

CANNOCK CHASE SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)

GUIDANCE TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Background

- 1.1 Stafford Borough Council has a duty as a Competent Authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Habitat Regs.) to ensure that planning application decisions comply with the Habitat Regulations and do not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which has internationally protected status under the Regulations for its unique heathland habitat.
- 1.2 The Council commissioned evidence, together with partner Local Planning Authorities in the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership (South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, Lichfield, East Staffordshire, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils), to look at the collective impact of future growth on the SAC.
- 1.3 The Evidence, produced by consultants Footprint Ecology, shows that the “in combination” impact of proposals involving a net increase of one or more dwellings within a 15 kilometre radius of the SAC would have an adverse effect on its integrity unless avoidance and mitigation measures are in place. The effects on the SAC comprise additional damage from visitor use and vehicle emissions. The SAC Partners have agreed to formally support the Footprint Ecology evidence base reports and acknowledge a 15km Zone of Influence.
- 1.4 Following the production of the Footprint Ecology evidence base, additional advice has been received from Natural England. This has directed the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership authorities to consider mitigating any likely significant effects through the provision of on-site mitigation measures, such as those set out in Section 3 of this guidance note. The use of measures seeking to avoid significant effects, such as off-site Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), is not being pursued at this time. This is primarily due to uncertainties regarding their effectiveness and their relatively high cost when compared to on-site mitigation measures.
- 1.5 Policy N6 of the Plan for Stafford Borough states:

Policy N6 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Development will not be permitted where it would lead directly or indirectly to an adverse impact on the Cannock Chase SAC and the effects cannot be mitigated.

To ensure the Cannock Chase SAC is not harmed, all development that leads to a net increase in dwellings within 15km of the site, as shown on the Policies Map, must take all necessary steps to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects upon the SAC's integrity. This may include contributions to habitat management; access management and visitor infrastructure; publicity, education and awareness raising; provision of additional recreation space within development sites where they can be accommodated and, where they cannot, by contributions to offsite alternative recreation space; and measures to encourage sustainable travel.

The effective avoidance and / or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated to the Council as the Competent Authority, and secured by means of a suitable mechanism (e.g. Legal agreement) prior to approval of the development.

