ECOLOGICAL EXPERTISE, EVOLVED

Loddon Garden Village

Technical Appendix 11.18: Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Delivery Plan

Prepared on behalf of

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Final Report

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Loddon Garden Village

Technical Appendix 11.18: Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Delivery Plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brief

1.1 The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), as set out in this document, is part of a strategy to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) arising as a result of the Proposed Development at Loddon Garden Village, as described in the separately issued Information for Habitats Regulations Assessment (EPR, 2025).

1.2 The following report sets out the principles for the delivery and ongoing management of the SANG to demonstrate that suitable impact avoidance measures can be implemented. Full details, to include infrastructure and planting specifications, will be set out in a 'SANG Creation and Management Plan' to be secured via planning condition.

Site and Development Description

1.3 The Site is a large area of land to the west of Wokingham, between the villages of Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham. It is located outside of the Green Belt and is largely made up of agricultural land and grasslands, with pockets of woodland and the River Loddon running through the centre of the Site.

1.4 The description of development for the application is as follows:

"Application for the phased development of a new community at Loddon Garden Village, comprising, in outline:

- *up to 2,800 residential units to include up to 100 custom and self-build plots;*
- *2 primary schools (up to 3 forms of entry) to include early years provision and 1 secondary school (up to 12 forms of entry);*
- *one District Centre, to incorporate up to 11,000m2 of Class E (Commercial, business and Service, to include a food store of around 2,500m2), and Class F (Local Community and Learning);*
- *one Local Centre; to incorporate up to 2,400m2 of Class E;*
- *a Sports Hub to include sports pitches and pavilion space;*
- *up to 4,250m2 of further Class E, Class F, and sui generis development to include commercial, health care and public house;*
- *comprehensive green infrastructure including a Country Park, landscaping and public open space, and ecological enhancement measures;*
- *20 gypsy and traveller pitches;*

- *comprehensive drainage and flood alleviation measures to include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and engineering measures within Loddon Valley for the River Loddon;*
- *internal road network including spine road with pedestrian and cycle connections and associated supporting infrastructure;*
- *new and modified public rights of way;*
- *associated utilities, infrastructure, and engineering works, including the undergrounding of overhead lines;*
- *Ground reprofiling to accommodate infrastructure, flood alleviation and development parcels;*
- *Up to 0.5ha of land adjoining St Bartholomew's church for use as cemetery;*
- *Electricity substation (up to 1.5ha).*

All matters reserved other than access, incorporating:

- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to Lower Earley Way via a new 4th arm to the Meldreth Way roundabout;*
- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular bridge over the M4;*
- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular bridge over the River Loddon;*
- *a new vehicular access to the A327 Reading Road, via a new arm to the Observer Way roundabout;*
- *a new pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to Thames Valley Science Park;*
- *an initial phase of internal roads with associated drainage, landscape and engineering works and ground reprofiling, between the A327 and the south eastern boundary of the site.*

Application includes full permission for the change of use of 40.4 hectares of agricultural land to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), 18.35 hectares of SANG link, and provision of Biodiversity Net Gain measures, the demolition and clearance of 20,809 m2 of buildings and structures at the Centre for Dairy Research (CEDAR) and at Hall Farm, the demolition of 3 existing dwellings on Carter's Hill Lane, and the retention of specified buildings at Hall Farm."

Planning Context with Respect to the Thames Basin Heaths

1.5 **Technical Appendix 11.18 Information for Habitats Regulations Assessment** (IfHRA) report (EPR, 2025) provides full details on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), its reasons for designation, and the relevant planning considerations. As such this document should be read in conjunction with the IfHRA and Chapter 11 of the Environmental Statement which details the Ecological Impact Assessment (EPR, 2025b).

1.6 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA designation covers a series of heathlands which support internationally important assemblages of ground nesting birds, listed under Annex I of the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC): Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Woodlark *Lullula arborea* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*. The location of the SPA in relation to the Site is shown on **Map 11.18.1**.

1.7 Research has shown that disturbance and predation of nests by domestic pets represents a significant threat to protected ground-nesting bird species, and supporting habitats are affected by eutrophication, trampling, increased risk of fire and fly-tipping (Underhill-Day, 2005). New residential development close to the Thames Basin Heaths increases this threat by introducing more people and their pets.

1.8 In light of this research, the Joint Strategic Partnership Board of affected local authorities in and around the Thames Basin Heaths SPA produced the 'Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework' (July, 2009), which outlines means by which residential development can avoid a significant negative effect on these birds. The Delivery Framework excludes development within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA since certain effects, primarily cat predation, cannot be avoided within this zone. Between 400m and 5km, where effects associated with dog-walking are likely, avoidance measures can be applied, including the provision of SANG and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). Large-scale development delivery beyond 5km is considered on a case-by-case basis.

1.9 To be effective as an alternative recreational resource to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA for both new and existing residents, the SANG must present particular characteristics that are favoured by existing and potential users of the SOA. Natural England's 'Guidelines for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' describes characteristics that are required or desirable when creating a SANG, based on survey responses provided by visitors to the SPA (NE, 2008).

1.10 The key requirement is that a SANG should be perceived as a 'natural' environment. This will usually mean that it should have a mixture of semi-natural habitats, be easily accessible by new and existing residents and through which paths with natural surfacing provide a range of walks, including a circular walk of an appropriate minimum length. It should also be possible for dogs to be let off the lead of a substantial part of the walk throughout the year.

SANG Proposals

1.11 Two areas of SANG are proposed to prevent adverse impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA as a result of the Proposed Development. The location of these SANG are shown on **Map 11.18. 2**.

