

**THAMES BASIN HEATHS  
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

Date: 18 June 2009

Subject: Cross boundary working on SANG

Report of: South East England Partnership Board

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Board agree the high level principles for joint working on cross boundary SANG set out in section 4 of this report.

**Purpose of the Report:**

To provide additional information about the options and implications for cross boundary provision of SANG and recommend some high level principles for taking joint working between authorities on SANG forward.

**1. Introduction and background**

1.1 The Delivery Framework sets out the need for:

- A strategic approach to the provision of access management measures and monitoring
- A local and, where appropriate, cross boundary approach to the provision and use of suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG).

1.2 The South East Plan policy NRM6 clearly states that:

*'Authorities should co-operate and work jointly to implement mitigation measures. These may include, inter alia, assistance to those authorities with insufficient SANG land within their own boundaries, co-operation on access management and joint development plan documents'*

1.3 The idea of cross boundary SANG is a relatively unexplored one, but one that is starting to be investigated by a number of local authorities. Whilst individual authorities must develop strategies to enable housing delivery within their own areas, essentially the need to protect the SPA is a strategic 'sub-regional' issue: all authorities that surround the Thames Basin Heath have a shared objective to protect the SPA. It is therefore important for authorities to work together to secure maximum strategic benefit to the environment and local communities from the limited resources available.

1.4 This paper - at the request of the officer steering group - provides more information about the options for, and implications of, cross boundary provision of SANG; and recommends some overarching principles to guide

joint working between authorities. The principles recommended in section 4 are deliberately high level as approaches will need to be carefully tailored to reflect local circumstances. Being too prescriptive at this early stage may complicate or inhibit joint working and the development of innovative solutions.

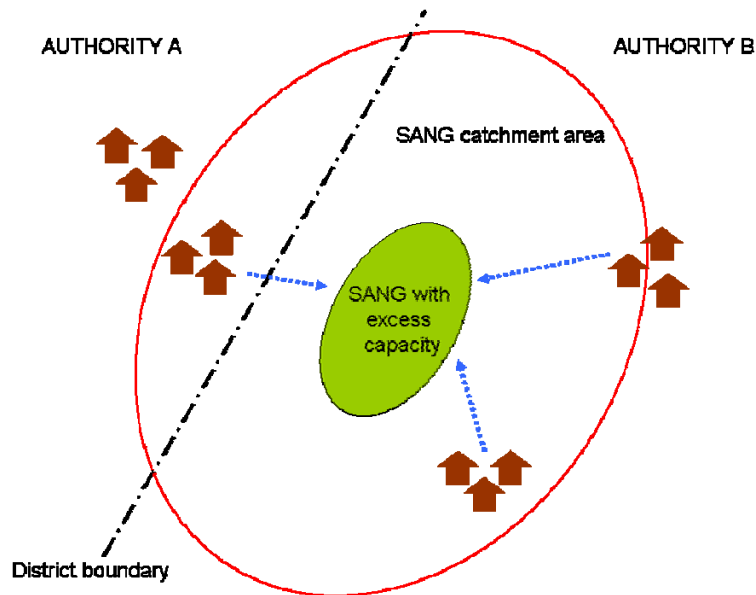
## 2. Examples of cross boundary SANG

- 2.1 The Delivery Framework states that local authorities should explore opportunities for cross boundary working. It provides some examples of when joint working between authorities may be appropriate.

### Example 1 – the catchment of a SANG extends into a neighbouring authority

- 2.2 It may be possible for authorities to share a SANG, allowing new housing development in one authority to be allocated SANG in another authority (see diagram 1). For example, if the catchment of a SANG in one authority (authority B) which has excess capacity extends into a neighbouring authority where there is a capacity deficit (authority A), or where it makes sense for authorities to share SANG delivery costs and/or capacity

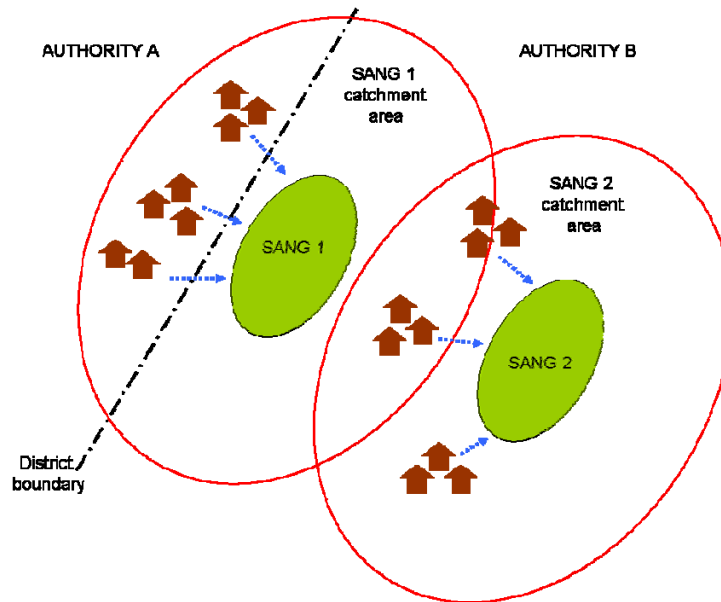
**Diagram 1**



### Example 2 – A local authority alone is not able meet its own SANG need

- 2.3 It may be possible for one authority (authority A) to identify and use a SANG in another authority area (authority B) (diagram 2). Realistically, this is only likely to be an option when the other authority has a plentiful, long term supply of SANG for its own use.

