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HRA Scoping Report for New Forest Local Plans

Non-statutory consultation document to inform the HRA of Local Plans being prepared by New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority

Prepared by LUC
April 2016

Project Title: Habitats Regulations Assessment of New Forest Local Plans

Client: New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority

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Contents

1 Introduction

Background to the Local Plans

1.1 New Forest District Council is undertaking a review of its adopted Local Plan which comprises two parts: the Core Strategy (adopted in 2009) and the Sites and Development Management Plan (adopted in 2014). An early review of the Local Plan is necessary in order to ensure that planning policies for the District are in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published in 2012, after the Core Strategy was adopted. The New Forest District Local Plan covers the parts of the District that lie outside of the New Forest National Park. The Council will initially prepare Part 1 of the new Local Plan which will replace the adopted Core Strategy and set out strategic policies and strategic locations for development. The replacement Part 2 Local Plan, setting out smaller sites plus development management policies, will be progressed at a later date.

1.2 The New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) has its own adopted Plan for the National Park, the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) which was adopted in 2010. The NPA commenced the preparation of a new Local Plan in 2015 in order to update the development plan for the National Park to reflect the significant changes that have been made to the planning system since 2010.

1.3 Both new Local Plans are at an early stage in their development, with the NPA having consulted on an 'Issues Consultation Document' in late 2015, and the District Council being due to consult on a Draft Local Plan Part 1 in summer 2016. The timetables for preparing the two Local Plans are broadly aligned.

1.4 LUC was appointed by New Forest District Council working in liaison with the New Forest National Park Authority in January 2016 to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the emerging Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park. Although the two Local Plans are being prepared separately and will therefore need to be subject to HRA Screening (and Appropriate Assessment if required) individually, a combined approach is being taken to the initial stages of the HRA in the form of this HRA Scoping Report.

Purpose of the HRA Scoping Report

1.5 The purpose of this HRA Scoping Report is to draw together and update as necessary the relevant evidence that was gathered during the HRA work undertaken previously for the adopted Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park, to describe the approach that will be taken to the HRA of the new Local Plans, and to obtain the views of Natural England and other selected stakeholder bodies on these.

The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

1.6 The requirement to undertake HRA of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in July 2007 and updated in 2010[1] and again in 2012[2]. Therefore, when preparing their Local Plans, New Forest District Council and the

[1] The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007. HMSO Statutory Instrument 2007 No. 1843. From 1 April 2010, these were consolidated and replaced by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI No. 2010/490). Note that no substantive changes to existing policies or procedures have been made in the new version.

[2] The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012. Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 1927.

New Forest NPA are required by law to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment although consultants can undertake the HRA on their behalf. The requirement for authorities to comply with the Habitats Regulations when preparing a Local Plan is explained in the online National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

1.7 The HRA refers to the assessment of the potential effects of a development plan on one or more European sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):

- SPAs are classified under the European Council Directive 'on the conservation of wild birds' (79/409/EEC; 'Birds Directive') for the protection of wild birds and their habitats (including particularly rare and vulnerable species listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive, and migratory species).
- SACs are designated under the Habitats Directive and target particular habitats (Annex 1) and/or species (Annex II) identified as being of European importance.

1.8 Potential SPAs (pSPAs)[3], candidate SACs (cSACs)[4], Sites of Community Importance (SCIs)[5] and Ramsar sites should also be included in the assessment.

- Ramsar sites support internationally important wetland habitats and are listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention, 1971).

1.9 For ease of reference during HRA, these designations can be collectively referred to as European sites[6] despite Ramsar designations being at the international level.

1.10 The overall purpose of the HRA is to conclude whether or not a proposal or policy, or whole development plan, would adversely affect the integrity of the European site in question either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. This is judged in terms of the implications of the plan for a site's 'qualifying features' (i.e. those Annex I habitats, Annex II species, and Annex I bird populations for which it has been designated). Significantly, HRA is based on the precautionary principle meaning that where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse impact should be assumed.

Stages of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.11 **Table 1.1** below summarises the stages involved in carrying out a full HRA, based on various guidance documents[7,8,9].

Table 1.1 Stages in HRA

Stage	Task	Outcome
Stage 1: Screening (the 'Significance Test')	Description of the plan. Identification of potential effects on European sites. Assessing the effects on European sites (taking into account potential mitigation provided by other policies in the plan).	Where effects are unlikely, prepare a 'finding of no significant effect report'. Where effects judged likely, or lack of information to prove otherwise, proceed to Stage 2.
Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment (the	Gather information (plan and European sites).	Appropriate Assessment report describing the plan,

[3] Potential SPAs are sites that have been approved by Government and are currently in the process of being classified as SPAs.
[4] Candidate SACs are sites that have been submitted to the European Commission, but not yet formally adopted.
[5] SCIs are sites that have been adopted by the European Commission but not yet formally designated as SACs by the Government.
[6] The term 'Natura 2000 sites' can also be used interchangeably with 'European sites' in the context of HRA, although the latter term is used throughout this report.
[7] *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission Environment DG, November 2001.
[8] *Planning for the Protection of Natura 2000 sites. Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents.* Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), August 2006.
[9] *The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England. A guide to why, when and how to do it.* RSPB. August 2007.

Stage	Task	Outcome
'Integrity Test')	Impact prediction. Evaluation of impacts in view of conservation objectives. Where impacts considered to affect qualifying features, identify alternative options. Assess alternative options. If no alternatives exist, define and evaluate mitigation measures where necessary.	European site baseline conditions, the adverse effects of the plan on the European site, how these effects will be avoided through, firstly, avoidance, and secondly, mitigation including the mechanisms and timescale for these mitigation measures. If effects remain after all alternatives and mitigation measures have been considered proceed to Stage 3.
Stage 3: Assessment where no alternatives exist and adverse impacts remain taking into account mitigation	Identify and demonstrate 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI). Demonstrate no alternatives exist. Identify potential compensatory measures.	This stage should be avoided if at all possible. The test of IROPI and the requirements for compensation are extremely onerous.

1.12 In assessing the effects of the Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park in accordance with Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012, there are potentially two tests to be applied by the competent authorities: a 'Significance Test', followed if necessary by an Appropriate Assessment which will inform the 'Integrity Test'. The relevant sequence of questions is as follows:

- Step 1: Under Reg. 102(1)(b), consider whether the plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites. If not –
- Step 2: Under Reg. 102(1)(a) consider whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on the site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects (the 'Significance Test'). *[These two steps are undertaken as part of Stage 1: Screening shown in Table 1.1 above.]* If Yes –
- Step 3: Under Reg. 102(1), make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the site in view of its current conservation objectives (the 'Integrity Test'). In so doing, it is mandatory under Reg. 102(2) to consult Natural England, and optional under Reg. 102(3) to take the opinion of the general public. [*This step is undertaken during Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment shown in Table 1.1 above.]*
- Step 4: In accordance with Reg.102(4), but subject to Reg.103, give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that the plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

1.13 It is normally anticipated that an emphasis on Stages 1 and 2 of this process will, through a series of iterations, help ensure that potential adverse effects are identified and eliminated through the inclusion of mitigation measures designed to avoid, reduce or abate effects. The need to consider alternatives could imply more onerous changes to a plan document. It is generally understood that so called 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI) are likely to be justified only very occasionally and would involve engagement with both the Government and European Commission.

1.14 The HRA should be undertaken by the 'competent authority' - in this case New Forest District Council and the New Forest NPA, and LUC has been commissioned to do this on their behalf. The HRA also requires close working with Natural England as the statutory nature conservation body[10] in order to obtain the necessary information and agree the process, outcomes and any mitigation

[10] Regulation 5 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*. HMSO Statutory Instrument 2010 No. 490.

measures. The Environment Agency, while not a statutory consultee for HRA, is also in a strong position to provide advice and information throughout the process as it is required to undertake HRA for its existing licences and future licensing of activities. Consultation will also be undertaken with the RSPB, Hampshire Wildlife Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

HRA work carried out previously

1.15 The adopted Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park were subject to HRA throughout their development. The final HRA documents for the two parts of the adopted New Forest District Local Plan are:

- Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement and Appropriate Assessment for New Forest District Council Core Strategy - Submission Document (prepared by New Forest District Council, September 2008).
- Sites and Development Management Development Plan Document Habitat Regulations Assessment of Submission Document and Main Modifications (prepared by New Forest District Council, September 2013) incorporating Appendix 1: Addendum to Habitats Regulations Assessment of Proposed Submission Document (prepared by LUC for New Forest District Council, August 2013).
- Appropriate Assessment of Policy TOT11: Eling Wharf (prepared by LUC for New Forest District Council, December 2011).

