

Release of Developer Contributions Towards Securing Access to Home Wood and Kennels Copse

Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

- 1. That any future developer contribution related to New Forest mitigation arising from planning permission granted for residential development at Park Farm, Stoneham (Policy COM5) be used to deliver and manage public access of the area identified as Home Wood and Kennels Copse in Annex B to the report.**
- 2. That the developer contributions outlined in Recommendation 1 be transferred to Eastleigh Borough Council as lead authority for the future management.**

SUMMARY:

- Following further discussions with the developer and Eastleigh Borough Council it is proposed that the New Forest Mitigation contribution arising from development at Park Farm, Stoneham be used to deliver and manage an area of woodland, Kennels Copse, as well as Home Wood. This is an additional location to that previously agreed by Cabinet.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2020 the Council agreed to provide financial support, through the use of developer contributions, to Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) to contribute to the delivery of Home Wood, an area of the Forest Park allocation.
- 1.2 Since that time further discussions between the Council, EBC and the developer have identified an opportunity to bring forward further woodland at Kennels Copse, adjoining Home Wood. However this woodland is outside the Forest Park allocation and differs from that previously presented and agreed at Cabinet.
- 1.3 This report seeks Cabinet's approval to allow for the S106 contribution from Park Farm, Stoneham to be used to deliver and manage both Home Wood and Kennels Copse.

2 Background

- 2.1 As part of the Revised Local Plan (RLP) five areas of woodland were allocated for a Forest Park (Policy LHW3) – see Annex A. This proposal was supported by the Council’s Forest Park Implementation Plan (2014). The Forest Park is a long standing proposal of sub regional significance. Its value has been reaffirmed in the Partnership for South Hampshire’s Green Infrastructure Strategy (2017) and the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan (2019). The submitted Eastleigh Local Plan (2018) also identifies the principle and benefits of the Forest Park. Its delivery is also seen as a key action for the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan.
- 2.2 The primary justification for the Forest Park was to provide a location for the current and future population of southern Test Valley and adjoining areas to access a range of informal recreation activities. The RLP also recognised the potential to provide mitigation for the impact on European designated sites from new development in south Hampshire.
- 2.3 One of the areas allocated for the Forest Park is Home Wood. The wood is situated on the south eastern boundary of the Borough. The mixed woodland comprises an area of 35 hectares of mixed woodland, bordered by the M3 to the north-west. The wood is predominantly within Test Valley.
- 2.4 To the east of Home Wood is an area of major residential development within the administrative boundary of Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) for approx. 1,100 homes, which is under construction. Adjoining this development is a small allocation within Test Valley for approximately 50 homes at Park Farm, Stoneham (Policy COM5). Planning permission for 63 units on this site was granted on 22 March 2021 (ref: 19/02630/FULLS).
- 2.5 As part of the delivery of the major residential scheme, EBC has worked with the landowner, developer and leaseholder (Forestry England) to secure, through a future management plan, the long term release of Home Wood for informal recreation and ecological mitigation. EBC has secured developer contributions towards delivering public access and the ongoing maintenance of Home Wood.
- 2.6 In June 2020 Cabinet agreed the release to EBC of £87,814.05 in Section 106 contributions specifically required to help deliver the Forest Park. This element of the decision remains unchanged.
- 2.7 Cabinet also agreed that subject to planning permission being granted, the developer of the Park Farm site would mitigate its impact on the New Forest ecological designation via a financial contribution which would also be transferred to EBC to help deliver Home Wood. A financial contribution of £80,600 based on the Council’s approved tariff approach for New Forest mitigation was proposed.
- 2.8 As part of that Cabinet report a plan of Home Wood was included. The boundary of Home Wood followed that of the existing Forest Park allocation within the RLP.