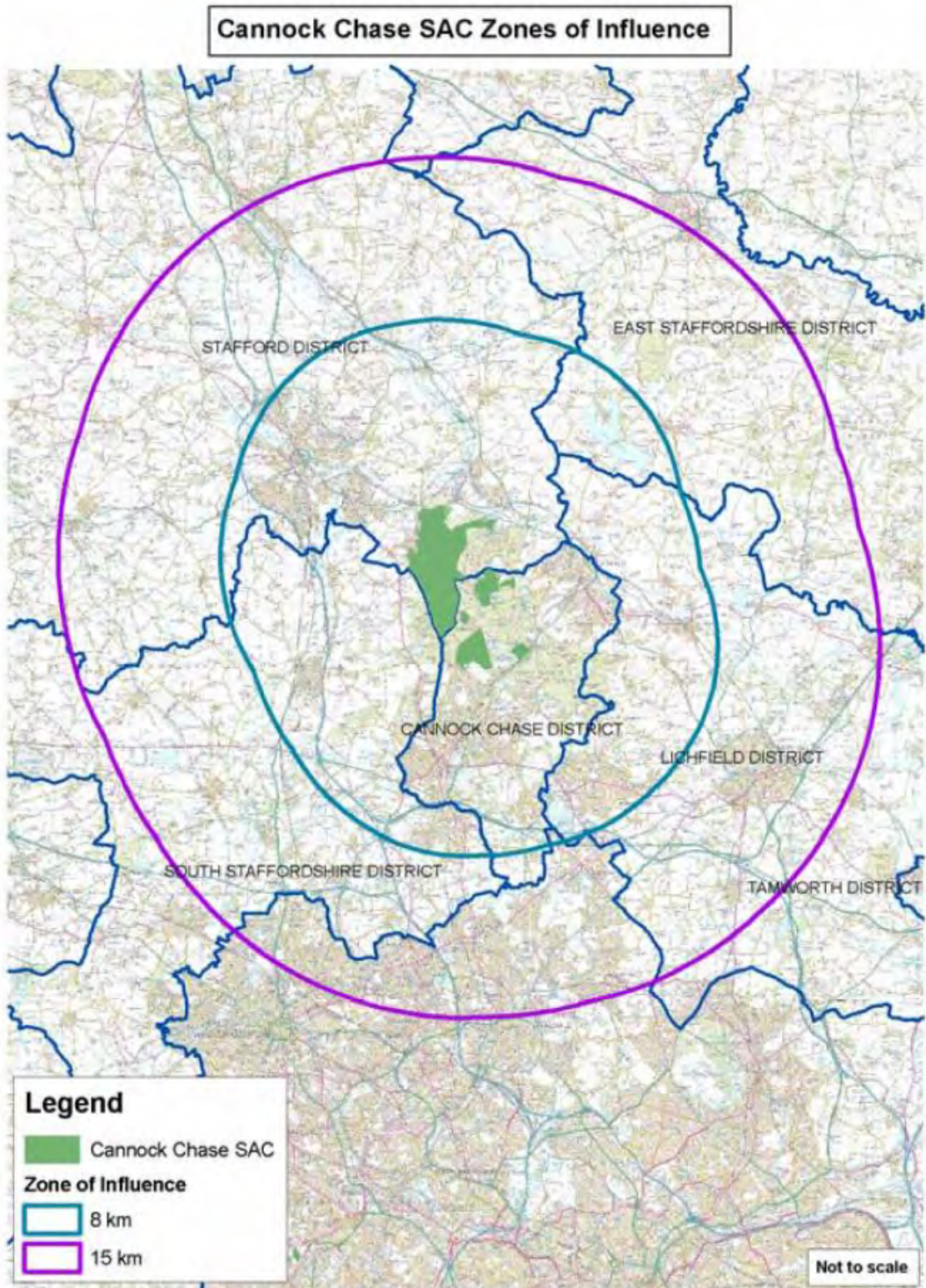
- 1.6 The Council must ensure that decisions made on planning applications will not have a negative impact on Cannock Chase SAC, in line with Policy N6. If there are any likely significant effects, the Council is either unable to grant planning permission due to the restrictions of the Habitat Regulations, or it must ensure there are appropriate mitigation measures in place.
- 1.7 To ensure there is no harm to the SAC arising from new residential development, the SAC Partnership have agreed a suite of measures with Natural England that if implemented should allow the planned development within 15km of the SAC to proceed without harm to the SAC.
- 1.8 However, a significantly higher proportion of visitors come from within a 0-8km radius. Therefore the suggested projects will be funded through financial contributions made by developments in the 0-8km Zone only.
- 1.9 This approach is being taken forward by all the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership authorities with housing still to be delivered within 0-8km of the SAC. Natural England supports the use of financial contributions to mitigate the impact of new residential development.
- 1.10 There is also a range of existing SAC and visitor management expenditure outside of that detailed in this guidance note, much of which seeks to manage the impacts of existing visitor pressures on the SAC. This primarily arises from Staffordshire County Council in its role as site owner and manager, and includes the following measures¹:
- Country Park Infrastructure and Visitor Management and Maintenance (£290,000 per year)
 - SAC Habitat Management (£206,400 per year)
 - Volunteer Input to Infrastructure and Habitat Management (25,000 hours per year, equivalent to £268,000 per year)
 - Other measures within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan and Visitor Management Strategy
- 1.11 The mitigation measures included in section 3 of this guidance note are directly targeted at mitigating impacts arising from new planning permissions and local plan policies, where these increase the number of residents within the Zone of Influence. Put simply, they take account of new development (such as those set out above) and then consider what additional measures may be required as new development comes forward within the Zone of Influence.