1.12 The first SANG is located within the wider EcoValley setting, on the western side of the River Loddon. For the purposes of this report, it will be referred to as the 'Western SANG'. The Western SANG, covering approximately 26.85ha, includes a circular route of 2.6km, with connecting routes providing shorter alternatives. It is located in the region of 400m from the nearest proposed residential parcels, with a car park proposed to be located approximately.

1.13 The second SANG is located adjacent to the Proposed Development on the eastern side of the River Loddon and will be referred to as the 'Eastern SANG'. The Eastern SANG benefits from a riverside setting, on-site parking and a variety of habitats. Covering approximately 13.55ha, the Eastern SANG provides a circular walking route of 1.83km.

1.14 In addition to the two SANG as outlined above, an area of 18.35km is proposed to be delivered as SANG Link along the River Loddon. This area will include linear footpaths to provide an attractive greenspace linking the Eastern and Western SANG, allowing visitors to complete longer walking routes as desired.

SANG Network

1.15 Alongside the newly proposed SANGs the University of Reading already own and manage in perpetuity a suite of SANGs in the local area. The context of the wider SANG network is shown on **Map 11.18.3**. These SANGs, in conjunction with the newly proposed SANGs, provide a multitude of open greenspace options and extensive walking routes throughout the local area.

Consultation

1.16 Consultation was undertaken with Natural England on the design of the SANGs in early 2025. A Site visit was undertaken on 10th March 2025, following which a response was provided by Natural England (**Annex 1**). Following this feedback, amendments were made to the design and a subsequent virtual meeting was held on the 29th April 2025. During this meeting the updated designs were presented to Natural England. Further correspondence from Natural England was issued, confirming the acceptability of the Western SANG and advising on amendments required to the Eastern SANG which have been taken into account within this SANG Delivery Plan (**Annex 2**).

2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

2.1 This section presents a summary of existing environmental and ecological baseline conditions within the site of the proposed SANGs, as a means to inform its design and creation. Consideration of such contextual information will serve to promote successful establishment of the proposed SANG, and the development of an assemblage of habitats that is at once naturalistic and sympathetic to the present and historic character of the broader landscape.

Physical Context

Site Location & Context

2.2 Loddon Garden Village (LGV) is located entirely within Wokingham Borough Council and is proposed for allocation under Policy SS13 within the Local Plan Update (WBC, 2024). LGV is located on the southern outskirts of Reading, bound by the M4 motorway to the north, and the A327 to the south.

2.3 Both areas of SANG are located within Flood zone 3.

Western SANG

2.4 The Western SANG comprises two distinct areas, Mill Field which includes arable land, and the wider Lourdes Meadow fields which currently support low intensity grazing and silage. It is bound by the River Loddon to the east, and the A327 to the south. The surrounding land is proposed to be included within EcoValley, which will deliver recreational opportunities for local and existing residents alongside enhancements for local wildlife and biodiversity net gain.

Eastern SANG & SANG Link

2.5 The Eastern SANG and SANG Link lie along the eastern banks of the River Loddon. Covering approximately 1.4km from north to south the SANG and adjoining Link encompasses woodlands, grasslands and wetland habitats. Small areas of greenspace is proposed to be delivered directly along the borders of the SANG, with residential and commercial development immediately adjacent to these.

Geology and Soils

2.6 London Clay forms the bedrock of both SANG with superficial alluvial deposits (clay, silt sand and gravel) on the floodplain. Part of the Western SANG sits on higher ground with river terrace' (sand and gravel) superficial deposits. As a result, this section of the Western SANG usually lies above normal floodwaters.

2.7 Soils are generally neutral to weakly acidic.

Existing Habitats

Western SANG

2.8 The majority of the Western SANG is comprised of modified grasslands, which are species-poor largely dominated by Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus*

pratensis. Historical maps show that the grasslands previously formed part of 'Lourdes Meadow'.

2.9 A large arable field is also present on the river terrace superficial deposits.

Eastern SANG & SANG Link

2.10 The Linear SANG encompasses a variety of habitats, although is dominated by woodland. This includes wet woodland which is overrun with Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, 'other broadleaved woodland' and lowland mixed deciduous woodland which includes an area of provisional Ancient Woodland known as Newbury's Copse.

2.11 Alongside the woodlands, an area of *Deschampsia* neutral grassland falls within the Linear SANG. The grassland is unmanaged and rank, dominated by Tufted Hairgrass *Deschampsia cespitosa.*

Existing Wildlife

2.12 Extensive ecological surveys have been undertaken across the wider LGV site since 2022, providing a detailed understanding of the local wildlife and how they are utilising the Proposed Development Site, including both SANG sites.

Freshwater Fish

2.13 The River Loddon supports a diverse array of freshwater fish, including the Bullhead *Cottus gobio*, Brown Trout *Salmo trutta* and European Eel *Anguilla anguilla*. At the southern end of the Site (adjacent to the Western SANG), the River Loddon includes shallow well oxygenated gravel beds, which are suitable to support spawning fish such Trout.

Amphibians

2.14 Environmental DNA surveys undertaken on the waterbody within Hall Farm Woodland Triangle LWS were negative for the presence of Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. Surveys across the wider LGV site confirmed Great Crested Newt as likely absent from all waterbodies on Site.

2.15 The waterbody within the Western SANG, and wetlands within the Eastern SANG are however likely to support common and widespread amphibian species such as Toad *Bufo bufo*, Frog *Rana temporaria* and other newt species.

Reptiles

2.16 Records of reptiles in the local landscape are limited, with Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica* identified as part of wider development works around Shinfield.

2.17 Areas of reptile habitat are severely limited in both SANG. The pasture fields are often tightly grazed, and when left to grow provide a monoculture of uniformed swards. Transitional habitats between woodlands and grasslands are largely absent, lacking the cover required in suitable reptile habitats.