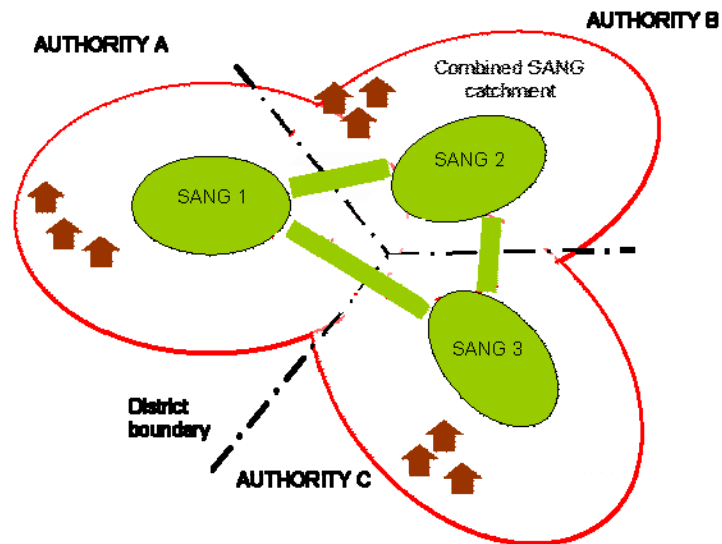
Diagram 2



Example 3 - There is the opportunity to add value and/or capacity to individual SANG by developing a network of SANG across boundaries

- 2.4 There may be instances where the benefits of agreeing a cross boundary network of SANG outweigh the benefits of those sites being individually by adjoining authorities (diagram 3). For example, there may be the opportunity to develop a functional SANG network that benefits a number of authorities. This approach is being explored in the Blackwater Valley, where the development of a cross boundary SANG 'corridor' could potentially benefit a number of authorities, including some with otherwise very limited SANG resources.

Diagram 3



### 3. Developing cross boundary SANG

3.1 Some authorities are starting to explore options for cross boundary SANG. In taking this work forward it is important that the opportunities and implications for each authority involved are fully understood. The allocation and/or use of SANG on a cross boundary basis will require particularly careful evidence gathering, clear justification and good communication and negotiation between authorities.

#### Benefits of cross boundary SANG

3.2 Cross boundary SANG may have both strategic and local benefits.

3.2.1 *Strategic benefits:* In general terms, making full use of all potential SANG capacity and catchment areas across the affected authorities will secure the maximum strategic benefits in terms of housing delivery and protection of the SPA. Developing cross boundary SANG may also help contribute to the development and retention of high quality greenspace and/or green networks, contributing to other important objectives, and benefiting residents from multiple authorities.

3.2.2 *Local benefits:* For authorities with limited options for SANG within their own boundaries, using a suitable site in an adjoining authority may help unlock housing delivery in all or part of that authority. For authorities with plentiful open space, allocation of that land as SANG for an adjoining authority may assist in the retention and upgrading of public open space. Working together to develop cross boundary SANG may also enable authorities to share SANG management and monitoring responsibilities, share acquisition costs and / or implement upgrading measures more quickly by combining developer contributions.

### Implications of developing cross boundary SANG

- 3.3 Perhaps the most notable consequence of developing cross boundary SANG is that the use of a site as SANG by an adjoining authority may have implications for if – and how - that site is used by the authority in which it is located. For example, the number of houses that can be allocated to a shared SANG (example 1 above) would be less than if the SANG was not shared. It is important that the implications of cross boundary SANG are fully understood when options are being explored.
- 3.3.1 *Communication and negotiation* – Throughout the process of developing cross boundary SANG, effective communication and negotiation between authorities will be vital to ensure that the priorities and aspirations of each authority are fully understood. For example, it will be important to ensure that any site being considered for use by one authority is surplus to the needs of the authority in which it is situated.
- 3.3.2 *Recognition of housing delivery priorities* – The main focus for an individual authority in terms of housing delivery will be delivery of housing in their own authority area. However it is important that wider strategic needs are recognised and taken into account – for example the need to ensure effective delivery of housing in adjoining authorities, and the need to implement a strategic approach to protecting the SPA.

## **4. Principles of joint working**

- 4.1 To ensure that joint working on cross boundary SANG, where appropriate, proceeds smoothly and effectively, it is recommended that the Board endorse some high level guiding principles.
- 4.1.1 *Principle 1* – when exploring and taking forward options for the cross boundary use or allocation of SANG local authorities will operate with transparency and fairness.
- 4.1.2 *Principle 2* - when exploring and taking forward options for the cross boundary use or allocation of SANG local authorities will have regard to the need to secure the maximum strategic benefit for the protection of the SPA and delivery of housing within the vicinity of the SPA.
- 4.1.3 *Principle 3* – Any LPA considering use or allocation of SANG in another authority commits to work in partnership with that other authority, to keep that authority fully informed about the technical work and negotiations being undertaken and to take full account of the views, interests and plans of the adjoining LPA throughout the process. SANG in an adjoining authority should only be formally identified following agreement with that authority.
- 4.1.4 *Principle 4* – Any LPA in whose area SANG land being considered by another authority is situated commits to work in partnership and cooperate with the LPA considering use/allocation of the SANG.

- 4.1.5 *Principle 5* – When implementing cross-boundary SANG solutions a written agreement between authorities should be prepared detailing aspects such as (although not limited to):
- The level of contributions and how they will be collected and used
  - The identified SANG capacity and how that capacity will be allocated
  - How the SANG will be managed, monitored and reviewed.
- These aspects should also be incorporated in avoidance strategies at the appropriate time.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The identification of cross boundary SANG can help ensure that SANG resources are used fully and effectively to secure strategic and local priorities relating not only to the provision of housing and protection of the SPA, but potentially other policy goals. However it is important that joint working proceeds on in a transparent and open manner. The above principles will help ensure this happens, and it is therefore recommended that the Board agrees these principles to guide joint working on cross boundary SANG.

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