2. Affected types of Development

- 2.1 Having determined in the evidence and the adopted Local Plan policy that a net increase of one or more dwellings will have an adverse impact on the integrity of Cannock Chase SAC, the same principle applies to the exercise of “Permitted Development” rights to create additional dwellings. Therefore, financial contributions will also be required from such development. Please contact the Council for further information.
- 2.2 Other types of residential development for those receiving supportive living, such as extra care schemes and specialist housing could also result in increased pressure on Cannock Chase SAC. The Council will assess each of these applications to establish the likely impact of the scheme on the SAC. The Council may accept variations on the financial contribution based on evidence that the pressure each application will exert on the SAC is less than standard because of the type of residential development proposed. Please contact the Council for further information.

¹ Approximate figures, provided October 2016

Map 1 Zones around Cannock Chase SAC
8km and 15km are the Partnership agreed zones



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3. Analysis of SAC Mitigation Costs

3.1 The following table of mitigation measures and estimated costings has been prepared by Natural England in collaboration with the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership. It comprises a range of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Measures (SAMMM) relating to Cannock Chase SAC which are deemed necessary to protect its integrity.

SAMMM Measure	Cost £K	Duration	Explanatory comments
Project initiation: business plan; agreement of partner responsibilities (Memorandum); recruitment of project staff.	50	Year 0	A simple assumption that there is a cost in employing the Lichfield DC project team for project initiation.
Staff: one full-time project manager and one full-time visitor engagement officer	1400	Years 1 to 10	Project manager £40k salary plus overheads = £80K. Engagement officer salary £30K, plus overheads = £60K. Costs dependent on managing body. These staff set up and manage all consultancy and other contracts, and undertake all engagement work above
Engagement of three of four key sectors: walkers and dog walkers; cyclists; horse riders. Development of volunteering and education programmes. Promotional and interpretation material	30	Years 1 to 10	Cost here only includes the promotional and interpretation material, which would consist largely of web-based material. The other cost of sector engagement is staff time and is adequately built into the figures below
Strategies: an overarching strategy for visitors and nested strategies for car parking, track and footpath management and each visitor sector, plus a monitoring strategy	135	Years 2 and 3	Consultancy costs. Overarching strategy including monitoring £50K, car parking £40K, each of three visitor sectors £15K.
Physical management: improvement of paths and tracks; implementation of parking plan ² ; way marking and on-site interpretation panels	255	Years 1 to 15	Contract costs. Paths and tracks: quoted cost £10 per m; 1km a year for 10 years; followed by 100m a year for 5 years. Assume implementation of a parking plan will be cost neutral (funded by car park charges) for car park closures. Allow approx. £100k for car park construction or modification (see Appendix 1). Panels and way marking £50K.
Monitoring	100	Years 4 to 15	Consultancy costs. Two repeats of the aerial survey of paths and tracks, £10K each to include ground truthing and targeted biological monitoring as necessary. Two visitor surveys 40K each.
SAMMM Total	1970	Years 1-15	

² See Appendix 1

Calculating the rates of developer contributions in the 0-8km ZOI

Local Authority in 0-8km ZOI of Cannock Chase SAC	Remaining housing numbers in 0-8km ZOI	Percentage (%) of total housing delivery	Proportion of SAMMM cost requirement per authority (over housing related plan period)	Monies already collected or committed	Monies left to collect for SAMMM delivery
South Staffordshire Council	150	1.8	£34,785	£0	£34,785
Cannock Chase District Council	1700	20.0	£394,232	£20,000	£374,232
Lichfield District Council	1715	20.2	£397,710	£96,500	£301,210
Stafford Borough Council	4900	57.7	£1,136,315	£414,550	£721,765
East Staffordshire Borough Council	30	0.4	£6,957	£0	£6,957
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	0	0.0	£0	£0	£0
TOTAL	8495				
SAMM cost	1970000				

