1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree to the release of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) capacity to enable Rushmoor to deliver its housing needs.

1.2 This report does not deal with wider SANG monitoring or any change in how the Council allocates its own SANGs capacity in future. That will be the subject of a separate report in August.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That the Joint Chief Executive be authorised to agree a Memorandum of Understanding with Rushmoor Borough Council providing for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) capacity for 1,500 new homes to be allocated to developments in Rushmoor from a combination of Bramshot Farm SANG, the new Hawley Park SANG, and other appropriate SANG which come forward within the relevant catchment.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 A request has been received from Rushmoor, for Hart to release spare SANG capacity to help deliver up to 1,500 new homes in Rushmoor (letter attached). Without this support Rushmoor will not be able to deliver in full its objectively assessed housing needs and important current regeneration schemes will also be frustrated.

3.2 Following a £5.3m interest free loan from the LEP Hart is delivering a new SANG at Bramshot Farm (1,745 new home capacity). Planning permission has been granted and works have begun with a view to the SANG being open in October. In addition further SANG capacity is to become available within the Rushmoor catchment area as part of the Hawley Park Farm development (788 new home capacity) with a possible opportunity to purchase further SANG land for an additional 551 new homes.

3.3 In March 2017 Cabinet agreed an interim release of SANG capacity from Bramshot Farm for 200 new homes (limited to development comprising 5 or less dwellings). This report does not consider any potential change to this arrangement – a further report of wider SANG monitoring will be brought to Cabinet in August.
4 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Under the duty to co-operate it is important for Rushmoor and Hart to work together so that the housing needs for the housing market area are met. Otherwise a significant burden is placed on Hart to deliver any unmet Rushmoor housing needs.

4.2 Rushmoor has already run out of spare SANG capacity and important regeneration projects are stalled. There is therefore an immediate need to release SANG capacity reinforced by Rushmoor’s need to demonstrate that its pre-submission Local Plan can meet its housing needs. An important part of the LEP funding agreement was that Hart would release capacity to help meet wider housing market area needs.

4.3 The arrangement with Rushmoor, which will be reflected in a Memorandum of Understanding, will include monitoring mechanisms to ensure a steady flow of income to ensure money is being received in order to pay back the LEP loan (it has to be repaid within 7 years).

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate unbudgeted financial or resource implications and the arrangement with Rushmoor will help Hart meet its financial obligations to pay back the LEP loan on schedule.

6 ACTION

The Joint Chief Executive agrees with Rushmoor the necessary Memorandum of Understanding and that it includes the appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure a constant delivery.

Contact Details: Daryl Phillips / 4492 / daryl.phillips@hart.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Letter from Rushmoor Borough Council, February 2017
Dear Daryl,

Bramshot Farm SANG

We communicated by letter (to Katie Bailey) in July 2016 confirming that Rushmoor Borough Council recognised the importance of working with its neighbouring authorities to secure Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in order to facilitate the delivery of identified housing need across the Housing Market Area (together comprising Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Councils). We offered our support for the LEP Bid seeking the acquisition of the Bramshot Farm site for the purposes of SANG provision, to be used as a shared resource for mitigating the impact of net new residential development in both Hart and Rushmoor.

In that letter, we indicated that around 1,000 dwellings were expected to come forward in and around the Farnborough area, without any appropriate SPA avoidance measures in place (although we noted that this could rise to 1,500 dwellings once the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELAA) had been updated). In view of this, we acknowledged that the sharing of SANG capacity at Bramshot Farm between our respective authorities would help to ensure that Rushmoor was able to deliver its proportion of the Housing Market Area’s Objectively Assessed Housing Need, and requested SANG capacity to mitigate up to 1,500 net new dwellings.

Since writing last July, you will be aware that the evidence base supporting our respective Local Plans continues to evolve. We have an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016), and work continues on refreshing Rushmoor’s SHELAA. In this context, Rushmoor is confident that its emerging Local Plan will set out a spatial strategy that meets its share of the HMA’s housing need. However, the actual delivery of the new dwellings to meet this need is entirely dependent on a supply of SANG to mitigate the potential recreational impacts associated with net new residential development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA).

The existing SANGs to which the Council has access in order to mitigate net new residential development in the Borough are reaching capacity. As you will appreciate, Rushmoor is a compact urban authority, and opportunities for identifying or securing new SANGs, which provide suitable catchments, is therefore limited. Hence, it is critical that Rushmoor has access to SANG mitigation at Bramshot Farm, in order to avoid a situation whereby net new housing delivery in the Borough ceases to come on stream. Were this to happen, given the recently communicated constraints on potential housing capacity in Surrey Heath Borough, the Council would face the scenario of needing to ask Hart to meet some of its housing need because it is unable to mitigate the impact of net new residential development on the TBH SPA.
In this context, the Council has analysed the latest information available in terms of the updated SHMA, the emerging update to the SHELAA, and remaining capacity in the existing SANGs to which it has access. On the basis of this evidence, I would like to make a formal request to Hart for capacity to mitigate 1,500 net new houses using Bramshot Farm SANG.

In order to formalise this arrangement, and to satisfy the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate in respect of our emerging Local Plans, I would like to put in place a signed “Memorandum of Understanding” to this effect, to ensure that both parties are committed to joint working on the implementation and utilisation of Bramshot Farm SANG in the future. This will help secure the future delivery of Rushmoor’s share of the HMA’s housing need, as identified in the SHMA 2016.

Mindful of the pending deadlines for the lead into the publication of Rushmoor’s Draft Submission Local Plan, I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes,

[Signature]

Keith Holland
Head of Planning