



Equality Screening Assessment (ESA)

This form must be completed to evidence what impact the proposal may have on protected groups within our community and/or workforce. Please complete with reference to the [Guidance Notes](#).

1: Proposal

Requirement	Details
Title of proposal:	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Mitigation Strategy
Type of proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• new or change of policy,• new or change to service.	Update existing policy/strategy The Guidance will replace a previous Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted by the Borough Council of Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council in 2015 and a mitigation strategy addendum adopted in 2016. The Guidance will also work in place of a previous SPD adopted by West Northamptonshire Council in 2021 and a mitigation strategy addendum adopted in 2022. The Guidance takes account of new evidence available since the adoption of these previous documents.
What is the objective of this proposal?	<p>The Guidance relates to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, a series of exhausted sand and gravel pits along the River Nene from Northampton to Thrapston. The site was designated for its wintering birds and is protected in law by the Habitats Regulations. Under these regulations, the council is the 'competent authority' for decisions relating to planning. This means that the council cannot approve development which would cause a 'likely significant effect' on the SPA's wintering birds.</p> <p>The Guidance has been produced to help councils, developers and others ensure that development does not have an impact on the SPA.</p>

Requirement	Details
	<p>Northamptonshire's main towns are earmarked for major urban growth. This creates pressures from built development, demand for public access and recreation. Recreational disturbance is the main threat to the SPA. A difficult balancing act is required to resolve impacts associated with recreation without compromising people's ability to be outside and enjoying the green spaces near their homes.</p> <p>Studies of the effects of visitor behaviour on bird behaviour and numbers have shown that people and dogs can disturb the SPA's birds as they feed and roost. The first visitor access survey of the SPA was done in 2014; this was updated in 2023 to identify changes in visitor numbers and access patterns. Studies of bird responses to disturbance were undertaken in 2018 and 2022.</p> <p>Birds react to disturbance in different ways. They will often fly, walk or run away, which uses valuable energy. They may also simply lift their heads and watch or become vigilant to potential danger. All of these behaviours interrupt the birds' feeding. Birds will avoid areas that are continually disturbed. Unfortunately, these are sometimes the best feeding areas. Repeated disturbance can also cause stress and loss of energy, which affects the birds' health and breeding potential.</p> <p>Natural England considers a single visit to the SPA as causing a 'likely significant effect' on the SPA. For this reason, the council must develop a way to mitigate these effects which arise from new development.</p> <p>The 2023 visitor access survey showed that 75% of winter visitors to the SPA live within 5.9km of the site. The 75th percentile is often used to define a zone of influence (ZoI), where new housing may trigger significant effects and therefore the need to provide mitigation. The 2023 survey showed that 'close to home' was the most common reason cited (62%) for visiting the SPA. Ninety-nine percent of winter visitors were visiting directly from home; 94% of these visitors lived in West or North Northamptonshire. The two most common main activities were dog walking (40%) and walking (39%). Fifty-nine percent of visitors visited 'most days' (i.e. at least 180 visits/year), including 18% who visited at least once a day. The average route length was 3.8km.</p>

Requirement	Details
	<p>The Guidance outlines a consistent approach to both consulting Natural England and identifying potential significant effects on the SPA's qualifying features. It provides detailed advice and guidance on implementing local plan policies relating to the SPA.</p> <p>New residential units and overnight accommodation within the 5.9km Zol will be required to mitigate effects of the development through contributions to the SPA Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy. Where development is considered likely to have an effect of its own on the SPA due to its size, location and availability of nearby semi-natural greenspace, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) may also be required.</p>
<p>Who will be consultation on this proposal? And when? (List all the groups / communities, including dates)</p>	<p>Public consultation is scheduled to take place from 10 March – 21 April 2026. There has been key stakeholder involvement in the production of the document with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England • Wildlife Trust BCN • Environment Agency • West Northamptonshire Council • Bedford Borough Council
<p>Did the consultation highlight any impact on protected groups? (If yes, give details)</p>	<p>The consultation document has been developed in consultation with expert stakeholders. The responses to the document have been assessed and the comments on accessibility or useability addressed within the document.</p>
<p>What processes are in place to monitor and review the equality impact of this proposal?</p>	<p>The delivery of the SPA mitigation measures will be overseen by the SPA mitigation working group comprising officers from North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils, Natural England and Wildlife Trust. The working group develops the SPA mitigation strategy and oversees the implementation of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures to mitigate the impact of new development. The measures will mainly be implemented on the ground by the Wildlife Trust. The mitigation strategy will be monitored and reviewed by the SPA mitigation working group; this monitoring will review all the projects that take place.</p>
<p>Who will approve this proposal? (Committee, PGG, CLT)</p>	<p>Executive</p>