1.16 Of close relevance to the HRA of the adopted New Forest District Local Plan, the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Mitigation Strategy for European Sites: Recreational Pressure from Residential Development' was adopted by New Forest District Council in June 2014. The background to the preparation of the SPD and its relevance to the HRA conclusions for the adopted Local Plan are described in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.17 HRA work was also undertaken in relation to the adopted New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD. The final HRA documents comprise:

- New Forest National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Habitat Regulations Assessment Report (prepared by Scott Wilson for the New Forest National Park Authority, January 2010).
- New Forest National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Habitat Regulations Assessment Report – Addendum (prepared by Scott Wilson for the New Forest National Park Authority, May 2010).

1.18 The adopted SPD on 'Development Standards' (September 2012) also provides relevant information in relation to avoiding significant effects on the integrity of European sites as a result of implementing the adopted Core Strategy. In addition, an HRA Screening Report was prepared by the New Forest NPA in July 2015 in relation to the National Park Management Plan 2015-2020.

1.19 Therefore, there is already a significant body of HRA work available relating to New Forest District and the New Forest National Park, which can be drawn on to inform the HRA of the new Local Plans. The purpose of this Scoping Report is to draw together that information and to update and expand it as necessary in order to set the context for the forthcoming HRA work.

Structure of this report

1.20 This chapter (Chapter 1) has described the background to the preparation of the new Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park and the requirement to undertake HRA. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the European sites in and around New Forest District and the New Forest National Park that could be affected by the Local Plans and summarises the key issues that will need to be considered during the HRA, drawing from the HRA work carried out previously.

- Chapter 3 describes the approach that will be taken to the HRA of the emerging Local Plans including the specific tasks that will be undertaken and the assumptions that will underpin the HRA judgements made.
- Chapter 4 describes the next steps that will be carried out in the HRA of the Local Plans.

1.21 The information in the main body of the report is supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 sets out detailed information about the European sites that will be the focus of the HRA.
- Appendix 2 presents an initial review of other plans and projects that could have significant effects on European sites in combination with the Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park.

2 European sites and key issues to be considered by the HRA

2.1 This chapter identifies the European sites to be included in the HRA for the new Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park and describes the key issues, drawing from the findings of previous HRA work and past consultation responses received from Natural England.

European sites included in the previous HRA work for New Forest District

2.2 In the HRA work undertaken previously for the two parts of the adopted New Forest District Local Plan, the Core Strategy and the Sites and Development Management DPD, the following 13 European sites were included in the assessments:

- River Avon SAC
- Avon Valley SPA
- Avon Valley Ramsar site
- Dorset Heathlands SAC
- Dorset Heathlands SPA
- Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site
- The New Forest SAC
- New Forest SPA
- The New Forest Ramsar site
- Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC
- Solent Maritime SAC
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site

2.3 These European sites were included in the previous HRA work because they were found to have potential ecological connections to New Forest District. A broad buffer distance of 10 km around the District boundary was applied as a starting point to identifying the European sites to be included in the HRA. The list of sites was then refined by considering whether any more distant European sites are functionally linked to the District and whether any of those within 10 km could be scoped out because of an absence of pathways by which effects on the integrity of European sites from development might occur.

European sites included in the previous HRA work for the New Forest National Park

2.4 In the HRA work undertaken previously for the New Forest NPA's Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD, the following eight European sites were included:

- The New Forest SAC
- New Forest SPA
- The New Forest Ramsar site
- Solent Maritime SAC
- Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site

- Mottisfont Bats SAC

2.5 Mottisfont Bats SAC was originally scoped out of the HRA but was later included in the assessment following a consultation response from Natural England which advised that the SAC should be included in the scope of the HRA, due to the distance over which the qualifying bat species are known to commute for foraging.

2.6 Six European sites that had originally been included within the scope of the HRA for the Core Strategy were screened out at the Submission stage. This was the case for River Avon SAC, Avon Valley SPA, Avon Valley Ramsar site, Dorset Heathlands SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA and the Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site. In the case of the Avon Valley sites, these sites were screened out of the HRA because development locations within the National Park did not derive water supplies from the Avon Valley catchment and the Environment Agency consenting regime was thought likely to avoid significant effects. The Dorset Heaths sites were screened out because the spatial distribution of development in the National Park in relation to the Dorset Heaths meant that recreational effects on sites were not considered likely. Natural England did not object to the screening out of these sites in its consultation responses.

European sites to be included in the HRAs for the new Local Plans

2.7 No objections were raised by Natural England during the HRA work for the adopted New Forest District Local Plan with regards to the list of sites included in the assessment suggesting that it would be appropriate to include the same 13 sites in the HRA work for the new Local Plan for New Forest District. However, in light of Natural England's consultation response to the HRA Report for the New Forest National Park Authority's Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD, which stated that Mottisfont Bats SAC should be included in the scope of the HRA, it is proposed that for completeness the SAC will also be included in the HRA for the New Forest District Local Plan.

2.8 For the HRA of the new Local Plan for the New Forest National Park, it is proposed that the same eight sites that were included in the HRA work for the adopted Core Strategy will be considered. The Avon Valley and Dorset Heathlands sites are scoped out for the same reasons as previously.

2.9 If at any point information gathered during the HRA indicates that other European sites could be affected by either Local Plan, they will be considered in the assessment(s) as appropriate.

Locations and attributes of the European sites

2.10 Several of the European sites to be included within the HRAs for the two Local Plans lie within the District and/or National Park boundaries where development resulting from the Local Plans will take place, as set out in. The remaining European sites to be included in the HRA are outside of both the District and NPA boundaries, with implications for the pathways along which they may be affected by development (see Chapter 3).

2.11 The locations of the European sites are shown in Figure 2.1**.** The designated features and conservation objectives of the European sites, together with current pressures on and potential threats to these are described in Appendix 1. This information was drawn from the Standard Data Forms for SACs and SPAs and the Information Sheets for Ramsar Wetlands published on the JNCC website[11] as well as Natural England's Site Improvement Plans[12] and the most recent conservation objectives published on the Natural England website (most were published in 2014)[13]. An understanding of the designated features of each European site and the factors contributing to its integrity will inform the assessment of the potential effects of the Local Plans on each European site and the likely significance of those effects.

[11] www.jncc.defra.gov.uk
[12] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5458594975711232
[13] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216

HRA Scoping for New Forest Local Plans

European Sites considered in the HRA

- New Forest District boundary
- New Forest National Park Authority boundary
- 10km buffer from study area
- Local Planning Authority boundary
- Special Areas of Conservation- (SAC)
  - 1: Dorset Heaths
  - 2: Mottisfont Bats
  - 3: River Avon
  - 4: Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons
  - 5: Solent Maritime
  - 6: The New Forest
- Ramsar sites
  - 7: Avon Valley
  - 8: Dorset Heathlands
  - 9: Solent and Southampton Water
  - 10: The New Forest
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
  - 11: Avon Valley
  - 12: Dorset Heathlands
  - 13: New Forest
  - 14: Solent and Southampton Water

Map Scale @ A3: 1:230,000

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CB:VG EB:Goosen_V LUCLON 6270-03_002_SCOPE_EuroDesignations_ConsideredForHRA_A3L_RevA 07/03/2016

Source: Natural England, JNCC

Previous HRA conclusions and key issues for the HRAs of the new Local Plans

HRA work undertaken previously for the New Forest District Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy

2.12 At the Submission stage, the HRA Report for the Core Strategy screened in three policies as potentially having likely significant effects in combination with other plans and projects - CS9, CS10 and CS11, which were the housing development policies. The potential effects of those policies related to increased disturbance from recreational activities in combination with the housing development proposed in other neighbouring plans, and could affect the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site.

2.13 Appropriate Assessment was therefore undertaken for policies CS9, CS10 and CS11 in combination with other plans and projects, and it was concluded that there would not be a likely significant effect on the New Forest SAC, SPA or Ramsar site when the mitigation measures provided through the Core Strategy and other plans and strategies were taken into account. This conclusion was based on the assumption that various recommendations would be implemented through the Core Strategy and subsequent DPDs, including open space provision and improvement and active partnership working with key stakeholders to deliver mitigation and undertake monitoring.

HRA work undertaken previously for the New Forest District Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management Plan

2.14 The HRA for the Sites and Development Management Plan considered the issues that were left to lower tier plans in the Core Strategy HRA, where it would implement some of the higher level Core Strategy proposals. It was therefore necessary for the HRA to consider whether the Sites and Development Management Plan implemented the mitigation required by the HRA of the Core Strategy.