- 2.9 Since that decision was made the Council, EBC and the developer have identified an opportunity to release further woodland for public recreation and mitigation. This area of woodland, Kennels Copse, is identified at annex B. The area adjoins the south eastern boundary of Home Wood and is to the north of the Park Farm development. Kennels Copse does sit within the allocation boundary (policy COM 5) However, it is outside of the defined Forest Park (Home Wood) allocation boundary previously presented to Cabinet. As such Cabinet's approval is required to allow the New Forest mitigation contribution to be used at this new location as well as Home Wood.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan 2019-2023 includes 'local environment' as one of its priorities. The plan identifies the provision of high quality green infrastructure as one area which the Council will invest in. Linked to this is the 'communities' priority which highlights the importance of the delivery of leisure spaces to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of our residents. Securing Home Wood and Kennels Copse would help meet these priorities.
- 3.2 The Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan identifies the benefits of land acquisition to enhancing biodiversity. An element of any future management of Home Wood and Kennels Copse will be to balance greater public access with protecting and enhancing existing biodiversity. In addition, by securing such a facility in a location adjacent to a large community it provides an accessible alternative instead of the use of the private car to other areas of woodland and open space that may be more ecologically sensitive.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 Natural England and neighbouring planning authorities have supported the principle of the Forest Park and have been keen to see the proposal move towards implementation.
- 4.2 As previously identified a communication plan would need to be established to highlight the use of Home Wood and Kennels Copse and to demonstrate the role that both the Council and EBC have had as part of enabling public access to these woods and the other environmental benefits.

5 Options

- 5.1 Cabinet have already agreed the principle of releasing the contribution. The option to consider is whether to agree that the Park Farm S106 contribution can be used to facilitate delivery of Kennels Copse beyond that identified as Home Wood in the RLP and the earlier Cabinet report.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 The location of Kennels Copse retains the ability for future residents of the Park Farm site and potentially Valley Park residents as well as residents of Eastleigh to access for recreation. A wider area of woodland being brought forward still delivers on a long term aspiration of the Council to bring forward the Forest Park.

- 6.2 In terms of funding by reducing the combined scale of the contribution to EBC it should not hinder the delivery of access to Home Wood.
- 6.3 The additional land would be managed by EBC in conjunction with Forestry England's role with the wider Home Wood management plan. It would not, in planning terms, form part of the Forest Park. The Council does not have the ability to amend the Forest Park allocation boundaries as defined in the Revised Local Plan. This is a matter that can only be achieved via the local plan review.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 The total contribution arising from the Park Farm development is, subject to planning approval, £80,600. This would be released to EBC once it has been received by the Council. As the Council will be a party of the future management plan responsibility for monitoring and enforcement will be shared with EBC.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 No legal implications. The developer contributions would be used for the purpose for which they were sought.

9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 An EQIA is not needed because the issues covered do not raise any equality concerns, therefore a full EQIA has not been carried out.

10 Other Issues

10.1 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate

- 10.1.1 The delivery of Home Wood and Kennels Copse would help protect ecologically sensitive sites by providing an alternative recreation destination. Its location close to residential development would allow for it to be accessed by more sustainable modes of transport. There would also be opportunity for woodland management to improve biodiversity.

10.2 Wards/Communities Affected

- 10.2.1 Home Wood falls within Chilworth parish. However, because of the potential attraction of the wood; the geography and administrative boundary of the Borough; and the ability to access the wood those communities that will be positively affected are predominantly those residing within the administrative boundary of Eastleigh Borough.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 In June 2020 the Council agreed to provide financial support, through the use of developer contributions, to Eastleigh Borough Council to enable the delivery of Home Wood. Since that time further discussions between the Council, EBC and the developer have identified an opportunity to bring forward further woodland at Kennels Copse adjoining Home Wood. However, Kennels Copse is outside the Forest Park allocation and differs from that previously presented and agreed at Cabinet. The use of the developer contribution to bring this area forward compliments the principles of managed public access at Home Wood.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (2016)
PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy
PUSH Green infrastructure Implementation Plan
Forest Park Implementation Framework (2014)
New Forest SPA Mitigation - Interim Framework
New Forest Partnership Plan

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	2	File Ref:	Pt11.1
(Portfolio: Planning) Councillor N.Adams-King			
Officer:	Graham Smith	Ext:	8141
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	14 April 2021