- 3.2 The table above identifies the planning housing growth within the 0-8 km Zone of Influence (ZOI) around the Cannock Chase SAC within the current development plans of the local authorities in the 0-8 km Zone during the 0-15 year period. Please note that should the estimated costings in the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Measures (SAMMM) plan above be refined through revised evidence or the monitoring and review process, the rates may have to be recalculated as part of ongoing review. Other types of development and windfall housing sites not included in the above table have the potential to impact on the SAC, and these will continue to need to be assessed and mitigated for on an individual basis through discussions with Natural England and / or the Local Authority.
- 3.3 It is at the discretion of each authority within the 0-8km ZOI how to deliver their individual total mitigation monies required to the SAC Partnership. For example, an authority may choose to only implement the charge on sites over a certain size or allocated sites. Provided that the individual authorities deliver the cost per authority to the SAC, it is their discretion how to implement charging and therefore approaches within each authority may differ.

4. Cannock Chase SAC Mitigation Payments in Stafford Borough

- 4.1 Stafford Borough Council is responsible for just under 58% of the entire project cost. This makes assembly of funds from Stafford Borough centrally important to delivery of the SAMMM project. The Council intends to build in a 5% contingency allowance over the minimum SAMMM costs to ensure that the minimum funds needed to mitigate development are collected.
- 4.2 The total cost of the SAMMM project is £1,970,000. Stafford Borough is liable for £1,136,315 of this. 5% of Stafford's apportionment is £56,815.

Remaining housing numbers in 0-8km ZOI	Percentage (%) of total housing delivery	Proportion of SAMM cost requirement (including 5% contingency)	Monies already collected or committed	Monies left to collect for SAMM delivery
4900	57.7	1,136,315 + 56,815 1,193,130	414,550	1,193,130 - 414,550 778,580

- 4.3 Stafford Borough Council has already collected and committed a proportion of the mitigation money required as shown in the table above. This has been collected by means of Section 106 from developments of 10 or more units. The Council intends to continue this approach and a charge of **£159** per house (778,580 / 4900) will be applied to applications for more than 10 units (in the 0-8km zone). The purpose of this will be to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to give the Council the legal authority to grant planning permission under the Habitat Regulations. For prior approval permissions a Unilateral Agreement is included in Appendix 1 for use, however parties should take their own independent legal advice in entering into such an agreement.

Appendix 1 - Additional Notes to the SAMMM

Car parking plan – Cost neutrality agreed with respect to de-commissioning car parks. Forestry Commission (FC) estimates £300/parking space for a new car park of 100 spaces with short access track (not including admin/planning costs) i.e. £30k per new 100 space car park plus planning/admin. Smaller car parks cost relatively more.

Set out below is the thought process in terms of what allowance to make for potential new car park spaces at this early stage:

Existing car park provision (FC land) = 480 spaces plus 15% (72 extra spaces) = 550 spaces (approx.)

For Staffordshire County Council (SCC) car park resource the Partnership should take account of following:

Footprint Ecology Visitor Survey Report – Car park tally counts for the SAC indicate that apart from the Marquis Drive site, the general pattern of car parking is one of scattered and often low level usage across a large number of car parks. Applying a 15% increase to the notional total resource of SCC car park spaces would appear likely to generate an excessively high sum in these circumstances.

Assuming a £100k funding pot for this strand of the project a 15% increase in car park space on FC land equates roughly with a cost of £30k. A residue of £70k then remains to deal with any changes to the SCC car park resource. Considering whether this is justified might take account of the following:

- Uncertainty regarding what outcomes will flow from the review of car parking arrangements. Costs of any implementation measures are therefore very hard to predict*
- Caution may be needed in view of the sensitive nature of any proposals involving car park charges*
- To give a feel for what this might mean in terms of the developer contribution tariff we can assess the effect of a range of car park cost scenarios*