

Farncombe House
Farncombe Estate
Broadway
Worcestershire
WR12 7LJ

t: 01451 870767
e: info@ecologysolutions.co.uk
w: www.ecologysolutions.co.uk



6898: LAND OFF KIDNAPPERS LANE, LECKHAMPTON

BRIEFING NOTE: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides the information required for a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) as requested by Natural England in correspondence with Cheltenham Borough Council (dated 1st May 2019). Subsequent correspondence from Natural England with Ecology Solutions (dated 16th May 2019) made reference to a previous advice letter (dated the 22nd August 2018) circulated to the three Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) local planning authorities to adopt an interim approach to help discharge their duties under the Habitats Regulations 2017. The information presented here is for the proposed residential development at land off Kidnappers Lane hereafter referred to as 'the site' (see Plan ECO1) and relates to the Cotswold Beechwoods Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The checklist provided by Natural England for consideration of developments in relation to the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC is detailed below:
 - Distance between application site and nearest boundary of SAC;
 - Route to SAC;
 - Type of development (E.g. use class C3); and
 - Alternative recreation resources available – on site and off site.
2. In the correspondence with Ecology Solutions (16th May 2019), Natural England also referenced the suitability of Homeowners Information Packs (HIPs) as contributions to mitigation measures with regard to the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC.

INFORMATION FOR HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

Distance

3. The site is located approximately 5.3km southwest of the nearest boundary of the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC and is separated by a number of roads, arable fields grassland fields and woodlands (see Plan ECO1).

Route to Cotswold Beechwood SAC

4. To drive from the site to the closest car parking facility in the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC it is approximately 9km and takes 12 minutes to drive. To walk

or cycle from the site to the closest access point into the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC it is approximately 7.4km and this would take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes to walk and 26 minutes to cycle.

Type of Development

5. The type of development is C3 (Dwelling Houses).

Alternative Recreation Resources

6. The site is surrounded by a number of recreational resources, and as part of the HRA for the adjacent proposed residential development (planning reference: APP/B1605/W/14/3001717), the HRA assessment (January 2013) identified a total of 33 alternative areas of open space within 3km of the proposed development (see Appendix 1 and Plan ECO1). At the appeal, the inspector concluded (at paragraph 115 – see below) that the adjacent proposed residential development would not have any likely significant effects on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, given the number of alternative recreation resources.

“At its closest point, the Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is 4.5km to the south-west of the site. No others are within 10km or likely to be affected. An assessment has been made of the potential for the development to affect the features for which the SAC is designated. This identified both the enhanced Lotts Meadow and thirty-one other areas of open space within 3km of the appeal site which, between them would provide assurance that adverse effects on the more distant SAC would not occur. In relation to the size of the SAC, recreational pressures from the development are unlikely to have any measurable effect in any event. Consequently, the conclusion is reached that the proposed development would not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.”

7. Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common SSSI is an alternative open space for recreation, and the common is located 1.3km southeast of the site. The common includes multiple car parks, with the closest car park located 1.3km from the site and taking 4 minutes to drive, 20 minutes to walk and 6 minutes to cycle.
8. Crickley Hill Country Park also provides a suitable alternative open space for recreation and is located between the site and the Cotswold Beechwood SAC. The country park includes multiple car parks and is located approximately 3km from the site. To drive to the closest car park from the site, it is approximately 5.4km and takes 8 minutes to drive, 1 hour and 6 minutes to walk and 18 minutes to cycle.
9. A number of circular walks have been identified in close proximity to the site at Kidnappers Lane itself (see Plan ECO1). Three circular walks have been identified that utilise surrounding Public Right of Ways (PROW). The walks are 3.9km, 3.2km and 2.2km and it is considered that given the number of PROW it is considered that further and shorter walks are available.
10. In addition, the site itself will include two small areas of open space that could be utilised for recreation and would likely be the first choice for alternative open space given it is on the doorstep of the development.

Homeowner Information Packs (HIPs):

11. HIPs have been recommended for the site by Natural England as part of the mitigation measures, given the scale of the proposed development. These will be included as part of the proposed development and will give new homeowners information to help them make informed choices about where to go for informal outdoor leisure and if they choose to visit sensitive sites, it will provide information on how to avoid impacting sensitive areas.
12. The content will include general information on the informal, outdoor recreation opportunities in relation to the site and how to help protect the places they visit. The HIPs will include specific information on nearby sensitive designated sites, which would include the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC / Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods SSSI. The HIPs can be secured by way of planning condition.