2.15 The Screening conclusions for the Sites and Development Management Plan were that only one policy (TOT11) could have likely significant effects (when considering the Plan alone) because it would result in development at Eling Wharf which is adjacent to Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site, and because there were already issues associated with leaking contaminants. The potential effects of policy TOT11 included increases in recreational pressure, biological disturbance from domestic animals, visual and noise disturbance, and increased traffic leading to increased air pollution. This policy was therefore subject to Appropriate Assessment in a separate background paper[14]. The Appropriate Assessment concluded that policy TOT11 could be implemented without likely significant effects on Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site, provided that a number of recommendations were implemented.

2.16 The full HRA Report for the Sites and Development Management Plan also considered the potential for the Sites and Development Management Plan to have likely significant effects on European sites in combination with other plans and projects. Potential but uncertain likely significant in-combination effects were identified in relation to the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site as well as Solent Maritime SAC and Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site as a result of recreational pressures from the housing allocations across South Hampshire and South East Dorset. The January 2012 HRA report concluded that these effects would not be significant taking into account the identified mitigation.

2.17 However, during the Examination the Inspector raised concerns about the assumptions made in the HRA not being adequately delivered in the Local Plan and advised that further work was needed with regards to mitigation. LUC was commissioned by New Forest District Council to provide advice in relation to this matter and undertook further work to establish the likely extent of the recreation effects identified in the HRA in order to inform judgements about the mitigation required. LUC's HRA Addendum (appended to the final HRA Report for the Sites and Development Management Plan) made recommendations about the mitigation required and these

[14] Appropriate Assessment of Policy TOT11: Eling Wharf (prepared by LUC for New Forest District Council, December 2011).

recommendations formed the basis of a new policy for the Plan, DM3[15]: Mitigation of Impacts on European Nature Conservation Sites, as well as a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Mitigation Strategy for European Sites' which was later adopted by the Council (see text box below).

2.18 The HRA Report was updated in September 2013 to incorporate the additional work undertaken and the Local Plan was later found sound and adopted.

New Forest District Council Mitigation Strategy for European Sites: Recreational Pressure from Residential Development (Supplementary Planning Document, adopted June 2014)

As described above, the recommendations made by LUC in the August 2013 HRA Addendum for the New Forest District Local Plan Part 2 (Sites and Development Management DPD) were taken forward by New Forest District Council and formed the basis of this SPD which was adopted by the Council in June 2014.

The SPD gives detailed guidance on the implementation of Policy DM3: Mitigation of Impacts on European Nature Conservation Sites and proposes four main elements of mitigation:

- Provision of new areas of publicly accessible natural green space – delivering between 30 and 40 ha of informal open space which is not currently available for this use.
- Enhancement of existing green space and footpaths/rights of way - a programme of enhancement to footpaths/rights of way and existing open spaces in all settlements in which the Local Plan allocates new residential development.
- Access management – measures include the provision of additional rangers for the New Forest SPA and Solent Coastal European sites.
- Monitoring – the gathering of further information, including about the condition of European sites' habitats and species and visitor patterns, and to gain a better understanding of the effects of visitors and other factors influencing the condition of the protected sites; and the monitoring of progress in implementing the mitigation strategy.

Specific mitigation proposals for each settlement are set out in the SPD. The mitigation measures will be provided and/or funded by the developers of the new residential development in the Plan area. The SPD also contains information about the likely costs of implementing the Mitigation Strategy.

Implementation of these mitigation measures is at an early stage and information on their effectiveness is not yet available. Rangers have recently been appointed for New Forest SPA and Solent Coastal European sites Open space and recreational walking route projects have been developed for implementation where development has taken place (or is proposed to take place). A number of projects are proposed for implementation in 2016/17 in Totton, New Milton, Lymington, Marchwood and Sandleheath. The Council will produce an annual monitoring report at the end of 2016/17 which will detail the progress on these projects.

HRA work undertaken previously by the New Forest National Park Authority

2.19 The HRA Report for the New Forest National Park's Core Strategy and Development Management DPD (Submission document) was prepared by Scott Wilson on behalf of the NPA in January 2010. Six of the Core Strategy policies were not able to be screened out of the assessment: CS12, CS13, CS14, CS16, CS18 and CS19 – these were the policies that defined the scale and location of new residential and employment development in the National Park as well as facilitating improved access for tourists and others to the National Park. The potential pathways of effects on European sites were identified as urbanisation, recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution.

2.20 Appropriate Assessment was undertaken in relation to these six policies in order to consider in more detail the potential for impacts on Mottisfont Bats SAC, the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site, Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC and Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site. It was concluded that in light of the mitigation

[15] Note that in the Inspector's Schedule of Main Modifications that was prepared prior to adoption of the Plan, the new policy was referred to as DM2a. In the final adopted Plan document it is policy DM3.

provided through the Core Strategy and Development Management DPD, likely significant effects from the DPD either alone or in combination with other plans and projects could be ruled out in relation to all of the European sites assessed.

2.21 Following minor amendments to the Core Strategy and Development Management DPD, an HRA Addendum was prepared by Scott Wilson on behalf of the NPA in May 2010. It was concluded that the minor proposed changes made to the Core Strategy following consultation did not result in any likely significant adverse effects on European sites. The Plan was later found sound and adopted.

Development Standards Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted September 2012)

Following adoption of the Core Strategy and Development Strategy DPD, New Forest NPA published this SPD in order to expand upon a number of the Core Strategy policies. Chapter 6 of the document relates to 'Habitat Protection and Mitigating the Impacts of Development' and provides additional guidance on the implementation of Policy CP1: Nature Conservation Sites of International Importance which reflects the Habitats Regulations and seeks to avoid development that could adversely affect the integrity of a designated site. In particular, the Policy refers to proposals for new housing located within 400 metres of the New Forest SPA requiring adequate measures to mitigate potential adverse effects.

Annex 5 of the SPD details the initial mitigation package which was drawn up with Natural England. The key features of the mitigation package are:

- Developer contributions towards mitigation measures where developments are located within 400 m of the New Forest SPA (New Forest NPA report that following adoption of the Core Strategy it has become apparent that impacts occur from beyond 400 m and mitigation is therefore normally sought for all development, including visitor accommodation).
- Provision of advice with regards to the requirement for Appropriate Assessment where development is proposed, particularly where it would be within 400m of the New Forest SPA.
- Developer contributions towards public open space in the National Park (separate to the mitigation of impacts from development on protected habitats).

Mitigation being implemented by the NPA is small scale, in proportion to the small scale of development. Since the adoption of the Core Strategy in December 2010, annual monitoring shows that between April 2011 and March 2015 a total of 57 dwellings have been completed within the New Forest National Park. To date (as of March 2016) the NPA has received just over £22,000 in S106 financial contributions towards habitat mitigation measures. These have been spent on a range of projects including protected species interpretive material used by the NPA rangers and at the New Forest Reptile Centre.

Key issues for the HRA of the new Local Plans

2.22 A review of the previous HRA work undertaken in relation to New Forest District and the New Forest National Park suggests that the key issue for the forthcoming HRA work is likely to be the impacts of housing growth and tourism-related development in relation to increased recreation pressure. It will be particularly important to consider the in-combination effects of the growth proposed across South Hampshire and South Dorset. The European sites most likely to be affected are the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site as well as Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC and Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site. However, until HRA Screening is carried out in relation to the policies and site allocations included in both Local Plans, it is not possible to screen out other types of effects, or effects on the other European sites. The types of effect that will be considered are set out in Table 3.2 of the following chapter.

2.23 The previous HRA findings for the adopted Plans indicate that the Appropriate Assessment stage of HRA is highly likely to be required in relation to both new Local Plans.

2.24 It is likely that housing numbers in both new Local Plans will increase from those set out in the adopted Plans. The adopted New Forest District Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy) provided for the development of at least 3,920 new homes over the period 2006-2026, in line with the figures set out in the now-revoked South East Plan. This equates to just under 200 homes per year over the Plan period. The adopted Core Strategy and Development Management DPD for the New Forest National Park provided for 220 new dwellings within the National Park between 2006 and 2026. In comparison, the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for New Forest District (outside of the National Park) has recently been assessed as being between 11,740 and 13,740 over the period 2011-2031, which equates to between 587 and 687 homes per annum[16]. The OAN for the New Forest National Park is between 2,800 and 3,280 over the same period, which equates between to 140 and 164 dwellings per year. The growth in OAN has been primarily driven by demographic changes.

