 63(1) of the Habitats Regulations.

- **Test 1:** having ascertained that the plan or project (or RMA) is not directly connected to, or necessary for site management for nature conservation, the first test of the HRA, commonly referred to as a screening test, considers whether or not the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

A significant effect is any effect that would undermine the conservation objectives for the respective European site and may include physical loss and/or damage of a habitat, disturbance effects, changes to water availability, deposition of contaminants through changes in air quality etc.

Following the European Court Judgement (ECJ) *People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)*, *'measures intended to avoid or reduce impacts on a European site cannot at the same time be regarded as part of the "project"'*³ and must be excluded from assessing whether a project is likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

- **Test 2:** the second test of the HRA is relevant to those that are screened as likely to have a significant effect alone or in combination with other plans or projects and requires an appropriate assessment. The role of the appropriate assessment is to consider the implications of the plan or project for the conservation objectives of the European sites in question and determine whether they will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the site. In carrying out an appropriate assessment, a local authority must have regard to the manner in which the project (or RMA) is proposed to be

³ <https://insideecology.com/2018/05/01/habitat-regulations-assessments-no-more-screening-out-with-mitigation-measures/>

carried out, or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposes that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

- 3.6. The potential for likely significant effects arising from increased recreational pressure on the protected Solent sites was assessed when HBC determined the original outline planning application. However, since then, Bird Aware Solent and the associated Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (SRMS) has generated a material change in relevant circumstance such that HBC is now required to undertake a new HRA to ensure that determination of the RMA is up to date and based on all relevant information.
- 3.7. HBC, as competent authority, is therefore required to review the conclusions of the original HRA and determine if the conclusions still stand. The review must have regard to the requirement for financial contribution set out in Bird Aware Solent and must be reported in an updated HRA.

4.0 Provision of Green Infrastructure at Berewood

- 4.1. Town Park is located immediately adjacent to Phase 8 and residents will benefit from direct access by foot. Completed elements of Town Park Phase A include the skate park and multi-use games area and a series of surfaced and mown paths. A cricket pitch has also been installed within Town Park Phase B. The final landscape planting for Town Park Phase B is approved and will be implemented over the winter 2025/26.
- 4.2. A public right of way on the northern boundary of Phase 8 links into a new bridleway that heads north through Town Park and permissive routes heading south and west across Town Park. Residents heading west across the Berewood site can access Newlands Meadow (an area of semi-improved grassland) and Newlands Row and Barnfield/Plant Row (areas of semi-natural woodland) on foot from Phase 8.
- 4.3. North of Phase 8 the River Wallington Community Nature Reserve (CNR) provides a linear route of approximately 1.2km running east-west across the Berewood development. The development of the River Wallington CNR involved the naturalisation of c0.9km of river channel that previously ran through a concrete channel. Along the banks of the River Wallington SUDS and semi-natural habitats have been created.
- 4.4. The River Wallington CNR links into the multi-use greenway, a surfaced route that runs north and south through the entire outline planning application area. The multi-use greenway is approximately 2.6km and links to further semi-natural green space provided to the north in the Taylor Wimpey Development and public rights of way and informal routes within the application area.

- 4.5. Extensive areas of green infrastructure have already been delivered at Berewood as part of the outline application. The landscaping of the remaining area of Town Park Phase B and the majority of Newlands CNR will be undertaken during the winter of 2025/26. The existing green space provision allows pedestrian access to a networks of footpaths that both lie within, and link to, green space for new residents of Phase 8. The network is a significant opportunity and allows for day-to-day recreational needs to be met. Longer walks and cycling options are also available with further green space being delivered whilst Phase 8 is under construction.
- 4.6. The role of alternative green space as mitigation to recreational impacts on the Harbours is recognised in the 2017 version of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (SMRS), which notes that some coastal visitors are prepared to visit alternative greenspace for some recreational trips and that this will help moderate the predicted increase in visitors to the coast and the potential for bird disturbance arising from new residential development. The SRMS has delivered two completely new strategic greenspaces and enhancements to other existing greenspaces as part the overall mitigation package.
- 4.7. The updated Bird Aware Solent Revised Strategy (September 2024) does not include a set of SANG criteria. However it does recognise the role of SANG in mitigating recreational impacts on the Harbours.
- 4.8. Although the open space of Berewood was designed and consented before the role of SANG in mitigating recreational impacts was recognised, it is useful to analyse against the SANG criteria set out in the 2017 SMRS (see Table 1 below) to understand the facility that it offers.

