

Date: 16 June 2025



Epping Forest District Council
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Newham
London Borough of Redbridge
London Borough of Waltham Forest
City of London Conservators of Epping Forest

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear All,

Update on the Epping Forest Strategic Solution – Recreational Pressure Zone of Influence and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Agreement.

Natural England last wrote to the Epping Forest SAC Oversight Group in March 2021 with details of the progress with regards to working towards a more permanent strategic approach to residential planning applications which have the potential to impact on Epping Forest SAC. This advice applied to all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) which were identified as partly or wholly within the 6.2km Zone of Influence (Zol).

We welcome the progress that has been made to date, and recognise the hard work that from all parties that has been required to progress to this stage. This letter provides an update on the overall position.

Requirement for Mitigation

The Zone of Influence for recreational pressure on Epping Forest SAC is still 6.2km, with the group of local authorities that are signatories to the SAMM Governance Agreement remaining unchanged. It has been agreed by the Technical Oversight Group that each visitor survey represents a snapshot in time, and that the Zol will only change if a trend appears as part of the long term monitoring.

We have worked with Local Planning Authorities to agree borough/district mitigation strategies that incorporate the SAMM Strategy alongside local measures. Given the differences in these local strategies and the measures adopted, we have referred to these local strategies as 'toolbox mitigation' in this letter.

The Habitats Regulations are definitive when it comes to alone and in combination tests. To reflect these legislation requirements, we advise that **all net increases** of residential development within the 6.2km will require both SAMM and toolbox mitigation to be provided **in perpetuity**. We think we have raised this individually with the impacted boroughs, but wanted to take this opportunity to clarify in writing.

The development of borough wide strategies makes it feasible for developments of all sizes to make contributions towards the provision of toolbox mitigation. We acknowledge that there will be differing timescales between local authorities in terms of bringing these strategies forward, and we will continue to work on a bespoke approach to avoidance and mitigation with larger developments in the interim until strategies are secured.

We look forward to continuing to work with you all as the SAMM strategy moves into a delivery phase, and working on local strategies that allow development to come forward within the Zone of Influence, while ensuring that there are adequate avoidance and mitigation measures in place to avoid further recreational pressure damage being caused to Epping Forest SAC.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only relating to Essex, please contact Fiona Martin at Fiona.Martin@naturalengland.org.uk.

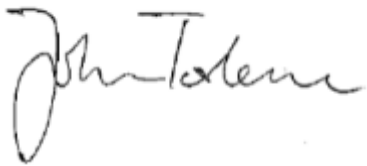
For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only relating to London, please contact Bella Jack at bella.jack1@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Horton'.

Graham Horton

Acting Deputy Director – Thames Solent Team

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Torlesse'.

John Torlesse

Deputy Director – West Anglia Team