2.25 While New Forest District Council's adopted Mitigation Strategy SPD may continue to provide mitigation for the impacts of housing development on European sites in relation to increased recreation pressure, it was prepared in the context of the lower housing figure in the adopted Local Plan. It will therefore be necessary for the HRA to include an assessment of the adequacy of the mitigation provided by the SPD in light of higher housing numbers.

[16] GL Hearn (September 2014) New Forest Strategic Housing Market Assessment: New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority.

3 Approach to the HRA

3.1 This chapter describes the approach that will be taken to the HRA of the new Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park throughout their development. Information is provided about how the previous HRA work undertaken for the adopted Plans (described in **Chapter 2**) will be drawn upon, as well as the assumptions that will be applied during the assessment. Consideration is also given to the sources of evidence that will inform the HRA.

Screening methodology

3.2 As required under Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010[17] an assessment of the 'likely significant effects' of each Local Plan will be undertaken. The methodology that will be used for the Screening of the two Local Plans is broadly the same as that used previously for the HRA Screening of the New Forest District Sites and Development Management DPD.

3.3 HRA Screening for the two Local Plans will be undertaken and reported on separately, at such time that each authority prepares a Local Plan document for public consultation identifying the type, scale and location of development.

3.4 An initial assessment will be undertaken to identify which components of each Local Plan have the potential to have likely significant effects on European sites, using the criteria set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Screening criteria to be applied during the HRA[18]

Effects on European Sites
Screened out
A. General statement of policy / general aspiration
B. Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability /sustainability of proposals
C. Proposal referred to but not proposed by the plan
D. Environmental protection / site safeguarding policy
E. Policies or proposals which steer change in such a way as to protect European sites from adverse effects
F. Policy that cannot lead to development or other change
G. Policy or proposal that could not have any conceivable effect on a site
H. Policy or proposal the (actual or theoretical) effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives (either alone or in combination with other aspects of this or other plans or projects)
Screened in
I. Policy or proposal with a likely significant effect on a site alone
Screening conclusion made after checking for likely significant effects in combination
J. Policy or proposal with an effect on a site but not likely to be significant alone – screen in or out after in combination test

3.5 The HRA Screening exercise will involve considering the potential for each Local Plan component to have a likely significant effect on any European site.

3.6 The outcomes of the Screening assessment will be presented in the form of a matrix, setting out:

- The Local Plan component being assessed (i.e. the policy or site allocation).

[17] SI No. 2010/490

[18] Based on list of screening categories provided by The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, DTA Publications, available from http://www.dtapublications.co.uk/ .

- The potential for likely significant effects, prior to consideration of existing mitigation, and the nature of the potential effects identified (e.g. habitat loss, changes in water levels etc.).
- Any existing policies or measures, for example other policies within the Local Plan document or measures being implemented in line with the 'Mitigation Strategy for European Sites' SPD, which adequately avoid or mitigate the potential effects identified.
- The screening conclusion, including the reasons for coming to the judgement of whether or not there are to be likely significant effects (with reference to the screening criteria set out in Table 3.1).
- The European sites that could be affected by those components of the Local Plan where likely significant effects cannot be ruled out.

3.7 A 'traffic light' approach will be used to record the likely impacts of the policies and site allocations on European sites and their qualifying habitats and species, using the colour categories shown below.

Red	There are likely to be significant effects (Appropriate Assessment required).
Amber	There may be significant effects, but this is currently uncertain (Appropriate Assessment required).
Green	There are unlikely to be significant effects (Appropriate Assessment not required).

3.8 A risk-based approach involving the application of the precautionary principle will be adopted in the Screening assessment, such that a conclusion of 'no significant effect' will only be reached where it is considered very unlikely, based on current knowledge and the information available, that a policy or site allocation would have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site.

Screening assumptions

3.9 The Screening stage of the HRA for each Local Plan will take the approach of screening each policy or site allocation individually, which is consistent with current guidance. For many of the types of impacts, screening for likely significant effects will be determined on a proximity basis, using GIS data to determine the proximity of potential development locations to the European sites that are the subject of the assessments. However, there are many uncertainties associated with using set distances as there are very few standards available as a guide to how far impacts will travel. Therefore, during the Screening stage of the HRA for each Local Plan a number of assumptions will be applied to inform the assessment of likely significant effects, as set out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Proposed assumptions and evidence sources for HRA Screening of the Local Plans for New Forest District and New Forest National Park

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
Direct loss or physical damage due to construction: Direct loss of or physical damage to designated habitats or habitats on which designated species rely. Direct mortality of designated species.	Unlikely to be able to rule out significant effects if a Local Plan policy or site allocation would result in development which: • overlaps with any European site, or • is used by the qualifying bird populations of Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site, Dorset Heathlands SPA, New Forest SPA, or Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site, or • overlaps with offsite areas of habitat of potential importance to the qualifying bat population of Mottisfont Bats SAC. Based on the SAC's 'Protocol for Planning Officers'[19], HRA Screening will assume that likely significant effects prior to mitigation cannot be ruled out for any development within 7.5 km of the SAC which would result in loss of or damage to open water, deciduous woodland, riparian, or unimproved grassland habitats or in construction of a significant linear feature such as a new road.	Any Local Plan policies that may be developed in relation to the protection of biodiversity at European sites may provide some mitigation, although Appropriate Assessment is highly likely to still be required. Provision of alternative habitat may help to mitigate the loss of offsite areas of supporting habitat; however this would need to be comparable in nature and such mitigation would need to be agreed with Natural England.	GIS data showing locations of site allocations in relation to European sites and areas of functionally connected land. Mapped data for any known offsite areas of supporting habitat used for breeding, roosting, and foraging by the bird populations of Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site, Dorset Heathlands SPA, New Forest SPA, or Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site or agreement with Natural England of appropriate buffer distances and relevant types of supporting habitat. British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) methodology surveys of bird populations and distributions for New Forest. Broad habitat types present at development site options.

[19] Mottisfont Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Protocol for Planning Officers: Report to Natural England, Jonathan Cox Associates, 2010.

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	Habitat loss/damage and mortality of designated species on site will only need to be considered in relation to the European sites that are located within the area covered by each Plan i.e.: New Forest District • Dorset Heaths SAC; Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar site • River Avon SAC; Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site • Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site New Forest National Park • River Avon SAC • Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC; Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site • The New Forest SAC and Ramsar site; New Forest SPA Likely significant effects can be ruled out in relation to the following sites as these are not within the area covered by the Plan and are not designated for birds or bats which may rely on offsite habitat within the Local Plan area in question: New Forest District • The New Forest SAC		

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	• Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC <u>New Forest National Park</u> • Dorset Heathlands SAC • Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site		
Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings: Noise and vibration. Light pollution. Visual presence. Increased numbers of pets and other predators.	Unlikely to be able to rule out significant effect if allocation: - overlaps with or is within 400m of European sites with qualifying features sensitive to these types of disturbance. Based on their designated features and the pressures and threats facing them (see Appendix 1), these are judged to be: • Dorset Heathlands SAC and SPA (only relevant to NFDC as the SAC and SPA are more than 400 m form the NFNPA boundary) • New Forest SPA A distance of 400 m was chosen because Policy CP1 of the existing New Forest NPA Core Strategy, which was agreed with Natural England, states that: *"…any housing that is proposed to be located within 400 metres of the boundary of the New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid of mitigate any potential adverse effects on the ecological integrity of the*	The use of good practice construction techniques may help to mitigate the impacts of construction, and it may be possible to plan construction work seasonally to reduce the potential for disturbance to the qualifying bird species. Similar to Policy CP1 of the existing New Forest NPA Core Strategy, new Local Plan policies for the protection of biodiversity at European sites may provide sufficient mitigation to allow likely significant effects to be ruled out.	GIS data showing locations of site allocations in relation to European sites and areas of functionally connected land. Information about distances travelled by the various qualifying bird species and mapped data for any known offsite areas of supporting habitat used for breeding, roosting, and foraging.