Visitor Surveys

13. It is acknowledged that new visitor surveys are being conducted at the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC (as per Natural England email on the 16th May 2019 to Dominic Farmer), but Ecology Solutions disagree with the stance set out in the August 2018 advice note, i.e. that the conclusions drawn cannot be extrapolated to inform the likely effects of residential development in the wider area and given this is the only available information, its data is highly relevant and considered below.
14. Visitor surveys have been undertaken by Ecology Solutions for the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC in relation to the North Brockworth site allocation (A4) (Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation Visitor Survey Report – November 2013, for planning application ref. 12/01256/OUT). From a review of the data obtained as part of this visitor survey, it can be seen that out of all the visitors (1,352), 41 people visited the SAC from Cheltenham (3.03%). The vast majority of respondents came to the SAC for walking or dog walking, with only two also coming for cycling (who came once a month all year round). Of these 41 people, only nine stated they visit the SAC weekly, with the remainder responding that they visit once a month, sporadically, or that it was their first visit / don't know. Overall, the visitor survey also highlights that the majority of people travelled between 5km and 10km from their home address to reach the access point at which they were surveyed (33.5%), with only 15.3% travelling more than 20km (and 12.6% not having a GL root postcode).
15. It can also be seen that the highest numbers of visitors were from GL3 (this does not include Cheltenham; the root postcode that includes Cheltenham and surrounding areas is GL51) with 15.2% of respondents in total travelling from this location.
16. The mean distance travelled by respondents from the GL root postcode area (excluding those on holiday to the area and from outside the GL postcode area) was calculated as being 6.66km, and the site lies approximately 5.3km southwest of the site at its closest point.
17. From a review of the data obtained as part of the visitor survey on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, it can be seen that the closest point of the site to an access point into the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC is the northern tip of Coopers Hill (**6.8km**) or from Birdlip (**5.3km**) (as the crow flies) at its closest point.

18. The visitor study showed that 6.1% of visitors arrived at the SAC from within 1km, 28.3% from within 1km and 5km, 33.5% from between 5km and 10km, and 32.1% from over 10km. As such is clear that the attractiveness of the SAC is not confined to just local populations, but that the numbers of the number of visitors relative to the population is low.