Table 1: Assessment of Berewood GI against SANG criteria

Locational Criteria	GI at Berewood
Essential	
A wholly new site or an enhancement of existing public open space if the site is currently underused and has substantial capacity to accommodate additional recreational activity	The Berewood OPA delivers over 100 ha of accessible green space in an area that was former farmland accessible only via a limited number of public rights of way. The greenspace is accessible to new residents of Berewood as well as existing residents of Waterlooville.
Be in a location where it will divert visitors especially dog walkers away from sections of SPA coast which are sensitive to additional	The greenspace at Berewood is accessible on foot for residents. It allows for quick and easy access to green space to cater for daily recreational needs, thereby reducing pressure to seek alternative off-site locations including those within the SPA.

human disturbance and where a significant increase in visitors is predicted	The greenspace at Berewood also provides a significant area of new open space that can be used by existing residents of Waterloo and the surrounding area. It offers an immediate and convenient opportunity for informal recreation and is easier to access than the coast & Harbours. The closest locations for accessing the SPA at Farlington Marshes off the A27 and South Moors through Harts Farm Way.
Be large enough to include a variety of paths which enable at least one circular walk of at least 5 km (approx. a 60 min walk)	The green space at Berewood includes a wide range of walks and it is possible to undertake a variety of 5km circular walks within the site using a range of paths.
Be in a location where a SANG would be acceptable in terms of planning policy and traffic generation, and would not have an unacceptable impact on biodiversity e.g. a nature conservation site protected under a local or national designation	The green space at Berewood is largely derived from farmland. The delivery of the GI at Berewood is approved under the outline planning application.
Be sufficiently large to be perceived as a cohesive semi-natural space, offering tranquility, with little intrusion of artificial structures (except in the immediate vicinity of car parks)	The green infrastructure at Berewood is embedded within the development and connected via walking routes. It is of substantial extent, coherent and semi-natural in character. Where green space borders development it is largely residential development except for parts of the River Wallington CNR which border a business park. For the large part however, it offers users opportunity to move away from the built environment, with no intrusive features as part.
No unpleasant intrusions of other kinds e.g. wastewater treatment odours;	There are no waste water treatment works or similar facilities within the green infrastructure.
Desirable locational criteria	
Has views of the sea which are not too distant or includes a sizeable water feature;	The River Wallington CNR provides a 1.2km linear walk alongside the River Wallington. This walk runs along a naturalised river channel with a network of SUDS features.
Has a varied topography with some gentle slopes, a mix of open and wooded areas, and a focal point such as a viewpoint, monument etc.	The green infrastructure at Berewood includes semi-natural grassland, semi-natural woodland, ponds, more formal parkland, riverside walks and play areas. It offers a diversity of features that lend themselves to quiet enjoyment as well as family opportunities where children can play. The community nature reserves offer a destination and serve as a dual focus for visitors.
Criteria for design and facilities	
Essential	GI at Berewood
Includes a variety of paths which enable at least one	The green space at Berewood includes a wide range of walks and it is possible to undertake a variety of 5km circular walks within the site using a range of paths.