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	SPA."		
Changes in air quality: Air pollution from new or more congested roads as a result of new development, resulting in toxic contamination or nutrient enrichment of habitats.	Increased traffic flows as a result of the amount and broad location of development proposed by the Local Plans could adversely affect local air quality and is a potentially significant issue where roads are located close to European sites that are sensitive to air pollution (principally nitrogen deposition). Based on the criteria provided for this purpose in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (Department for Transport, 2007), likely significant effects will be identified where road corridors within 200m of the above European sites are likely to experience an increase in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of more than 1,000. European sites that are within 200 m of major roads (motorways or 'A' roads) and may be sensitive to changes in air quality are: • Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site • The New Forest SAC and Ramsar site; New Forest SPA • Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site	Measures in the Local Plans relating to the use of sustainable transport modes may help to mitigate increases in road traffic.	Traffic modelling work to show likely increase in AADT along routes within 200m of the following European sites: • Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site • The New Forest SAC and Ramsar site; New Forest SPA • Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site Air quality data from monitoring stations may be useful to inform an assessment of baseline conditions.
Recreation pressure:	European sites scoped into the HRA which are judged to be vulnerable to recreation	For NFDC, mitigation may be provided by any Local Plan	Visitor surveys and recreation pressure studies, particularly those set out in

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
Designated species mortality or disturbance: direct mortality of ground nesting birds' eggs or young by visitor trampling or dogs off leads; disturbance of ground nesting birds by recreational visitors and their dogs; mortality due to increased incidence of fires; mortality due to tipping/littering. *Designated habitats loss or damage*: path erosion or soil compaction by walkers, cyclists, horse riders etc.; eutrophication of soils by dog faeces; increased incidence of fires; tipping/littering.	pressure, based on their designated features and the pressures and threats facing them (see Appendix 1), are judged to be: • Avon Valley SPA • Avon Valley Ramsar site • Dorset Heathlands SAC • Dorset Heathlands SPA • New Forest SAC • New Forest SPA • Solent Maritime SAC • Solent and Southampton Water SPA • Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site The HRAs will therefore consider the potential for increased recreation pressure on these sites as follows. <u>Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site</u> Dog walkers disturbing the designated population Bewick's Swan in areas outside public rights of way identified by the Site Improvement Plan as a concern. It is understood that Natural England has not previously been concerned about recreational pressure on this site arising from development in the New Forest, due in part to very limited public access. The Gadwall population for which the SPA is	policy requirements to deliver measures set out in its SPD 'Mitigation Strategy for European Sites: Recreational Pressure from Residential Development'. This SPD may require revisions in light of: - an increase in the numbers of houses to be provided since the SPOD was prepared; and - the need to ensure that measures are sufficient to adequately mitigate recreation pressure on Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site (and possibly Dorset Heathlands SAC and SPA – see discussion below) since the measures set out in the SPD were only designed to reduce recreation pressure on the New Forest and Solent Coast European sites. The New Forest National Park Local Plan may specify similar measures to those set out in the NFDC SPD, albeit on a smaller scale in line with a lower level of housing provision, to support wardening, enhance open space provision and monitor recreation pressure on European sites which can be relied upon to mitigate recreation pressure.	August 2013 addendum to HRA of NFDC Sites and Development Management DPD.

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	also designated is focussed on Blashford Lakes Gravel Pits which is managed as a nature reserve so access controlled. It also seems likely that the extensive outdoor recreation opportunities within the New Forest National Park and Solent Coast European sites exert a stronger pull on many residents of New Forest District and New Forest National Park than the Avon Valley. The HRA will therefore assume that recreational users of the Avon Valley are overwhelmingly local and that a potential for a contribution to in-combination recreational pressure on Bewick's Swan only exists for any residential development within 1.0 km of Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site. <u>Dorset Heathlands SAC and SPA</u> Based on research into the behaviour of visitors to the Dorset Heaths[20,21] and Natural England's views documented in The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2015-2020[22], the HRAs will assume that prior to consideration of mitigation, all residential development	Mitigation of recreation pressure on the New Forest SAC and SPA is also likely to be provided by existing recreation management by the Forestry Commission. The west of the NFDC plan area falls within the 5 km protection zone around Dorset Heaths within which contributions to mitigation of recreation pressure are required. Historically, it has been accepted by Natural England that development within this area of New Forest District can instead contribute to mitigation of recreation pressure on New Forest SAC and SPA. This is presumably on the basis that contributions gathered from the remainder of the contribution zone are deemed sufficient to avoid likely significant effect in-combination and that those developments are not currently required to contribute to mitigation of recreation pressure on New Forest SAC and SPA. The HRA	

[20] R. T. Clarke, J. Sharp and L. D, "Access Patterns in South-east Dorset. The Dorset Household Survey: Consequences for Future Housing and Greenspace Provision," Footprint Ecology, Unpublished report, 2008.
[21] D. Liley, J. Sharp and C. R. T, "Access Patterns in South-east Dorset. Dorset Household Survey and Predictions of Visitor Use of Potential Greenspace Sites," Footprint Ecology, Unpublished report, 2008.
[22] The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2015-2020 Supplementary Planning Document: An implementation plan to mitigate the impact of new housing development upon the Dorset Heaths Special Protection Area, 2016.

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	within 5 km of Dorset Heathlands SAC or Dorset Heathlands SPA is likely to have a significant effect in-combination. New Forest SAC and SPA Prior HRA work for the NFDC Local Plan Part 2[23] provides a detailed review of evidence on recreation pressure on New Forest SAC and SPA. It goes on to conclude that whilst the best available evidence is inconclusive the risk of residential development in New Forest District leading to increased visitor pressure on the New Forest European sites cannot be ruled out for development anywhere within New Forest District. The HRAs will therefore assume that prior to mitigation, likely significant in-combination effects on New Forest SAC and SPA cannot be ruled out for any residential development within New Forest District or the New Forest National Park. Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site The Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (SDMP) has established that 75% of visitors to the Solent European sites come from within 5.6 km (as the crow flies) of Solent and Southampton Water SPA and recommends that avoidance and mitigation measures be sought for	of the NFDC Local Plan will assume that this netting off arrangement will continue such that development contributing to mitigation of recreation pressure in line with the requirements of New Forest District Council's SPD 'Mitigation Strategy for European Sites: Recreational Pressure from Residential Development' is deemed to have mitigated its in-combination recreation pressure on Dorset Heathlands SAC and SPA. As above, this SPD may require revisions in light of increased housing numbers in order to provide the required mitigation.	

[23] See Appendix 1 of Local Plan (Part 2) Sites and Development Management Habitats Regulations Assessment of Submission Document and Main Modifications, NFDC, 2013.

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	residential development within this zone of impact[24]. The HRAs will therefore assume that prior to consideration of mitigation, likely significant in-combination effects on Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site cannot be ruled out for residential development within this zone.		
Changes in water quantity: Water abstraction to supply new development resulting in changes to water levels or flows at designated sites.	Unable to rule out likely significant effects unless the proposed level of development will not affect the water levels and flows at European sites that are vulnerable to changes in water levels and flows. Reliance will be placed on the HRA reports accompanying relevant water company Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP)[25] and River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) to make this assessment.	Any Local Plan policies requiring water efficiency measures within new development may provide some mitigation.	Information about water availability and connectivity between sources of abstraction and European sites: • Southern Water's Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2015-2040 and associated HRA report. • Bournemouth Water's Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2015-2040 and associated HRA report. • South East river basin district River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2015 and associated HRA report. • Water Cycle Studies, including PUSH Water Cycle Study (relevant to east of New Forest District; not available at time of writing).
Changes in water quality:	*Treated wastewater discharges:*	Development management protocols in the Avon Valley	Information about the existing treatment capacity of WwTWs and the likelihood that

[24] Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (SDMP) Briefing Note, Solent Forum / SDMP Project Group, 2013.

[25] WRMPs are statutory plans that set out how the water company intends to secure its water supply over a 25 year plan period to ensure that a balance between supply availability and forecast water demand is maintained.

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
Increased volumes of treated wastewater discharges, resulting in nutrient enrichment of water and potential lowering of dissolved oxygen as well as increased water velocities and levels downstream of WwTW outfall. (N.B. Some areas of the New Forest off sewage network and rely on septic tank/package plant treatment) Overloading of combined sewer network during storm events, resulting in contamination of water bodies. Contaminated surface runoff from urban surfaces and roads.	Unable to rule out likely significant effect until there is sufficient evidence to conclude whether the development proposed is likely to affect water quality at hydrologically connected European sites due to increased volumes of treated wastewater discharged from WwTWs serving the Plan areas. *Combined sewer overflows:* Unable to rule out likely significant effect until evidence confirms that any sewer network capacity issues can feasibly be addressed. *Contaminated surface runoff:* Unable to rule out likely significant effect until there is sufficient evidence to conclude whether the development proposed is likely to result in an increase in contaminated surface water runoff in proximity of vulnerable European sites. Effects relating to changes in water quality only need to be considered in relation to the European sites that are potentially vulnerable to a reduction in water quality. Based on their designated features and the pressures and threats facing them (see Appendix 1), these are judged to be: • River Avon SAC	relating to phosphate inputs. Any Local Plan policies requiring sufficient wastewater treatment and sewerage network infrastructure capacity to be in place prior to occupation of new development. Any Local Plan policies requiring water efficiency measures within new development may provide some mitigation. The use of SuDS in new development may help to mitigate the potential impacts of contaminated surface water runoff.	any required additional capacity can be provided without deterioration in the water environment. Information about the capacity of the combined sewerage network and the feasibility of any enhancements required to serve the amount and locations of development proposed. Information about the hydrological connectivity of drainage catchments and WwTWs discharge points to European sites. Potential information sources include: • Water Cycle Studies, including PUSH Water Cycle Study (relevant to east of New Forest District). • Any confirmations of available capacity received by NFDC and NFNPA from water companies which have been endorsed by the Environment Agency. • River Avon SAC Nutrient Management Plan[26].