2.18 Areas of tussocky grassland within the *Deschampsia* neutral grassland of the Eastern SANG, and along the arable field margin on the Western SANG provide the most suitable opportunities

and may support low numbers of common reptiles including Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis* and Grass Snake.

Breeding/Wintering Birds

2.19 The wider LGV Site supports a range of bird species, from breeding assemblages of farmland birds to overwintering wildfowl.

2.20 The Eastern SANG supports a combination of woodland birds, such as Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* and Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* and riparian species including Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*. Overwintering birds including flocks of Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and Redwing *Turdus iliacus*.

2.21 By contrast, the Western SANG largely supports farmland birds during the breeding season, including Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*. In the winter, the grassland fields often flood and support populations of waterfowl, including large flocks of Greylag Geese *Anser anser* and Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*.

Bats

2.22 Nine species (or groups) of bats have been recorded across the wider LGV Site, comprising: Long-eared bat *Plecotis sp*; Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*; Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*; Myotis species *Myotis sp*; Nathusius' Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*; Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*; Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*; Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygnaeus*; and Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*.

2.23 Optimal habitats for bats within the Western SANG are largely limited to linear features, including hedgerows, treelines and the river corridor. Hall Farm Woodland Triangle LWS may provide roosting opportunities for tree-dwelling species.

2.24 The Eastern SANG provides a roosting opportunity for tree dwelling species. The River Loddon acts as an important linear feature in the local landscape, providing foraging opportunities for species such as Daubenton's bat which are known to roost under the M4 motorway bridge.

Otter

2.25 Both the SANGs border the River Loddon, which has been found to support transient Otter *Lutra lutra*. Although no evidence of a permanent territory has been identified, low levels of foraging activity have been recorded, suggesting occasional use for foraging and/or commuting.

Opportunities

2.27 Creation and ongoing conservation management of the proposed SANGs and SANG Link will result in biodiversity net gains through the improvement and diversification of existing habitats. This will benefit local floral communities, invertebrate assemblages, reptiles, birds, small mammals and bats, including Species of Principle Importance listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended) and the Berkshire Local Recovery Nature Strategy.

2.28 Habitats of Principle Importance listed under S41 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended) to be created, such as Lowland Meadow, will make positive contributions to the aims of the Berkshire Local Recovery Nature Strategy.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction

3.1 This section considers the aims and objectives of habitat creation and management within the proposed SANGs. Underpinning the SANG delivery proposals are the two principle aims and five derived objectives, whose achievement can be monitored as a means to evaluate the efficiency of implementation and management work, and to guide future changes to the Management Plan.

Aims

3.2 The principle aims of habitat creation and manage

- Provide a convenient and accessible, enjoyable and satisfying recreational experience in a natural environment, so that new and existing residents in the area, who would otherwise travel to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, with or without a dog, opt to visit the proposed SANGs as an alternative; and
- Protect and enhance the naturalness, biodiversity and local character of the proposed SANGs area, to increase its likely effectiveness as a SANG and in accordance with policy and legislative requirements.

Objectives

3.3 These principle aims are supported by a series of more specific objectives:

1) To deliver and maintain an accessible greenspace resource in fulfilment of criteria set out in Natural England's 'Guidelines for the Creation of SANG';
2) To create new semi-natural habitats in order to achieve biodiversity gains and produce a diverse, naturalistic, and attractive landscape;
3) To restore and enhance existing degraded habitats in order to achieve biodiversity gains and produce a diverse, naturalistic, and attractive landscape;
4) To manage the SANGs and SANG Link for both amenity value and biodiversity benefit; and
5) To provide opportunities for public engagement and involvement in the management of the SANG.

Objective 1: *To deliver and maintain an accessible greenspace resource in fulfilment of criteria set out in Natural England's 'Guidelines for the Creation of SANG'*

3.4 Based on an average household occupancy rate of 2.4 people per household, the proposed provision of up to 2,800 dwellings within the Proposed Development, would result in an additional 6,720 residents. Based on the variable SANG requirements from the different mitigation zone within which the Proposed Development sits, a maximum of 24.33ha of SANG are required (SANG requirement calculations are set out within Technical Appendix 11.17).

3.5 Two distinct areas of SANG are proposed to be delivered as part of the Proposed Development, providing a total of 40.40ha. Measuring 26.85ha, the Western SANG provides circular walks of varying lengths, including a 2.6km route. The Eastern SANG connects directly to residential

development and provides a circular route of 1.83km. These SANG are connected via a SANG Link, allowing visitors to complete longer routes as desired.

3.6 The proposed SANGs therefore represent an overprovision of SANG of 16.07ha for the Proposed Development.

3.7 **Annex 3** relates the specific characteristics of the proposed SANGs to the required and desirable attributes set out in Natural England's 'Guidelines for the Creation of SANG'.

Objective 2: *To create new semi-natural habitats in order to achieve biodiversity gains and produce a diverse, naturalistic, and attractive landscape*

3.8 The current agricultural landscape is proposed to be diversified through the creation of new semi-natural habitats to provide a diverse and attractive landscape. Habitats proposed for creation include:

- Woodland Pasture type habitats
- Species-rich Native Grasslands
- Native scrub
- Scattered trees
- Water features, including ponds or permanently wet attenuation basins

Objective 3: *To restore and enhance existing degraded habitats in order to achieve biodiversity gains and produce a diverse, naturalistic, and attractive landscape*

3.9 Alongside the proposed habitat creation, the restoration of historic and existing habitats will restore the natural feel of the local landscape and provide opportunities for local biodiversity. Habitats proposed for restoration or enhancement include:

- Lowland Meadow restoration across the historic Lourdes Meadow
- Reinstatement of historic watercourse within Lourdes Meadow
- Diversification of existing grasslands along the River Loddon
- Conservation-led management of existing woodlands

Objective 4: *To manage the SANGs and SANG Link for both amenity value and biodiversity benefit*

3.10 To ensure that the amenity and biodiversity value of the SANGs and SANG Link are maintained in perpetuity ongoing management will be undertaken, in line with the management regimes currently in place in across the wider University of Reading SANG network. Such actions will include:

- The checking and upkeep of Site furniture and infrastructure;
- Aftercare of newly established habitats;
- Ongoing conservation management of new and existing habitats.

