

Date: 5 February 2020

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Georgina Blakemore  
Chief Executive

**Planning Policy Team**

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Dear Mr Smith,

**Re: Epping Forest District Local Plan and Epping Forest SAC**

Thank you for your two letters dated 28 November 2019 and I apologise for the delay in replying.

We do recognise the ongoing engagement and assistance that the Conservators have given to us and my officers have continued to engage with your officers in relation to matters with regard to the Epping Forest SAC. This included a joint meeting with yourselves and Natural England to discuss an updated methodology on assessing the air pollution effects on the SAC held on 12 December 2019. We have also liaised with regard to the updated visitor survey (which was commissioned by this authority in order to facilitate procurement issues the Conservators were having). The draft report was circulated prior to the Christmas break and comments have been received from your officers.

A meeting on 24 February 2020 has now been arranged with all relevant parties to take forward and agree final comments before going back to the consultants, Footprint Ecology, to consider the implications of the updated survey in order to finalise the mitigation strategy for recreational pressure and to agree appropriate governance arrangements. In relation to the governance arrangements we had understood from the London Borough of Waltham Forest that they would like to take the lead in pursuing this matter but as no meeting has been set up by them we agreed at the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Officer meeting held on 28 January 2020 (to which your officers were invited) that we would now instigate this.

We note your position in relation to the mitigation strategy and will continue to work with your officers, as well as Natural England, on both the SAMMS and SANG Strategy. Please be assured that we fully recognise the importance of this work and the role that your officers have played, and I hope will continue to play, in helping to develop and refine our approaches. To this end, as well as the meeting to be held on 24 February a further technical meeting with your officers and Natural England has been arranged for 26 March 2020. The Council is also currently preparing a Green Infrastructure Strategy to support an integrated approach to the provision and enhancements to existing spaces which will be shared in draft and on a confidential basis ahead of taking a report to the Cabinet on 26 March 2020 prior to formal consultation. As part of the informal engagement a presentation will be made to the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Member Board on 24 February 2020.

We are very much aware of the matters raised by both yourselves and Natural England at the Hearing sessions and are using these to guide our work.

I thought that you might find it helpful to know that this Council has currently funded the costs of the updated visitor survey. We note your request for a costs undertaking to help with the expenditure and resources of the preparation of SAMMS proposals. We were not aware that LUC were being commissioned for this work, its scope or its cost and therefore suggest that this is discussed at the meeting on 24 February together with the cost of the visitor survey when all the relevant authorities are present.

I trust this answers the issues you raised and look forward to meeting you on 7 February 2020.

Yours sincerely



Cllr John Philip

Planning Portfolio Holder, Epping Forest District Council

cc Georgina Blakemore – Chief Executive, Epping Forest District Council