

North Meadows Mitigation Strategy

Briefing Note No. 23-29

Service : *Environment*
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Introduction and Overview

1. North Meadow Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR) is notified as an exceptional example of lowland meadow and is subject to strict legal protection. Natural England has advised that in view of existing visitor levels, any additional residential dwelling, or overnight accommodation within a zone of influence is likely to lead to a loss of site integrity. Mitigation is needed to allow development to proceed, and this is most effective, and cost efficient, when delivered by a strategic approach.
2. The North Meadow NNR/SSSI is in the northern part of Wiltshire, however its integrity as a nature conservation site is also affected by development in neighbouring authorities. An Interim Strategy has been jointly prepared and agreed by Cotswold District Council, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council in partnership with Natural England (NE).

Interim Strategy

3. Recreational mitigation strategies have been used successfully at several internationally important sites across the UK to enable new developments to come forward without increasing recreational impacts.
4. Because the exact level and type of adverse recreational impacts on North Meadow NNR has not been determined, it has been concluded, following the precautionary approach, that an interim 5 year Mitigation Strategy is the appropriate way forward. Data collected, as part of the monitoring elements of the Interim Mitigation Strategy will enable the approach to be reviewed after 5 years.
5. The mitigation set out in the strategy has been approved by Natural England as appropriate and sufficient in the interim period.

Zones of Influence

6. A visitor survey was commissioned by the Local Authorities (lead Authority – Swindon Borough Council) and undertaken by the consultancy, Ecological Planning and Research

(EPR) in 2022, and completed in March 2023.

7. The visitor surveys identified two main user groups of the North Meadow NNR/SSSI: local, year-round users and those that come specifically to see the display of fritillaries during their flowering period. These data have been used to define two revised Zones of Influence (Zoi), based on visitor type and hence timing of visit during the year, with different levels of mitigation being appropriate to each.
8. The two zones are:
 - Inner Zone (local users arriving on foot and by car all year round) is set at 0 - 4.2km from the boundary of the SAC.
 - Outer Zone (fritillary visitors) is set at 4.2 - 9.4km from the boundary of the SAC.