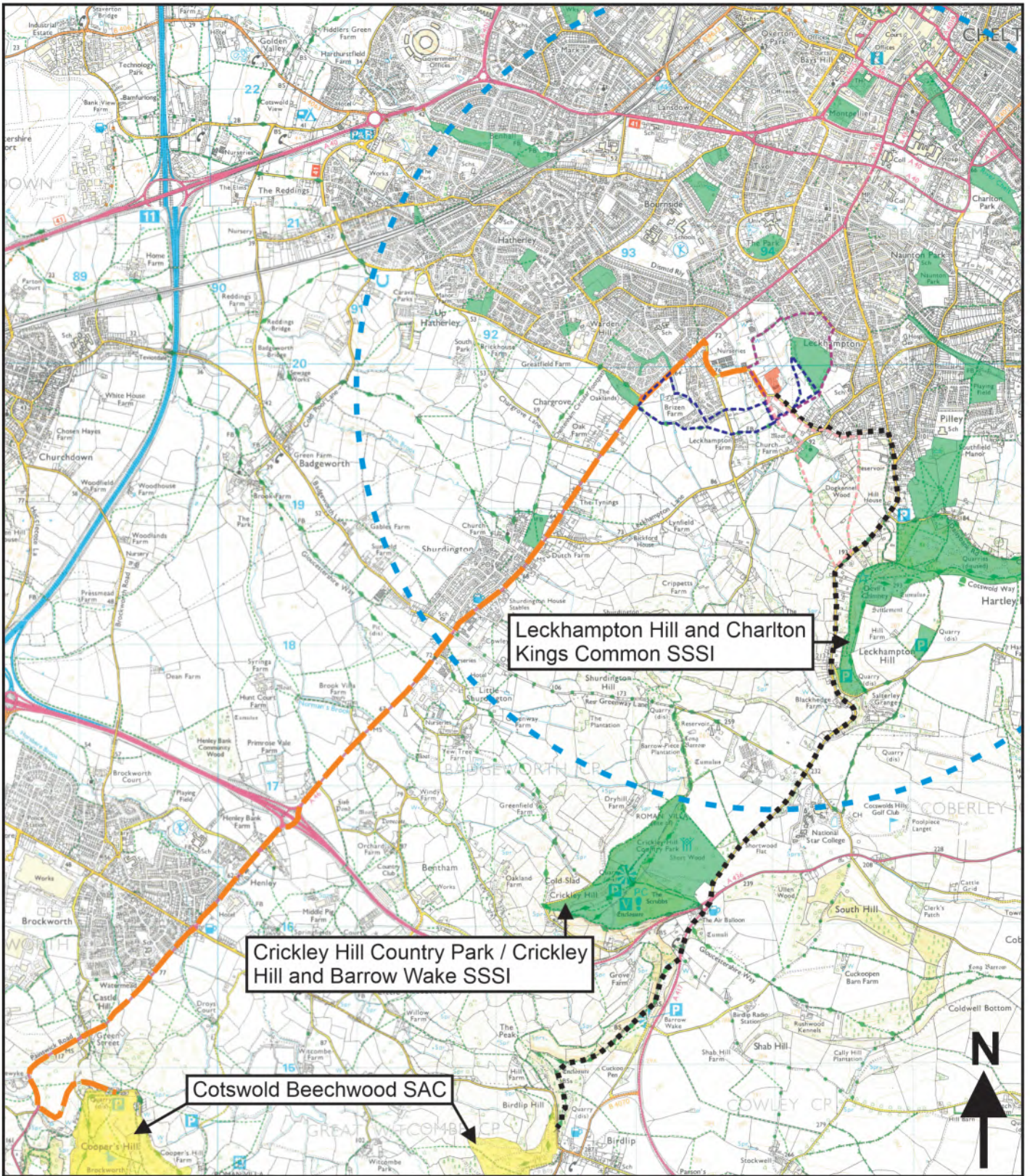
CONCLUSIONS

19. Given the adjacent development was concluded by the Inspector for the Secretary of State as not having any likely significant effects on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC based on the number of alternative recreational resources that are closer to the site, it follows that there would not be any likely significant effects on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, resulting from the proposed development at Land off Kidnappers Lane. Nonetheless, even great certainty can be provided by the applicant's willingness to provide HIPs to new residents, the details of which can be secured by way of planning condition. As such, based on the information presented above it is considered that the development proposals at Kidnappers Lane would not likely affect the integrity of the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC either alone or in combination with other development, thus meeting the test of the Habitats Regulations 2017.

PLANS

PLAN ECO1

Alternative Open Space, Route to Cotswold Beechwood
SAC and Circular Walks



Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common SSSI

Crickley Hill Country Park / Crickley Hill and Barrow Wake SSSI

Cotswold Beechwood SAC

- KEY:**
- SITE
 - ALTERNATIVE AREAS OF OPEN SPACE WITHIN 3KM
 - 3KM RADIUS FROM THE SITE
 - COTSWOLD BEECHWOODS SAC
 - DRIVING ROUTE TO COTSWOLD BEECHWOOD CLOSEST CAR PARK- 9KM
 - WALKING AND CYCLE ROUTE TO COTSWOLD BEECHWOOD - 7.4KM
 - ALTERNATIVE CIRCULAR WALK (A) - 3.9KM
 - ALTERNATIVE CIRCULAR WALK (B) - 2.2KM
 - ALTERNATIVE CIRCULAR WALK (C) - 3.2KM