2: Equality Consideration

In turn, consider each protected group and question whether the proposal seeks to:

- Eliminate discrimination,
- Foster good relations,
- Remove barriers,

Protected Groups Look at each group in turn. Will that group be impacted differently by the proposal to other protected groups? How? Why?	General Equality Duty Considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data to show who is in this group. • Consider how they are impacted by the outcomes and during the process. • Whose perspective does this need looking at from? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees • Customers • Contractors 	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there levelling up opportunities for a particular group? • Can you... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remove disadvantage? • improve access/support? • collect more data to be more informed? 	Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Neutral • Negative
Age Are different age ranges impacted differently?	n/a	The 'community engagement' aspect of the mitigation strategy has to date included school visits, plus work with Scout groups, Rushden Rangers, Wombles and other children's groups/forums. As the community engagement element is being retained in the new strategy it is expected that this work will continue.	Neutral
Sex Is one sex impacted more than another?	n/a	The 'community engagement' aspect of the mitigation strategy has included work with Northants Nature Girls, a Wildlife Trust BCN initiative to get more women outside and enjoying nature together. It is expected that this will continue through the new mitigation strategy.	Neutral
Disability Is one type of disability impacted more than others?	n/a	The SPA SPG/mitigation strategy document incorporates accessibility features to allow those with screen readers and other assistive technologies to navigate and use the document.	Neutral

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Gender Reassignment Will there be an impact on people who are trans?	n/a	n/a	Neutral
Race Are people from one ethnic group affected more than people from another?	n/a	The mitigation strategy includes new and updated signage at some of the lakes: these should be written in 'plain English' to improve accessibility for those for whom English is not a first language.	Neutral
Sexual Orientation Are people of one sexual orientation affected differently to people of another sexual orientation?	n/a	n/a	Neutral
Marriage & Civil Partnership Note: Applies to employment proposals only.	n/a	n/a	Neutral
Pregnancy & Maternity Are people who are pregnant, or have a baby of 6 months old or younger, impacted by this proposal?	n/a	n/a	Neutral
Religion or Belief Does the proposal impact people differently depending on their religion or belief?	n/a	n/a	Neutral

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Care Experience Does the proposal impact someone who has been in care differently to someone who has not. Please also refer to the care experience guidance notes .	n/a	n/a	Neutral
Health & Wellbeing 1. Health behaviours (E.g. diet, exercise, alcohol, smoking) 2. Support (E.g. community cohesion, rural isolation) 3. Socio economic (E.g. income, education). 4. Environment (E.g. green spaces, fuel poverty, housing standards).	<p>The mitigation strategy will support public enjoyment of the Special Protection Area's wildlife while ensuring visitor pressure does not adversely impact the birds for which the site was designated.</p> <p>Large developments (approximately 500 dwellings and more) within 5.9km of the SPA will be required to deliver significant green infrastructure ('SPA mitigation') on site, to draw visitor pressure away from the SPA by providing high quality semi-natural greenspace close to home. This will result in increased habitat creation within the 5.9km zone of influence.</p> <p>On-site 'SPA mitigation' which is delivered on large developments must be designed to be attractive to residents, usually those living within 400m of the green infrastructure. This would reduce the need for motorised travel to high-quality semi-natural greenspace for recreation purposes.</p>	n/a	neutral

3: Equality Impact

Question	Response
What impact does the proposal have on the protected groups? No Impact, Positive Impact, Negative Impact or a combination? Any negative impact will result in an overall negative impact.	No impact
Does an Equality Impact Assessment need to be completed? (Yes, if any negative impact is found.)	No (If yes, this Equality Screening Assessment must be adjoined to the Equality Impact Assessment).
Is this document going to be published with the relevant report? If yes, include link to location.	Yes Once the public consultation has concluded and any amendments to the document have been made, it will be presented to Executive for adoption at the 9 June 2026 meeting.
Does the associated proposal meet our accessibility requirements? Writing for Inclusion Guidance	Yes

4: Ownership

Question	Response
Directorate	Growth and Regeneration
Service area	Policy and Placemaking
Lead officer's name	Heather Webb
Lead officer's job title	Principal Project Officer
Lead officer's email address	Heather.webb@northnorthants.gov.uk
Lead officer's signature	
Date completed	26/02/26

Question	Response
Confirm Lead Officer has completed Equality Impact Assessments iLearn Module .	Yes

Completed forms must be sent to [NNC Equalities](#)

Approved by:	Emma Freeman
Date Approved:	23 March 2026
Additional requirements:	none