

North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Guidance for Applicants

August 2025

This document contains important information in relation to your submitted planning application following the Council's adoption of the **Interim North Meadow Mitigation Strategy 2023-2028**.

What is the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC) SAC?

The North Meadow SAC is recognised as an internationally important site for its biodiversity and is known in particular for the very high proportion of the surviving UK population of snake's head fritillary (*Fritillaria Meleagris*), a plant highly characteristic of damp lowland meadows in Europe and now rare.

Natural England has advised the Council that over recent years, recreational pressures from visitors to the site have increased and are now causing considerable damage to the wildlife value of the SAC.

The Council is legally obliged to consider whether planning applications would affect the biodiversity of North Meadow and Clattinger Farm.

Understanding Recreational Impacts

In 2022 Swindon Borough Council, along with Cotswold and Wiltshire Councils jointly commissioned visitor survey work to better understand the visitor impact on North Meadow. This has identified two visitor catchments (known as 'Zones of Influence'):

- **Inner Zone is set at 0 - 4.2km from the boundary of the SAC** - it represents the area within which 75% of local regular users originate plus local visitors to the flowers in the main summer season.
- **Outer Zone is set at 4.2 - 9.4km from the boundary of the SAC**. This represents the area within which 75% of those that come to view the flowers during the main summer flowering season originate and does not feature regular users.

An interactive map of the two catchments are available on the [Council's website](#). **Your planning application has been identified as falling within one of the Zones of Influence.**

What are the implications for my Planning Application?

As your application is located within one of the zones, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be required to support the application. You will need to demonstrate that sufficient mitigation has been provided to address any potential recreational impacts at North Meadow.

To provide a simple, effective and streamlined approach to progressing applications in a timely manner, without applicants needing to undertake detailed work on a HRA, the Council has engaged with Natural England and our adjacent Local Authorities to develop an 'Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy'.

This strategy provides applicants with the option of paying a per unit / dwelling financial contribution towards delivering mitigation measures such as improved site information; monitoring, and ranger services to mitigate against additional visitor impacts generated by new development. The strategy can be found on the Council's website [North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023-2028 | Swindon Borough Council](#)

What are the Fees?

Table 1 below shows the mitigation fees as set out in the strategy on a per unit basis.

(note: updated costs that will apply per dwelling starting on 01 October 2024 [North Meadow SAC Mitigation Costs October 2024 - FINAL | Swindon Borough Council](#))

Table 1 - Mitigation Financial Contributions (from 01 October 2024)			
Zone	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contribution per unit	Infrastructure Mitigation Projects/Strategic Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) contribution per unit	Total financial contribution to delivery of the Strategy/ per unit
Inner zone (0 – 4.2km) Relevant developments under 50 units	£331.61	£480	£803
Inner zone (0 – 4.2km) Relevant developments over 50 units	£331.61	Normally provided within the development site i.e. SANG	£331.61
Outer zone (4.2 – 9.4 km) All relevant developments	£331.61	N/A (Except for larger developments (e.g. those that trigger the EIA Regulations), which will be considered on a site by site basis)	£331.61
Outside 9.4km	N/A (Except for larger developments (e.g. those that trigger the EIA Regulations), which will be considered on a site by site basis)	N/A (Except for larger developments (e.g. those that trigger the EIA Regulations), which will be considered on a site by site basis)	N/A (Except for larger developments (e.g. those that trigger the EIA Regulations), which will be considered on a site by site basis)

The financial contribution will be used towards meeting the overall cost of the strategic mitigation package as set out in the strategy. The contribution will be secured through;

- an agreement under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 (for applications involving 10 units or less) where the applicant will pay the contribution prior to determination of the application, or
- Unilateral Undertaking (Section 106 Agreement) where the applicant will be required to agree to pay the contribution prior to the commencement of development.

For s111 Agreements involving applications 10 units and less – Please complete and return two signed copies of the attached form agreeing to pay the mitigation contribution on receipt of invoice and prior to the determination of your application. Once payment is received a copy will be signed by the authorised officer of the Council and returned to the applicant to signify the Council's agreement to receipt of the habitats mitigation contribution under the terms set out in this form. A s111 legal fee of £275 will also apply.

For Unilateral Agreements (UU) – You will need to instruct a solicitor and the case officer will instruct the Council's legal team to draft an agreement to be completed prior to determination of the planning application. There are additional legal and monitoring fees for applications as set out below in Table 2.

Table 2: Legal and Joint Administration / Monitoring Fee (UU)	
UU Agreement Legal Fee	
Up to and including 4 units	£400
5 – 10 units	£800
11 dwellings or above	Fee on a case by case basis
More than one contribution or obligation required for the scheme	Fee on a case by case basis
Monitoring Fee	
All schemes	£504

Application Calculation Example

For example, a new housing development of 2 dwellings within outer zone (4.2 - 9.4km from North Meadow):

Table 3: Application Calculation Example (UU)		
Fee Type	Calculation	Total
Mitigation Charge	2 x £331.61	£663.22
Legal Fee	1 x £400	£400
Monitoring Fee	1 x £504	£504
Total		£1567.22

What are my other options?

While the preferred option is for applicants to contribute towards strategic mitigation, an alternative is to undertake a 'shadow' HRA setting out the level of recreational impact linked to the application and a set of mitigation measures to address this harm both alone and in combination with other plans or projects (i.e. other planning applications). Should you wish to proceed with this option, you may wish to seek specialist professional advice in advance of

contacting Natural England by using their [Discretionary Advice Service](#). These shadow HRAs can be costly and complicated assessments to prepare and to date no shadow HRAs have been submitted that adequately address the impacts on the SAC.

Further Information

The Habitat Regulations is a complex area of planning and the Council has a new [dedicated web page](#) with further information on North Meadow and Clattinger Farm, which will be added to over time with FAQs. You can also contact your assigned Case Officer for further information.