[26] River Avon Special Area of Conservation Nutrient Management Plan for Phosphorus, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council, 2015

Potential effects of Local Plan policies/site allocations	HRA screening assumptions, prior to considering mitigation	Potential mitigation	Data/information required to inform judgements and potential evidence sources
	• Avon Valley SPA • Avon Valley Ramsar site • Dorset Heathlands SAC • Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site • The New Forest SAC • The New Forest Ramsar site • Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC • Solent Maritime SAC • Solent and Southampton Water SPA • Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site		

Interpretation of 'likely significant effect'

3.10 Relevant case law helps to interpret when effects should be considered as a likely significant effect, when carrying out HRA of a land use plan.

3.11 In the Waddenzee case[27], the European Court of Justice ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (translated into Reg. 102 in the Habitats Regulations), including that:

- An effect should be considered 'likely', *"if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on the site"* (para 44).
- An effect should be considered 'significant', *"if it undermines the conservation objectives"* (para 48).
- Where a plan or project has an effect on a site "*but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned"* (para 47).

3.12 A recent opinion delivered to the Court of Justice of the European Union[28] commented that:

"The requirement that an effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimus *threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on the site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having* any *effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill."*

3.13 This opinion (the 'Sweetman' case) therefore allows for the authorisation of plans and projects whose possible effects, alone or in combination, can be considered 'trivial' or *de minimus*; referring to such cases as those *"that have no appreciable effect on the site"*. In practice such effects could be screened out as having no likely significant effect; they would be 'insignificant'.

In-combination effects

3.14 Regulation 102 of the Amended Habitats Regulations 2010 requires an Appropriate Assessment where "*a land use plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site*". Therefore, as well as considering the likely effects of each Local Plan alone on European sites, it will also be necessary to consider whether there may be significant effects from either Local Plan in combination with other plans or projects.

3.15 This exercise will be carried out as part of the Screening stage of the HRA for each Plan. The potential for in-combination effects will only be considered for those Local Plan components identified as unlikely to have a significant effect alone, but which could act in combination with other plans and projects to produce a significant effect. This approach accords with recent guidance on HRA[29].

3.16 The first stage in identifying potential 'in-combination' effects involves identifying which other plans and projects in addition to the new Local Plans may affect the European sites that will be the focus of the HRA.

3.17 There are a large number of potentially relevant plans; therefore the initial review has focussed on planned spatial growth within authorities adjacent to New Forest District and the New Forest National Park as well as minerals, waste and transport plans. The findings of any associated HRA work for those plans have been reviewed where available.

3.18 Particular consideration will be given to the potential for likely significant effects to arise from the Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park in combination, given the close geographical relationship of the Plan areas.

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[27] *ECJ Case C-127/02 "Waddenzee"* Jan 2004.
[28] *Advocate General's Opinion to CJEU in Case C-258/11 Sweetman and others v An Bord Pleanala* 22nd Nov 2012.
[29] DTA: The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook: http://www.dtapublications.co.uk/handbook/browse

3.19 Based on a review of the National Infrastructure Planning website[30] and discussion with New Forest District Council and the New Forest NPA, no significant scale projects that could result in in-combination effects with either Local Plan have been identified.

3.20 Should any other plans or projects be identified throughout the HRA process that could lead to in-combination effects on European sites with either Local Plan, they will be included in the review.

3.21 Appendix 2 presents the initial review of other plans and projects, outlining the components of each plan or project that could have an impact on nearby European sites and considering the findings of the accompanying HRA work (where available). This information will be updated as the HRA work for the Local Plans progresses. The following authorities' plans and HRA work have been included:

- Bournemouth Borough Council.
- Christchurch Borough Council.
- Dorset County Council.
- East Dorset District Council.
- Hampshire County Council.
- Isle of Wight Council.
- Poole Borough Council.
- Southampton City Council.
- Test Valley Borough Council.
- Wiltshire Council.

Mitigation

3.22 Some of the potential effects that may be identified during the HRA work for the Local Plans may be able to be mitigated through the implementation of other policies in the Local Plans themselves, for example any policies relating to the provision of improved sustainable transport links (which could help to mitigate potential increases in air pollution associated with increased vehicle traffic) and the provision of green infrastructure within new developments (which may help to relieve increases in visitor pressure at European sites). There may also be policies with the specific purpose of protecting and enhancing the environment, including biodiversity. Such potential mitigation is identified in Table 3.1 and will be taken into consideration during the Screening stage of the HRA for each Plan and will influence the Screening conclusions as appropriate.

3.23 As described in Chapter 2, it will be important for the two local planning authorities to review their existing recreation mitigation strategies in discussion with Natural England and other stakeholders to ensure that they will remain effective in light of the revised housing figures being proposed.

3.24 For the New Forest District and New Forest National Park Local Plans, it is likely that more detailed work will be required regarding mitigation. Once the findings of the HRA Screening of each Local Plan are known, it is likely that the Mitigation Monitoring Group will be convened to share knowledge and understanding of the issues, and to review the initial findings in light of the previous mitigation work undertaken and the results of monitoring. The objective will be to agree an approach to mitigation and possibly further data collection that will ensure the integrity of the European sites is maintained.

Appropriate Assessment

3.25 As described in the previous chapter, it is highly likely that the Appropriate Assessment stage of the HRA will be required in relation to the new Local Plans for New Forest District and the New

[30] National Infrastructure Planning website http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/

Forest National Park Authority, given the proximity of European sites and taking into account the findings of previous HRA work.

3.26 The Appropriate Assessment stage of the HRA focuses on those impacts judged likely at the screening stage to have a significant effect, and seeks to conclude whether they would result in an adverse effect on the on the integrity of the qualifying features of a European site(s), or where insufficient certainty regarding this remains. The integrity of a site depends on the site being able to sustain its 'qualifying features' across the whole of the site and ensure their continued viability.

3.27 An Appropriate Assessment matrix will be prepared for each of these European sites where significant effects from the Local Plan could not be ruled out. The matrix will set out each European site's qualifying features and conservation objectives, standards and factors which are needed to maintain the site's integrity, existing trends and pressures at the site including the use of areas of off-site functional land (where data are available), as well as the conservation objectives, and the site vulnerabilities identified during the screening stage.

3.28 For each European site and likely significant effect identified, distinctions will be made between direct and indirect effects, short or long term effects, construction, operational or decommissioning effects, isolated, interactive or cumulative effects and permanent, intermittent or temporary effects. The impacts will vary, depending on the habitat or species in question for each site.

3.29 As stated in HRA Guidance[31], assessing the effects on the site(s) integrity involves considering whether the predicted impacts of the Local Plan policies (either alone or in combination) have the potential to:

- Cause delays to achieving the conservation objectives of the site.
- Interrupt progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site.
- Disrupt those factors that help to maintain favourable condition of the site.
- Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of favourable condition of the site.
- Cause changes to the vital defining aspects (e.g. nutrient balance) that determine how the site functions as a habitat or ecosystem.
- Change the dynamics of relationships that define the structure or function of the site (e.g. relationships between soil and water, or animals and plants).
- Interfere with anticipated natural changes to the site.
- Reduce the extent of key habitats or the population of key species.
- Reduce the diversity of the site.
- Result in disturbance that could affect the population, density or balance between key species.
- Result in fragmentation.
- Result in the loss of key features

3.30 The latest available data sources will be drawn on to inform the Appropriate Assessment as relevant. The results of this analysis should enable a conclusion to be reached regarding whether the integrity of any European site would be affected. If this were the case, an assessment of alternative solutions and mitigation would need to be undertaken. This would consider the extent to which such effects can be avoided through the examination of alternatives. In the context of the Local Plans, such alternatives may include the clarification of policies to remove areas of uncertainty leading to predicted impacts or to include conditions or restrictions relating to their implementation, the modification of policies to include alternative solutions or locations for particular developments or the omission of policies where no alternatives exist.