circular walk of at least 5km (approx. a 60 min walk)	
Generally, proposals will be within the Partnership area but sites located just outside might be considered.	Berewood sits with the Partnership for South Hampshire Area.
Includes adequate car parking for visitors with that car parking being well located in relation to the road network	There are no car parks provided as part of the Berewood development for visitors. However road side parking is available which allows visitors to access green space within the development. Visitors living within Berewood can access all areas by foot and have no need for a carpark.
Be clearly signed at access points and at key junctions on the surrounding road network, with an information panel at each access point which explains the layout of the SANG and the routes available to visitors.	The primary function of Berewood GI is for residents so there is no signage on roads. Interpretation boards have been provided in the River Wallington CNR and similar boards will be provided in Newlands CNR in due course.
Access points for visitors arriving on foot must be well located in relation to nearby residential areas	All areas of the green space are accessible on foot by residents. Town Park and both Community Nature Reserves are accessible on foot from surrounding residential development.
Designed so that the SANG is perceived by users as a cohesive semi-natural space which is safe and easily navigable	The green space at Berewood is integrated into the wider development and managed through an on-site contractor. With the exception of walks in the woodland areas, routes are mainly through open grassland with little scrub vegetation close to pathways. They are maintained as safe and accessible.
Paths must be clearly discernible, well signposted/waymarked, and have firm, level, well drained surfaces (albeit unsealed to avoid any 'urban feel') in order to be useable throughout the winter	A substantial number of footpaths within the development are surfaced. A second tier of paths are also present throughout the greenspace which are unsurfaced (to maintain a rural feel) but are maintained by seasonal mowing.
Movement within the SANG must be largely unrestricted, with plenty of space away from road traffic	Movement within the SANG is unrestricted. Road traffic in the vicinity of the SANGS is largely linked to the residential properties and directed away from the greenspace.
Dogs are welcome and the majority of the sites is suitable for safe off-lead dog exercise.	Dogs are permitted off leads in Town Park, along the southern bank of the River Wallington CNR and within the Newlands CNR.
Dog swimming area.	No specific dog swimming areas are provided but the River Wallington is accessible for dogs and some of the ponds within the green space are used by dogs for swimming and splashing.
Dog waste bins	Dog waste bins are provided throughout the green space
Desirable design and facilities criteria	

Car parking would be free of charge in the winter and preferably all year round	There are no specific SANG car parks but free on-road parking is available throughout the year.
Has multiple access points and with car parking at each rather than in a single location	There are numerous access points to the GI within Berewood with an option for on-road parking close to Town Park, Newlands CNR and the River Wallington CNR.
Incorporates innovative and attractive dog walking facilities such as dog activity trails, agility courses, enclosed off-lead training/exercise areas, dog washing facilities.	Newlands CNR includes 2 dog agility areas

- 4.9. This analysis demonstrates that the open space provision at Berewood meets the criteria of the strategic SANG. It therefore caters not only for the needs of residents associated with Berewood but also for existing residents of surrounding areas, reducing the number of visits to areas of the coast within the protected sites.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. The outline planning application for Berewood include a bespoke GI package that was designed, in part, to mitigate the recreational impacts of the new residents on the protected sites along the Solent Coast through the provision of over 100ha of accessible GI for new residents.
- 5.2. Delivery of the GI associated with the outline planning application has created new recreational opportunities for residents of Waterlooville which play a role in reducing recreational pressure on the protected Solent sites. As the analysis contained in this note shows, the GI provision at Berewood satisfies the essential requirements for a strategic SANG as set out the 2017 SRMS and is effective in attracting users from the local areas who may otherwise have visited the coast.
- 5.3. New residents of the Phase 8 development will be able to access areas of established GI from the day of occupation and additional areas of green space will be completed over the winter of 2025/26. There is sufficient GI provision available for daily recreational need linked to the 185 units.
- 5.4. Rather than necessarily pay a financial contribution, Bird Aware Solent retains an option for developers to provide their own mitigation. The open space created at Berewood provides accessible natural areas for new and existing residents of Waterlooville. It sits in the context of an area that has limited access to extensive

areas of semi-natural greenspace and is a real and meaningful recreational opportunity for the local community. It is effective in mitigating recreational pressures from the new residential developments as well as reducing existing recreational pressures through drawing in local residents from outside of the Berewood development. From this it follows that additional payments to Bird Aware are not required, in line with the approach of all RMA's submitted up to this point.

JP090725