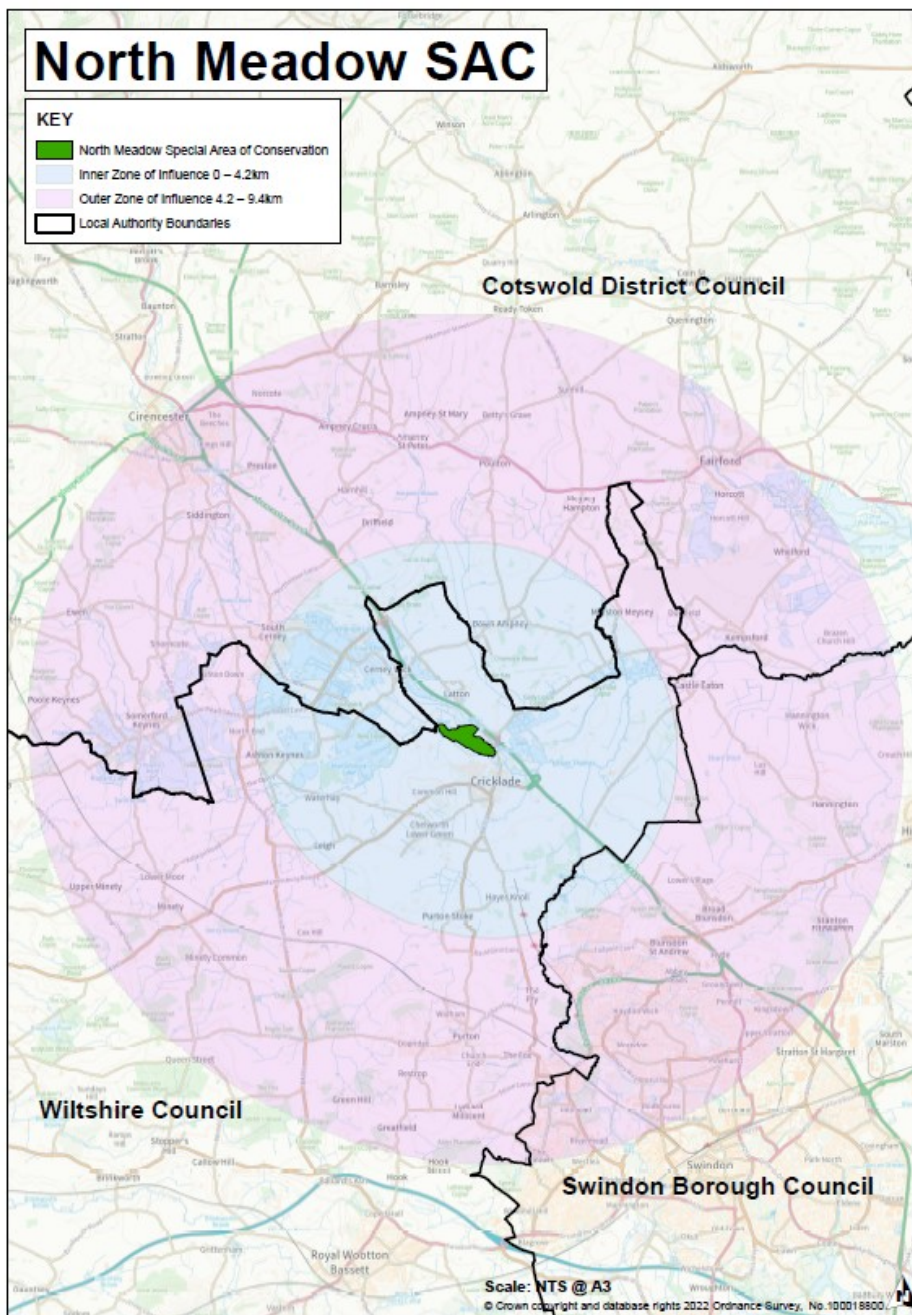


Figure 1 Map to show the two Zols and the administrative boundaries

Type of development

9. The main types of development affected include:

- All residential units (i.e. C3 Use Class)
- Residential/holiday/guest annexes
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (sui generis)
- Residential institutions within the C2 Use Class where the residents are not severely restricted by illness or mobility
- Student accommodation
- Sites for Gypsy, Roma, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
- Tourist accommodation, including hotels, self-catering, caravan and touring holiday accommodation.

Developer contributions

10. The mitigation strategy will be funded by developer contributions. The costs per development unit is based on a package of mitigation measures that include –

- On-site measures such as increased wardening/rangers; monitoring; signage etc. (often termed SAMMs – Strategic Access Management and Monitoring)
- Off-site measures such as new greenspaces (often called SANGs – Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces), enhancement of public rights of way etc (known as “infrastructure mitigation projects” (IMPs).

11. The charge equates to £803 per unit* in inner zone (0 to 4.2km) and £323 per unit* in outer zone (4.2 km to 9.4km). The strategy is based on estimated planned growth within the Zone of Influence; however, it is scale-able should other development come forward.

Zone	SAMM contribution per unit**	Infrastructure Mitigation Projects/SANG contribution per unit*	Total financial contribution to delivery of the Strategy/ per unit*
Inner zone (0 – 4.2km) Relevant developments under 50 units	£323	£480	£803
Inner zone (0 – 4.2km) Relevant developments over 50 units*	£323	Normally provided within the development site ie SANG	£323
Outer zone (4.2 – 9.4 km) All relevant developments	£323	N/A (except for larger developments (eg those that trigger the EIA Regulations), which will be considered on a site by site basis)	£323

Figure 2 Mitigation Financial Contributions Table

** A unit is as described in Section 11 of the Mitigation Strategy*

12. Each Local Planning Authority (LPA) will be responsible for securing developer contributions. A Steering Group will be set up with Local Planning Authorities and Natural England.
13. Contributions will be secured by section 106 agreements or unilateral undertakings with planning applications. Alternatively, applicants can submit a section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 Agreement form agreeing to make the relevant payment on receipt of the appropriate invoice, prior to determination.
14. Further information on the strategy will be provided on Wiltshire Council's website in due course.

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