[31] *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission Environment DG, November 2001.

4 Consultation and next steps

4.1 This Scoping Report has introduced the HRA process that will be undertaken in relation to the new Local Plans for New Forest District and the New Forest National Park as they are prepared, and has presented and updated information that was gathered during the previous HRA work which will be drawn on for the HRA of the Local Plans.

Consultation

4.2 The Scoping Report is being sent to Natural England for consultation. Although not statutory consultees for the HRA, comments are also being invited from the Environment Agency, the RSPB, Hampshire Wildlife Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

4.3 In particular, consultees are requested to:

- Comment on the adequacy of the proposed approach (summarised in Table 3.2) to identify likely significant effects from the two Local Plans, justifying any proposed changes and suggesting appropriate data sources to implement these.
- Provide copies of or links to relevant sources of data to inform HRA judgements; an initial list is suggested in the final column of Table 3.2.
- Identify any plans or significant projects additional to those in Appendix 2 that should be considered for their potential to have effects in combination with those of the New Forest Local Plans.
- Provide information on the main sources of water supply for the New Forest National Park and New Forest District and the connectivity of these to the scoped in European sites (Environment Agency).

Next steps

4.4 Once New Forest District Council and the New Forest NPA have produced the first iterations of their Local Plans, these will be subject to HRA in line with the methodology described in Chapter 3 of this report.

4.5 The HRA reports produced will be updated as required throughout the preparation of the Local Plans and published alongside each consultation version of the Local Plans. Additional consultation may be undertaken with Natural England as the statutory consultation body for HRA.

Appendix 1
Attributes of European Sites

Introduction

This appendix contains information about the European sites scoped into the HRA (see Chapter 2 above). Information about each site's area, the site descriptions, qualifying features and pressures and threats are drawn from Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIPs)[32] and the Standard Data Forms or Ramsar Information Sheets available from the JNCC website[33]. Site conservation objectives are drawn from Natural England's website and are only available for SACs and SPAs.[34]

River Avon SAC

Site area: 416.57 ha

Overview of site and its location

The River Avon SAC is one of the richest chalk rivers in Europe. It is important for its fish population, invertebrate, which include populations of Desmoulins Whorl Snail and its in-river plant community habitat as well as bankside habitats.

Qualifying Features

H3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation

S1016 *Vertigo moulinsiana*: Desmoulin`s whorl snail

S1095 *Petromyzon marinus*: Sea lamprey

S1096 *Lampetra planeri*: Brook lamprey

S1106 *Salmo salar:* Atlantic salmon

S1163 *Cottus gobio:* Bullhead

Pressures and threats

Physical modification

The Strategic Framework for the Restoration of the River Avon (Halcrow and GeoData 2009) found 59% of the length of the River Avon, 36% Nadder, 33% Wylye, 23% Till, 6% Dockens and 2% Bourne to be partially, significantly or severely modified. Physical habitat modifications have caused simplification of the biotope mosaics (substrate types, variations in flow, channel width and depth, in-channel and side-channel sedimentation features, bank profiles, erosion features, in-channel and bankside vegetation cover and woody debris) and impact both on the SAC chalk stream habitat feature itself and also the levels of populations of the SAC species it supports. The Site Improvement Plan proposes options for the full restoration, rehabilitation or enhancement covering the majority of the River Avon and associated watercourses.

Siltation

Excessive fine sediment supply can lead to the smothering of coarse substrates and the loss of flora and fauna dependent on them. Sources of silt include run-off from agricultural land, roads, sewage and fish farm discharges.

Water pollution

[32] Site Improvement Plans: East of England, Natural England, http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/4873023563759616
[33] JNCC Data Forms http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4
[34] European Site Conservation Objectives, Natural England, http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/sac/conservationobjectives.aspx

Elevated levels of phosphate (P) lead to dominance by algae and a loss of characteristic plant species. Organic pollution, reducing dissolved oxygen levels (from microbial breakdown of organic material) effects biota and is also an issue. Water quality can also affect the habitat quality necessary to support Desmoulin's whorl snail. Diffuse pollution from agriculture, small point discharges and wastewater treatment works (WwTW) discharges are contributing to elevated levels of nutrients (by 10-50ug/l P) and reduced dissolved oxygen levels in parts of the SAC. Catchment sensitive farming measures (including agri-environment scheme resource protection measures) are estimated to deliver approximately 10% (maximum 20%) reduction in P levels. Whilst nearly all WwTWs within the catchment have been limited to 1mg/l P, and the locations in the Avon catchment that show improving water quality trends generally coincide with improvements to WwTWs in that reach of river, it is likely that further reductions of P will be necessary from WwTWs and also small point sources.

A Nutrient Management Plan[35] has been published to facilitate reduction and management of phosphorus levels in the River Avon SAC to comply with Habitats Directive obligations. In its summary of recommendations affecting housing and development it states that where the existing permitted headroom of a WwTW can accommodate further development, further connections should be allowed without the need for an Appropriate Assessment provided that these would not compromise deliverability of the Nutrient Management Plan. Where development would mean that a WwTW reaches its permitted headroom or otherwise require any variation in its discharge consent the change of consent in accordance with permitting regulations will be subject to a full Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Water abstraction

Water abstraction causes lower than natural river flows that affects a range of habitat factors including current velocity, water depth, wetted area, substrate quality, dissolved oxygen levels and water temperature. The maintenance of both flushing flows and base flows, based on natural hydrological processes, is vital to the sustaining the SAC chalk stream habitat as a whole and to fish species at low flows in particular.

Changes in species distributions

Salmon are declining and the population level is below the critical conservation level. The reason for the decline is not fully understood and may relate to external factors and climate change; however in-channel habitat, flows, siltation and temperature may also be significant contributing factors (refer to the EA River Avon Salmon and Sea Trout Site Action Plan). These factors are being fully or partly addressed through the implementation of various plans; however are limited by budgetary constraints. Desmoulin's whorl snail habitat is fragmented throughout the catchment and of varying quality. The main issue affecting the habitat being site dryness or scrub cover and where hydrologically feasible this is being addressed through agri-environment and Conservation Enhancement Schemes.

Invasive species

Invasive plants cause progressive deterioration of bankside habitats by impoverishing the botanical diversity and causing winter instability due to lack of year round plant cover. This can increase the risk of erosion and siltation and thereby affect fish spawning habitat and gravel habitat supporting characteristic submerged plant communities. Invasive animal species such as Signal crayfish are known to impact on riverine species such as Salmon, but in the Avon their population size, distribution and potential impact is not quantitatively known.

Hydrological changes

Desmoulin's whorl snail is an annual species and requires localities that are stable hydrologically. Changes in the hydrology that may affect the species include flooding or drying out due to low ground water levels which may be linked to either changing climate conditions or over-abstraction.

Inappropriate weed control

Insensitive weed cutting may impact on the chalk stream habitat and the fish species it supports.

Habitat fragmentation

[35] River Avon Special Area of Conservation Nutrient Management Plan for Phosphorus, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council, 2015

The SAC boundary may not adequately cover the extent of all Annex 1 and Annex 2 features and/or their supporting habitats. Several of the headwaters and the tributaries that are not included within the boundary of the SAC (or underpinning SSSI) are integral to and important to the natural functioning of the whole river system and also support the habitats and species for which the site is selected and/or notified. The headwaters are also particularly sensitive to abstraction pressures.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:

- the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;
- the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely;
- the populations of qualifying species; and
- the distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Avon Valley SPA

Site area: 1351.1 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Avon Valley SPA is a wide river valley comprising mostly unimproved wet grassland and has importance for wintering wildfowl with Bewick's Swan and Gadwall as the notified features. The population of Bewick's Swan in the Avon Valley has decreased in line with a national trend of decrease, which is felt to be due to decreased breeding success. At the moment the SPA does not meet the threshold for them.

Qualifying Features

A037(NB) *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*: Bewick swan

A051(NB) *Anas strepera*: Gadwall

Pressures and threats

Water Pollution

Elevated levels of phosphate (P) lead to dominance by algae and a loss of characteristic plant species. Within Blashford Lakes high P levels could switch the system from a macrophyte dominated system to an algal dominated one resulting in poorer feeding conditions for gadwall. Organic pollution, reducing dissolved oxygen levels (from microbial breakdown of organic material) effects biota and is also an issue. Water quality can also affect the habitat quality necessary to support SPA species.

