

DECISION TAKER: Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan, Councillor Jackie Porter

REPORT TITLE: REVISED BIRD AWARE STRATEGY

11 DECEMBER 2024

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WARD(S): BISHOP'S WALTHAM, WHITELEY & SHEDFIELD, CENTRAL MEON VALLEY, SOUTHWICK & WICKHAM AND DENMEAD

DECISION:

1. That the Bird Aware Partnership's revised strategy and supporting financial model be noted and endorsed.
2. That authority be given to the Strategic Director to approve updates to Appendix B financial model of the revised strategy, as required by emerging guidance, caselaw and local circumstances.
3. That authority be given to the Strategic Director to approve updates to the financial model as required by operational need and market influences.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Winchester City Council is a member of the Bird Aware Solent Partnership, along with all Local Planning Authorities in PfSH (Partnership for Southern Hampshire), adjacent Solent area authorities and national and local conservation bodies.

The Bird Aware Strategy (previously known as the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership Strategy) provides a mechanism which enables housing developers to address the issue of mitigation on the Solent coastline arising from new housing developments within 5.6km of the Solent Special Protection Areas (SPAs). This means that the Council is able to meet its obligations under the Habitats Regulations and, in so doing, continue to grant planning permissions for residential developments in the southern part of the district.

This paper outlines the steps undertaken to review the work and finances of Bird Aware Solent and seeks approval from Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan for the revised Bird Aware Strategy and financial model. The key revisions to the

Strategy include extending the duration from 2034 to 2050, providing mitigation for around 5,700 dwellings per annum where previously it had been closer to 2,500 per annum, and the inclusion of summer/breeding birds.

#### OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

1. It is recommended that the council approves the revised Bird Aware Strategy and financial model.
2. If the Partnership does not adopt the proposed changes, it is acknowledged that this may lead to potentially negative outcomes, including, but not limited to:
  - With Natural England acknowledging the new evidence base related to breeding birds, it is possible that developers may be required to provide their own mitigation for these birds if they are not covered under this strategic scheme.
  - With more housing coming forward, the existing Strategy will not remain fit for purpose over time, as it will not have the required scale of resources to deal with the scale of the issues it is mitigating against.
  - There is an increasing risk that as the Strategy does not align with the city council's Local Plan period (2040), this could be an issue that is raised at the Local Plan examination as the city council will not be able to evidence an appropriate mitigation scheme.
  - There will be an increasing risk that the condition of the SPAs will deteriorate over time, resulting in increased mortality of the birds.

#### DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None

#### DISPENSATION GRANTED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE:

None

APPROVED BY: Jackie Porter

DATE: 11.12.2024

**Councillor Jackie Porter – Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan**

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Revised Strategy document

Appendix B: Financial Model

Appendix C: Map showing the charging areas within WCC

Appendix D: Letter from Natural England

Appendix E: Equality Impact Assessment