***Objective 5**: Provide opportunities for public engagement with the SANGs and involvement in its management*

3.11 It is the intention of the University of Reading to retain the freehold ownership of the SANG, and to manage the SANGs in line with other local SANG under their ownership and management. A ranger will oversee day-to-day management and maintenance of the SANG, including engaging with visitors. Public education events may also be held within the SANGs to further engage local visitors, such as Meadows Day which is currently held annually at Langley Mead.

4. SANG IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

4.1 This section describes the implementation and habitat creation works that will be completed prior to the opening of the SANGs. The proposed layout of the Western SANG is shown at **Annex 4**, and the Eastern SANG on **Annex 5.**

4.2 It is intended that both SANG will fall under the wider suite of SANGs owned and managed in by the University of Reading. These include Langley Mead, Langley Mead extension and The Ridge. Infrastructure to be provided within the LGV SANGs will broadly align with the approach and designs of existing infrastructure within the existing suite of SANGs.

Phasing

4.3 The Western SANG will be delivered first, to be implemented in full and available to members of the public prior to the first residential occupation of the Proposed Development. At 26.85ha, the Western SANG is of a sufficient size to provide mitigation for the entirety of the Proposed Development.

4.4 The Eastern SANG and SANG Link will be delivered at a later stage of the Proposed Development.

Provision of Infrastructure

Fencing and Access

4.5 Attractiveness to dog-walkers will be an essential attribute of the SANGs. To this end the SANGs will be created as a secure, enclosed area within which dogs can be freely exercised off-lead.

4.6 Where footpaths enter/exit the SANG, self-closing kissing gates will be installed. Field gates for machinery will also be installed at suitable locations to allow access for management.

4.7 Dog-proof fencing will be installed around the perimeter of both SANG where required to create a secure space. The exception to this will be along the Eastern SANG boundary with the River Loddon, which will be kept free of fencing to maintain an open feel. The River in itself will provide the boundary delineating the perimeter of the SANG.

4.8 In keeping with the naturalistic, semi-rural character of the SANG, boundary fencing will be of timber post-and-wire or post-and-rail construction with stock netting.

Paths

4.9 Footpaths will comprise a mixture of bound-gravel and mown paths. Bound-gravel, or similarly resilient substrates will comprise the main walking routes, providing a durable surface which can be accessed by visitors with limited mobility. Such substrates will also ensure footpaths require minimal maintenance after potential inundation events.

4.10 Interconnecting footpaths which make up the shorter alternative routes will comprise of mown grass paths to ensure the SANGs do not have an overly urban feel.

4.11 Lourdes Meadow and the surrounding fields are subject to regular inundation during the winter months. To maintain access, boardwalks will be used to raise some footpaths above floodwaters for as much of the year as is possible. Alternative routes will comprise of mown paths through the grasslands or bound-gravel paths (or similar) where considered appropriate.

4.12 Similarly, parts of the SANG Link pass through areas of wet woodland that may become difficult underfoot during the winter months. Discrete areas of boardwalk will be used in these areas to maintain access between SANG.

Site Furniture

4.13 The use of site furniture and signage within the SANGs will be minimised to maintain an information semi-rural ambience. The distribution of benches, bins and information boards will principally be concentrated around key activity areas, such as access points. Timber will be the predominant material, in simple, robust designs.

4.14 The exact locations of site furniture will be confirmed post-submission within the SANG Creation and Management Plan.

Habitat Creation

4.15 The broad principles for habitat creation are set out below to demonstrate that the SANGs can provide semi-natural habitats in line with the requirements of the Natural England SANG Guidelines.

4.16 Further details will be provided in a detailed SANG Creation and Management Plan which will take into account provisions for biodiversity net gain.

4.17 An indicative habitat map of proposed broad habitats is shown on **Maps 11.18.4 and 11.18.5**.

Woodland Pasture

4.18 Mill Field is proposed to be turned into a woodland pasture type habitat, to include species-rich grasslands with scattered individual and groups of trees, which will then be grazed by cattle.

4.19 Grassland type will be suited to local soil conditions, subject to the results of soil sampling. Given the use of the field as arable land, the elevated nutrient levels will impact the ability to deliver a species-rich grassland sward. It is therefore considered that seeding with a suitable seed mix would be the most appropriate method of establishing grasslands in this area.

4.20 The inclusion of Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor* seed within the grassland seed mix will aid in reducing the growth of grasses which are likely to outcompete herbaceous species given the nutrient levels of ex-arable land. This will help the herbaceous species to establish and create a more diverse sward.

4.21 To create a woodland pasture type habitat, individual scattered trees will be planted across the field. Trees such as Oak *Quercus robur* which are a prominent species in the local landscape will be used, whilst opportunities for fruit and berry-bearing species will also be considered for their value to local foraging wildlife.

Pond Creation

4.22 It is currently proposed to include at least one pond within the Western SANG which can be utilised as a feature for dog walkers and for wildlife. Additionally, some attenuation basins will be included as part of the wider drainage strategy.