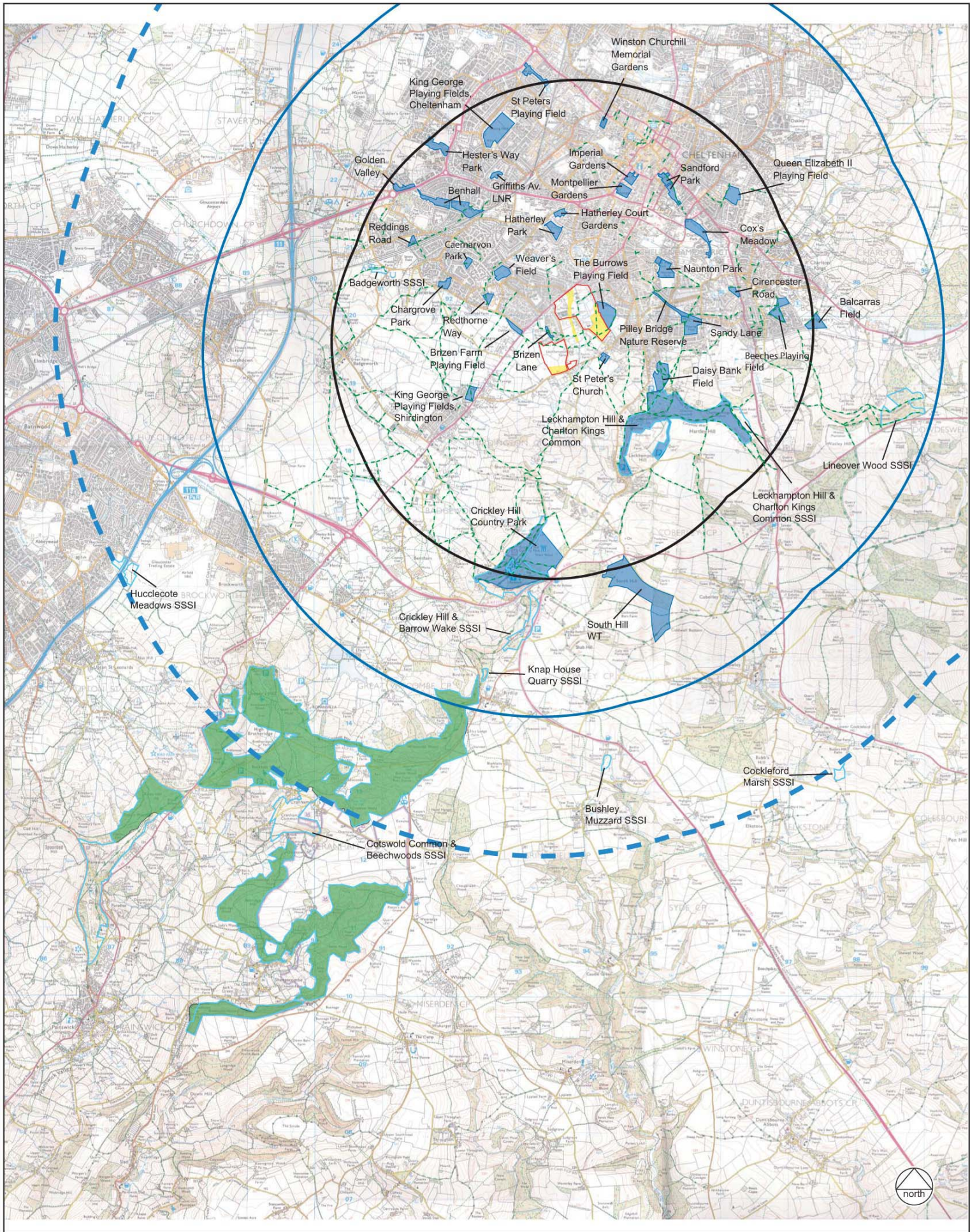
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PLAN ECO1: ALTERNATIVE OPEN SPACES, ROUTES TO COTSWOLD BEECHWOOD SAC AND CIRCULAR WALKS

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Alternative Open Space Location Plan and Table
(APP/B1605/W/14/3001717)



KEY			
	Site boundary		Alternative areas of open space (only those within 3km have been mapped)
	Cotswold Beechwoods SAC		Proposed areas of open space
	Footpaths		SSSI
	3km radius around site		5km radius around site
	7km radius around site		

CLIENT: Bovis Homes, Miller Strategic Homes, M A Holdings
 PROJECT: Leckhampton Ecology
 TITLE: Alternative Open Space Location Plan
 SCALE AT A3: 1:50,000
 DATE: January 2013
 436.2 / 016

Based on Ordnance Survey mapping with permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
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 The Stables, Howbery Park, Benson Lane, Wallingford, OX10 8BA
 1 01491 838175 | consult@hda-enviro.co.uk | www.hda-enviro.co.uk

Landscaping Architecture
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 Ecology

FIGURE 2

Table 2: Alternative areas of open space to the SAC within 3km of the proposed development

