

Appendix 2 - Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

- 1) Development proposals which are likely to have a significant effect on the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) will be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). This includes:
 - a) where proposals are within the zone of influence of Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and;
 - b) where proposals result in a net increase of 100 units or more
- 2) Where development proposals are subject to a HRA they will be required to deliver suitable mitigation and / or avoidance measures in order to address potential adverse effects arising from increased recreational disturbance. This includes provision, improvement and / or maintenance of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (or a suitable financial contribution towards the same).

Reasoned Justification

2.1 The Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation includes 9 separate sites in the Chiltern Hills and spreads across 3 counties. The Special Area of Conservation is an internationally recognised designation with habitats and species of significant ecological importance.

2.2 As part of its emerging local plan, Dacorum Borough Council has found evidence of visitor pressure in Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation as a result of additional residential development from within the zone of influence. The report identified a 12.6km Zone of Influence (ZOI). As a result, large developments in the ZOI will be required to produce a Habitat Regulations Assessment and may be required to provide mitigation measures.

2.3 A small part of Three Rivers falls within the ZOI. It was not included in the 'strategic solution' by Natural England as less than 2% of visitors to the SAC were from Three Rivers. However, the requirement to produce a Habitat Regulations Assessment applies to sites within the ZOI. The Council has set a threshold of 100 dwellings or more on the advice of Natural England.

2.4 As part of the Habitat Regulations Assessment, development proposals will be expected to deliver suitable mitigation and / or avoidance measures to address any adverse impact on the SAC. Mitigation measures include the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) of sufficient size/quality to divert visitors away from the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC and leading to a creation of a semi-natural experience. Any mitigation measures should take into account information in the most recent Mitigation Strategy. SANGs must also consist of adequate parking for visitors, unless the site is intended for local use (within 400m walk of developments linked to it); aim to enable completion of a

circular walk of 2.3 to 2.5km around the SANG; are designed to enhance safety perceptions by users; are free from tree and scrub cover along parts of the walking routes and must incorporate a semi-natural feel with little intrusion of artificial structures.