4.23 As the precise characteristics of the attenuation basins which may be included within the SANGs will be determined by the demands of their attenuative function, the habitat creation methods here prescribed relate specifically to the specific wildlife ponds. However, all habitat creation within the SANG will be undertaken in accordance with the underlying objective of providing an attractive recreational destination with a distinct naturalistic character.

4.24 Ponds which are not serving a drainage function will be graded and sculpted to form gently sloping, irregularly contoured sides and a series of marginal shelves. A broad and gently shelving "beach" will be created at the point facing the nearest path to serve as an access and emergence point for dogs. Ponds will be planted with native aquatic and marginal vegetation to provide opportunities for invertebrates and amphibians.

Scrub Planting

4.25 Discrete blocks of scrub planting may be included at appropriate locations through the SANGs, mostly notably in the Eastern SANG to diversify the habitats available and provide screening. Scrub planting will comprise of native species, including Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Dog Rose *Rosa canina*.

Screening

4.26 Where required, planting will be incorporated to provide visual screening from urban intrusions, such as the M4 motorway, the A327 and the Proposed Development.

4.27 Screening will include a combination of native scrub planting, as outlined above, and trees such as Oak and Field Maple *Acer campestre*. The exact specification of the screening will be dependant upon the location. For example, screening within the Western SANG will need to consider species which will tolerate regular and potentially prolonged inundation such as Alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

Habitat Restoration and Enhancement

Lowland Meadow

4.28 Lourdes Meadow is a historic title for the field within the Western SANG, which can be attributed to the Earl of Fingalls' 1756 Estate Map. The aspiration for this part of the SANG will be to restore the field to the floodplain meadow it would have been historically.

4.29 Restoration will follow the framework previously adopted at Langley Mead SANG to restore the grasslands there. Adaptations to the previous methodologies will be made as required based on previous experience and outcomes.

4.30 Broadly, the grasslands will be diversified using a green hay from a suitable receptor site, such as Moor Copse Nature Reserve. The exact location of the donor hay will be dependant upon the results of the soil samples.

4.31 The following operations will be carried out in sequence to enhance the existing grassland sward in the areas to receive green hay:

1. Reduce sward height using mowing or heavy grazing in late summer. Remove thistles and other tall ruderal plants using either weed wiping or topping with mower;
2. Harrow using a disc or power harrow until approximately 50% bare ground is visible;
3. Soon after harrowing, harvest green hay and spread immediately onto the assigned receptor location, at a harvesting-to-spreading ratio of approximately 1:2;
4. Leave the fields for at least one week (or three in wet weather) to allow seed to fall;
5. Introduce stock animals (preferably cattle) to graze the site and trample in the seed; and
6. Revisit the fields after one month to sow supplementary seed from suitable species such as Ragged Robin, Great Burnet, Yellow Rattle and Bird's Foot Trefoil, followed by further grazing.

Lourdes Meadow Watercourse

4.32 Evidence of a historic watercourse running through Lourdes Meadow is present on historic maps, and remnants of the channel can be seen on both current aerial imagery and on the ground. Opportunities to re-establish this watercourse will be sought, subject to hydrological advice.

4.33 Given that the channel is still present through much of the meadow, deepening and reconnecting the watercourse to the existing network of ditches along the adjoining Hall Farm Triangle Woodland Local Wildlife Site will be explored, including opportunities to provide new marginal and aquatic vegetation if sufficient water levels can be maintained.

Species-rich Grasslands

4.34 Grasslands within the Eastern SANG will be diversified to improve the existing sward from a species-poor grassland to species-rich.

4.35 The Eastern SANG includes low intensity grazing land and Deschampsia grasslands. Both are currently species poor and in the case of the Deschampsia grasslands lacking management.

4.36 Grasslands will be diversified through the introduction of suitable seed mixes, green hay or a combination of both, the composition of which will be subject to the results of soil sampling.

4.37 Where green hay is used, the methodology will follow that as outlined above for the lowland meadow creation. Seed distribution would follow a similar methodology in terms of ground preparation and aftercare but seed spreading would be subject to the recommendations of the supplier.

5. ONGOING MANAGEMENT

Introduction

5.1 This section sets out an overview of the broad management prescriptions that will ensure the SANG is maintained to the required standard in perpetuity to maintain its function in providing amenity space and biodiversity value.

5.2 Full details of proposed management regimes for habitats and infrastructure will be set out in the SANG Creation and Management Plan, to be secured through planning condition.

5.3 The long-term aim will be for both SANGs and the SANG Link to be incorporated into the wider SANG Management Regime undertaken by the University of Reading across the suite of SANG under their ownership and management.

Infrastructure Maintenance

5.4 Regular maintenance checks will be conducted to identify and remedy damage to items of amenity infrastructure, such as fences, gates and boardwalks. These checks will be undertaken by the Ranger on a regular basis

5.5 Checks of footpaths will be regularly undertaken to ensure they remain accessible and are not obstructed or blocked. Strimming of mown paths may be required on occasion to ensure the routes remain clear, particularly in the early phases of the SANG when usage may not be sufficient to keep them open.

5.6 Removal of loose litter and emptying of dog waste and litter bins will be undertaken at appropriate intervals.

5.7 In the longer term, items of site furniture and infrastructure will be repaired or replaced as required to maintain the safety and accessibility of the SANG, and the integrity of its perimeter fencing.

Habitat Management

5.8 Ongoing habitat management will be undertaken to ensure the proposed habitats can be delivered to provide visits with the natural experience expected of a SANG.

Grasslands

Grazing

5.9 It is proposed that where possible grasslands will be grazed to maintain their biodiversity interest. An appropriate grazing regime will be set out within the SANG Creation and Management Plan, to include livestock type, stocking density, timing and length of grazing that will support herb-rich grasslands.