Alternative area of natural greenspace ¹	Area (Ha)	Typology ²	Hierarchy ³	Linear distance from site (m)	Walking distance from site ⁴ (m)	Driving distance from site (m)	Bearing from site
Leckhampton Open Space (1)	22 (incl 11.6ha located in 2 parcels)	Nat & semi nat GS/ Outdoor sport facility/ Amenity GS (see Section 4)	(Not in audit as proposed)	Located within site as part of the proposed development			
Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve (2) 404	1km long	Nat & semi nat GS	Neighbourhood	1323	1654	1645	East
Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (including Daisy Bank Field) (3) 407 & 410	63.7	Nat & semi nat GS	Regional	1410	2110	2092	South-east
Crickley Hill Country Park (4), GCC	57.8	Nat & semi nat GS	Not in audit (considered Regional due to size/amenity)	3549	3774	6115	South
The Burrows Playing Field (5) 800	6.1	Outdoor sport facility	Neighbourhood	422	528	1448	East
Brizen Lane OS (6) 801	0.5	Amenity GS	Local	594	659	804	North & west
St Peter's Church (7) 806	1.4	Churchyard	Neighbourhood	541	737	1770	South-east
Brizen Farm Playing Fields (8) 1912	1.9	Outdoor sport facility	Neighbourhood	1164	1543	1609	West
Redthorne Way OS (9) 1809	1.7	Amenity GS	Neighbourhood	1411	1763	2735	West
Weaver's Field (10) 1900	3.2	Nat & semi nat GS	Neighbourhood	1381	1741	2414	North-west
Hatherley Park (11) 1001	3.1	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	1601	2571	3218	North
Hatherley Court Gardens (12) 1002	0.9	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	1639	2623	2896	North
Naunton Park (13) 501	0.6	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	1462	2024	2253	East
Naunton Park (13) 508	4.3	Outdoor sport facility	Local	1374	2122	2414	East
Sandy Lane (14) 403	5.8	Outdoor sport facility	Neighbourhood	1460	1770	1770	East
King George's field, Shurdington (15)	2.6	Outdoor sport facility	Neighbourhood	1859	2519	2715	South-west
Chargrove Lane OS (16) 1801	1.9	Amenity GS	Local	2155	2589	2735	West
Caernarvon Park (17) 1800	1.2	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	1930	2377	2896	North-west
Benhall OS (18) 200	11.1	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	2700	3652	4988	North-west
Griffiths Ave LNR (19) 1406	0.78 (2.5 acres)	Nat & semi nat GS	Neighbourhood	2584	3728	4988	North-west
Montpellier Gardens (20) 700	3.6	Parks & gardens	Borough	2004	2474	4023	North-east
Imperial Gardens (21) 701	1.6	Parks & gardens	Regional	2235	2782	3379	North-east
Sandford Park (22) 503	4.4	Parks & gardens	Borough	2428	3019	3379	North-east
Cox's Meadow OS (23) 406	5.6	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	2114	2904	2896	North-east

Alternative area of natural greenspace ¹	Area (Ha)	Typology ²	Hierarchy ³	Linear distance from site (m)	Walking distance from site ⁴ (m)	Driving distance from site (m)	Bearing from site
Cirencester Road OS (24) 402	1.3	Amenity GS	Neighbourhood	2300	2896	2896	East
The Beeches Playing Field (25) 301	5.6	Outdoor sport facility	Neighbourhood	2773	3487	4184	East
Balcarras Field (26) 312	3.8	Nat & semi nat GS	Local	3251	4081	4506	East
Queen Elizabeth II playing field (27) 100, 104 (Ewens Road OS) & 113 (Ewens Road)	4.1	Amenity GS	Neighbourhood	2857	3941	4023	North-east
Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens (28) 1601	1.0	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	2978	4001	6598	North
King George V playing field, Cheltenham (29) 1400	11.6	Outdoor sport facility	Neighbourhood	3114	4694	5954	North-west
Hester's Way Park (30) 602	3.9	Parks & gardens	Neighbourhood	3296	4768	5793	North-west
Golden Valley OS (31) 604	1.8	Amenity GS	Neighbourhood	3258	4327	6115	North-west
Reddings Road OS (32) 201	1.0	Amenity GS	Local	2763	3371	4828	North-west

1 The number (not in brackets) following the site name is Cheltenham Borough Council's reference number for that site.

2 From Cheltenham Borough Council – Green Space Audit (November 2008). The following typologies generally with unrestricted access are included (including their primary purpose) in accordance with the companion guide to PPG17 (now revoked):

- Amenity Greenspace – Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas;
- Cemeteries and churchyards – Quieter contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Also includes closed burial grounds used for informal recreation;
- Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces – Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness;
- Outdoor Sports Facilities – Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports;
- Parks and Gardens – Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.

3 From Cheltenham Borough Council – Green Space Audit (November 2008). The following hierarchy levels were used to classify the importance or significance of Cheltenham's green spaces (from Table 3 which did not include Regional level):

- Borough – Those sites whose significance should attract people from across the entire borough. Usually large sites with a range of facilities or designated importance for history or nature conservation;
- Neighbourhood – Those sites which perform a function that serves a more immediate community. Unlikely to attract people from across the borough.
- Local – Those sites which perform a function to a small area – typically areas of amenity green space.

4 Closest public/ adopted footpath entry point via footpath network/ B-roads.