5.10 A small herd of suitable cattle will be used to graze the SANG, which are adapted to feeding on rough grasslands and compatible with public access and dogs. The stock will not include dairy cattle, but more docile species such as Aberdeen Angus, Dexter or Belted Galloway. As required by law for sites with public access, no dairy bulls will be allowed to graze within the SANG.

5.11 Where possible, areas of SANG will be kept cattle free at times, to provide visitors with walking route options which do not require them to enter spaces with cattle.

5.12 Full details of the proposed grazing regime will be set out in the SANG Creation and Management Plan.

Mowing

5.13 Where grazing is considered impractical or unsuitable, mowing regimes will be implemented to maintain biodiverse grasslands. Mowing regimes will comprise of two cuts a year during mid-summer, during which arisings will initially be left on the surface to allow seeds to disperse before being removed.

Woodlands & Trees

5.14 Felling will only be carried out on trees that are considered to be a significant hazard or would be deemed to be beneficial to the ecology of the area. Major maintenance work or felling of trees will be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March – August inclusive), unless there are over-riding health and safety concerns. In this instance, the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist would be sought prior to felling.

5.15 Regular checks of trees within close proximity of footpaths will be undertaken to maintain a safe walking environment.

Native Scrub

5.16 Trimming and cutting of scrub will take place to prevent encroachment and provide edge habitats of value to local biodiversity.

Waterbodies

5.17 Ponds and watercourses will require minimal ongoing management, other than to prevent the encroachment of vegetation that may otherwise colonise the margins.

5.18 Should vegetation such as rushes establish and begin to enclose the scrape, it will be cut and removed to maintain an open habitat. Mowing of grasslands around the margin may become necessary if it becomes overgrown.

6. DELIVERY, FUNDING AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Introduction

6.1 This section sets out the arrangements for delivery and future ownership of, and responsibility for the future management of, the Western and Eastern SANGs at LGV; the mechanisms through which the required funding will be secured in-perpetuity; and the detailed costs that will be associated with setting up the SANG and managing it.

Delivery

6.2 The University of Reading will undertake the implementation works details in **Section 4** above to deliver the Western and Eastern SANG to the standard envisaged in this Delivery Plan but may call upon assistance from external organisations as required.

Ownership & Management

6.3 Ownership and management responsibilities for the Western and Eastern SANG, as well as the SANG Link will remain with the University of Reading.

6.4 Both SANG and the SANG Link will remain as a freehold of the University of Reading. The University intents to manage the SANGs in line with other local SANG under their ownership and management (Langley Mead, Langley Mead extension and The Ridge). The University will manage the SANGs themselves but may call upon assistance from external organisations as required.

6.5 The SANGs will be managed in-perpetuity, or for as long as is required by relevant legislation and policy.

6.6 The University will provide financial security for the SANG management in-perpetuity through the setting aside of a ring-fenced capital sum (the “Contingency Fund”) sufficient to fund the SANG management, and the provision of ‘step in rights’ to Wokingham Borough Council to permit them to take over the SANG and acquire the Contingency Fund if independent arbitration agrees that the SANG is not being managed adequately. The Council would then be able to manage the SANG itself from the proceeds generated by the Contingency Fund.

6.7 The Contingency Fund will be ring-fenced and index-linked by the University, which remain outside of the University’s general liabilities. The capital sum will increase in accordance with the Consumer Prices Index from the date of the grant of planning permission of the Loddon Garden Village to the contingent date when the sum is passed to the Council. Subject to the above, the University will have the benefits of all income arising from the fund.

Cost Assessment

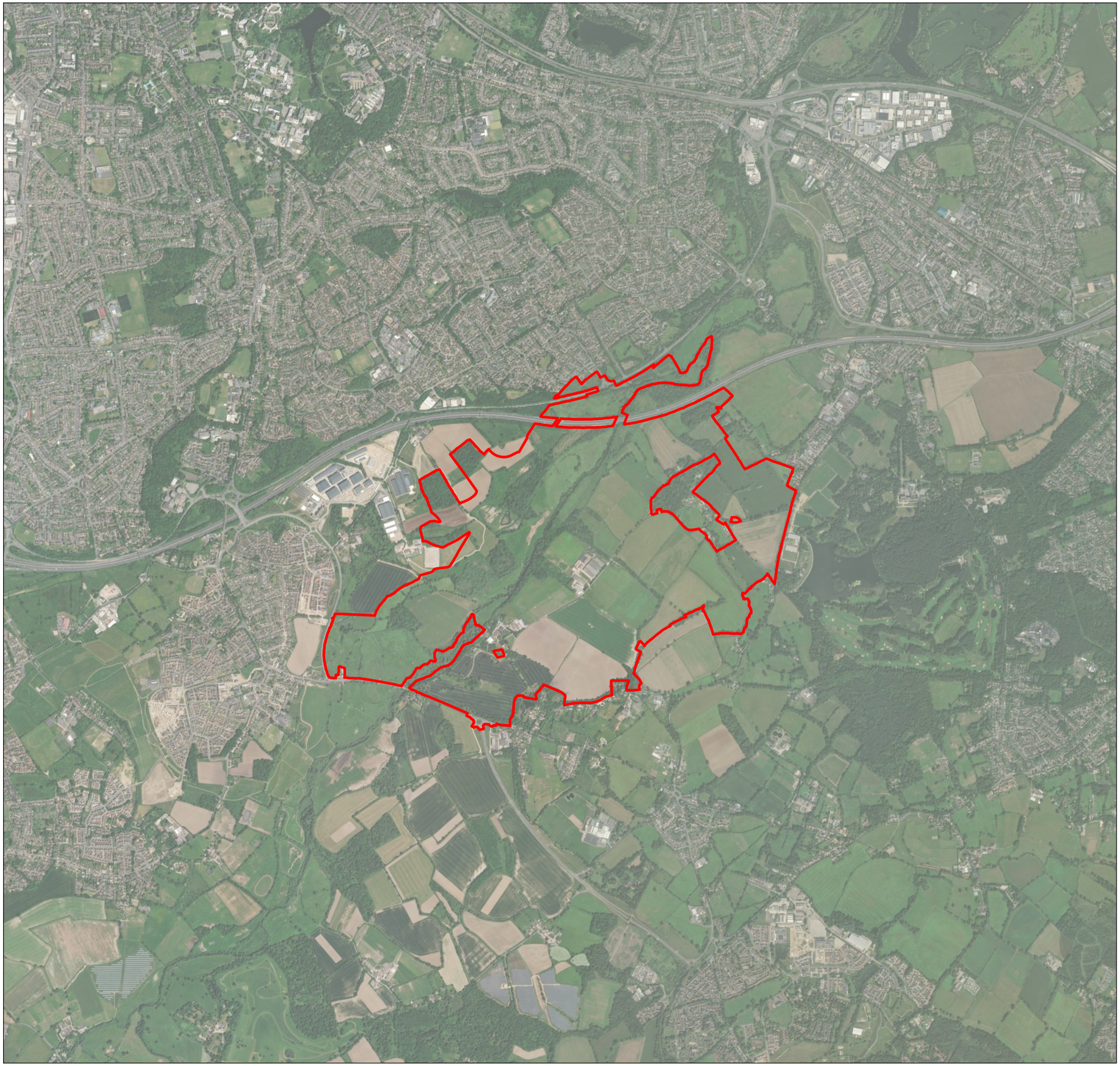
6.8 A costing assessment to include likely capital costs is included at **Annex 6**.

7. REFERENCES

Natural England (2021). Guidelines for the Creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space.

Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (2009). *Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework.*

Wokingham Borough Council (2010). Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document, January 2010. Available at: https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/local-plan-and-planning-policies.



Map 11.18.1 Site Location and Context

KEY

Site boundary

SCALE: 1:25,000 at A3

0 250 500 750 1,000 Metres

N

EPR

CLIENT: University of Reading

PROJECT: Loddon Garden Village

DATE: 27 August 2025

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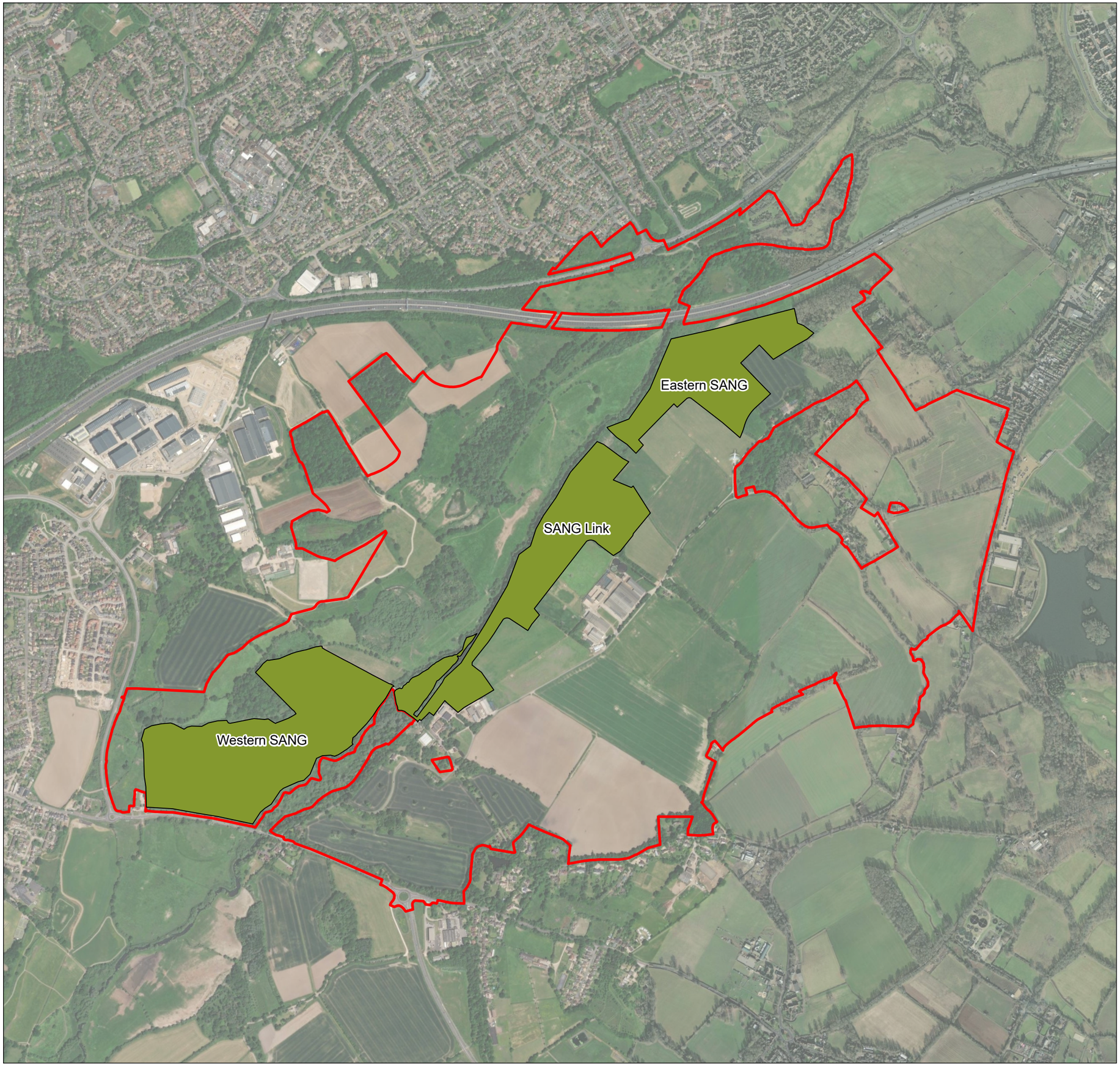
P23/42

Aerial Image: Maxar, Microsoft



Map 11.18.2 Proposed SANG Location

KEY

- Site boundary
- Proposed SANG location

SCALE: 1:13,000 at A3

0 200 400 600 800 Metres

N

EPR

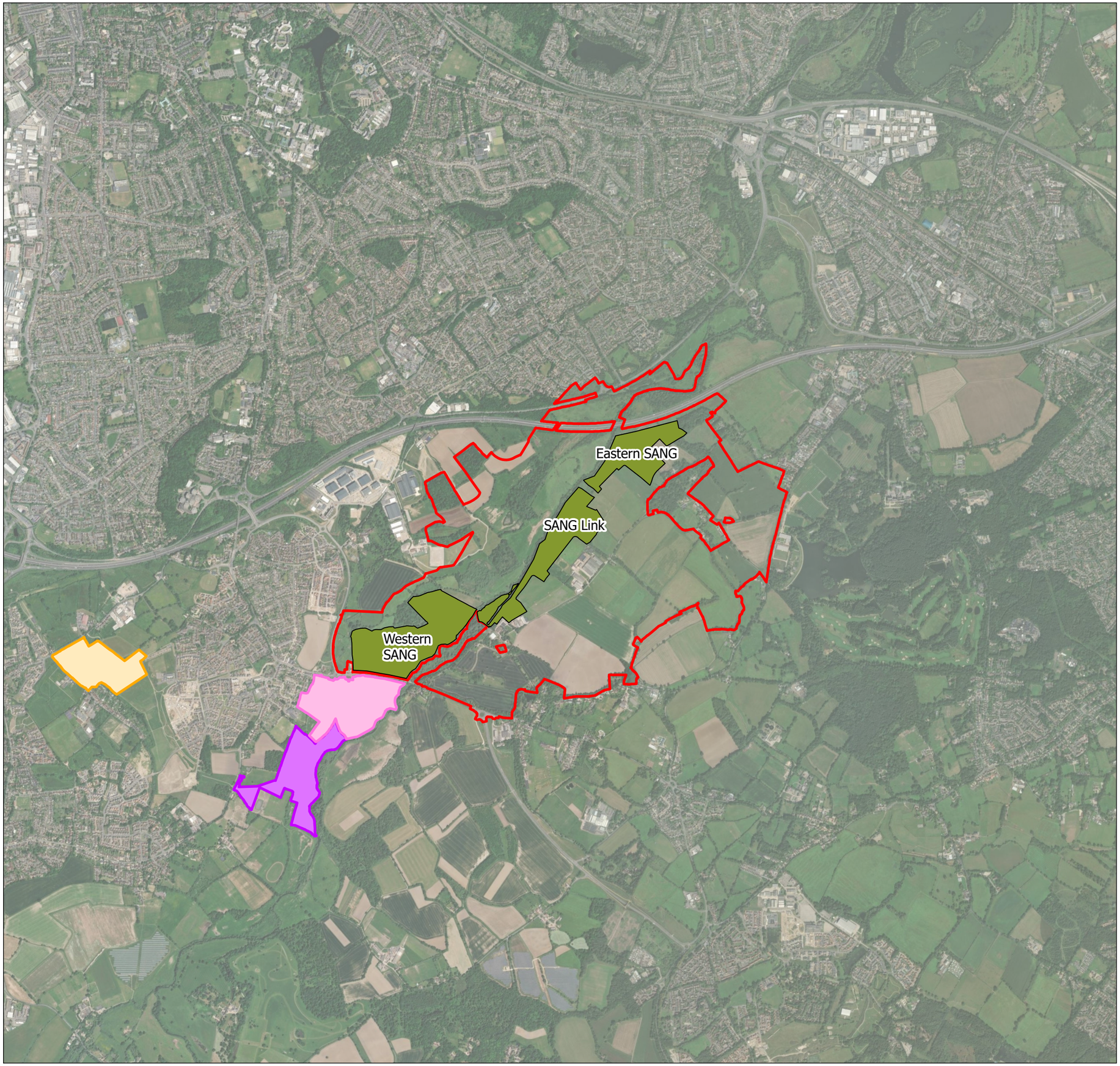
CLIENT: University of Reading

PROJECT: Loddon Garden Village

DATE: 27 August 2025

Y:\Loddon Garden Village, Shinfield 2201\GIS\Planning Application\SANG Delivery Plan\Map11.18.2_SANGLocationP2342_3968_270825.aprx

Aerial Image: Maxar, Microsoft



Map 11.18.3 Proposed SANG Location

KEY

- Site boundary
- Proposed SANG location
- Langley Mead SANG
- Langley Mead SANG Extension
- The Ridge SANG and Ridge Extension

SCALE: 1:26,000 at A3

0 250 500 750 1,000 Metres

N

EPR

CLIENT: University of Reading

PROJECT: Loddon Garden Village

DATE: 27 August 2025

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Aerial Image: Maxar, Microsoft