Changes in species distributions

Bewick’s Swans are choosing to winter elsewhere even though the habitat in the SPA remains good for them.

Public Access/Disturbance

Dog walkers disturbing wildfowl in areas outside public rights of way is a concern.

Change in land management

Areas of wet grassland may become wetter due to higher river levels in summer. This may increase the difficulty of managing some areas of the floodplain by grazing and cutting in some years potentially

impacting on the grazing quality for Bewick swans. This may be in part be linked to reduced weed cutting in the river channel but also changing summer rainfall patterns (e.g. increased summer storminess) related to climate change

Habitat fragmentation

The SAC and SPA boundaries may not adequately cover the extent of all designated features and/or their supporting habitats, e.g. several of the headwaters and the tributaries that are not included within the boundary are integral to and important to the natural functioning of the whole river system and also support the habitats and species for which the site is selected and/or notified. The headwaters are also particularly sensitive to abstraction pressures.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- the population of each of the qualifying features; and
- the distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Avon Valley Ramsar site

Site area: 1385.1 ha

Overview of site and its location

The site encompasses the lower reaches of the River Avon and its floodplain between Bickton and Christchurch. The River Avon displays wide fluctuations in water level and parts of the valley are regularly flooded in winter. The Avon valley has a greater range of habitats and a more diverse flora and fauna than any other chalk river in Britain. The valley includes one of the largest expanses of unimproved floodplain grassland in Britain, including extensive areas managed as hay meadow.

Qualifying Features

Criterion 1: The site shows a greater range of habitats than any other chalk river in Britain, including fen, mire, lowland wet grassland and small areas of woodland.

Criterion 2: The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland flora and fauna including several nationally-rare species.

Criterion 6: The site has species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

- Species with peak counts in winter: Gadwall, *Anas strepera strepera*

Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.

- Species with peak counts in winter: Northern pintail, *Anas acuta* and Black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa islandica.*

Pressures and threats

Disturbance to vegetation through cutting / clearing

No information available.

Vegetation succession

Major issue arising from decline in traditional pastoral agriculture and lack of maintenance of ditch network.

Drainage/land-claim for agriculture

Management of water levels driven partly by agriculture but also urban flood risk management continues to have adverse effect on habitats.

Sedimentation/siltation

High levels of silt in river continue to degrade its interest, especially aquatic species but also contribute to silting-up ditches and deterioration of grasslands after flood events.

Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species

Crassula helmsii is increasing problem in Blashford Lakes following restoration of gravel pits, not controlled adequately through planning consents and technically difficult to control following withdrawal of herbicide approval.

Pollution – domestic sewage

No information available.

Pollution – agricultural fertilisers

No information available.

Recreational/tourism disturbance (unspecified)

Site is subject to wildfowling and game shooting, and associated activities (e.g. shooting hides, game cover management, pheasant release pens, etc.); full extent/intensity unknown but known to be considerable. Likewise fishing and related activities (e.g. fish stocking, vehicular and pedestrian access, fencing of river banks, vegetation management etc.). Access by people and dogs both on and off public rights of way is also a significant cause of disturbance in some areas.

Reservoir/barrage/dam impact: flow regime

No information available.

Conservation objectives

None available.

Dorset Heathlands SAC

Site area: 5719.54 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Dorset heathlands is an extensive lowland heathland area in southern England. Formerly a single tract divided only by river valleys it is now fragmented. The heathlands comprise a wide range of different habitat types related to variation in soils, hydrology, water chemistry and land use history.

Qualifying Features

H4030 European dry heaths

H7230 Alkaline fens

H6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)

H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica *tetralix*

H7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*

H7210 Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*

H9190 Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains

S1044 *Coenagrion mercuriale*: Southern damselfly

S1166 *Triturus cristatus*: Great crested newt

Pressures and threats

Inappropriate Scrub Control

Invasion of heath by trees and scrub results, over the long term, in the loss of heathland vegetation.

Public Access and Disturbance

Public access and disturbance affect large parts of the site mainly in the area of Poole/Bournemouth. Effects include habitat change from nutrients in dog faeces, and dumping of garden rubbish. On a number of sites the illicit use of heaths for motorcycle scrambling is resulting in disturbance and erosion; however motorcycle use on heathlands has generally declined relative to previous levels in response to site wardening and alternative facilities being made available.

Undergrazing

Generally grazing has now been successfully introduced on most of the larger heathland sites but there remain some ungrazed areas which would benefit from the introduction of an extensive grazing regime.

Forestry and Woodland Management

Several of the heathlands have conifer plantations on former heathland (most planted after notification) or mature conifers (or sometimes birch) that have invaded heathland. Favourable condition requires removal of these plantations for heathland restoration or, at least, management to increase the heath component within the woodland.

Drainage

Drainage is generally the result of ditches made within the site to endeavour to drain wet heath or mire. These drains invariably result in adverse changes to wet heath and mire communities in the vicinity.

Water Pollution

Pollution from different sources affects a number of areas. It comprises of pollution from adjacent agricultural land (run-off causing nutrient enrichment); leaching from adjacent landfill sites (3 sites); pollution from foul drainage (septic tanks, sewage discharge); urban run-off. Poor water quality from the sources listed can also impede the ability to restore the sites' natural hydrology. Silt/sand run-off from adjacent sand/gravel workings and now capped landfill have smothered part of a mire system at Upton Heath. Successful remedial work in the above cases is difficult.

Invasive Species

Various invasive plant and fish species are present, and these have the potential to impact negatively on the site's features.

Habitat Fragmentation

Dorset's lowland heathland is a fragmented remnant of a once extensive landscape. Some 86% of Dorset's heathland has been lost since the 1800s, and the surviving area is broken into many fragments. This curtails the genetic and physical interchange of a number of species and leads to edge effects on smaller sites. Moreover, species populations that are dependent on the wider habitat network of heath and forest beyond the designated site boundaries are vulnerable to changes within that wider network.

Conflicting Conservation Objectives

Heathland management aimed at maintaining open heathland does not cater for a number of rare species that require more specific management measures.

Wildfire/Arson

Fire predominantly affects the urban heaths (about a third of the heathland area in and around Poole and Bournemouth) which are subject to arson. The result is that some heaths are burned too frequently and in spring and summer.

Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Air pollution impacts on the site's vegetation diversity. As with most lowland heathlands and mires in England N deposition is close to, and in some cases exceeds critical loads (e.g. For Rhynchosporion).

Deer

High deer numbers have affected heathland and mire on Arne Heath, Holton Heath and Stokeford Heath. Deer numbers are now being reduced and the habitats are recovering

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;
- the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely;
- the populations of qualifying species; and
- the distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Dorset Heathlands SPA

Site area: 8184.96 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Dorset heathlands is an extensive lowland heathland area in southern England. Formerly a single tract divided only by river valleys it is now fragmented. The heathlands comprise a wide range of different habitat types related to variation in soils, hydrology, water chemistry and land use history.

Qualifying Features

A224(B) *Caprimulgus europaeus*: European nightjar

A246(B) *Lullula arborea*: Woodlark

A302(B) *Sylvia undata*: Dartford warbler

A082(NB) *Circus cyaneus*: Hen harrier

A098(NB) *Falco columbarius*: Merlin

Pressures and threats

Inappropriate scrub control

Invasion of heath by trees and scrub results, in the long term, loss of heathland vegetation which provide habitat for the qualifying bird species.

Public Access/Disturbance

Public access and disturbance affect large parts of the site mainly in the area of Poole/Bournemouth. Disturbance of breeding SPA birds, mostly by dogs, can affect their breeding success, with implications for population level effects e.g. nightjar and woodlark. Other effects include predation by domestic cats and urban foxes. On a number of sites the illicit use of heaths for motorcycle scrambling is resulting in disturbance and erosion, however motorcycle use on heathlands has generally declined relative to previous levels in response to site wardening and alternative facilities being made available.

Forestry and woodland management

Several of the heathlands have conifer plantations on former heathland (most planted after notification) or mature conifers (or sometimes birch) that have invaded the heathland habitat favoured by the SPA's designated bird species.

Habitat fragmentation

Dorset's lowland heathland is a fragmented remnant of a once extensive landscape. Some 86% of Dorset's heathland has been lost since the 1800s, and the surviving area is broken into many fragments. This curtails the genetic and physical interchange of a number of species and leads to edge effects on smaller sites. Moreover, species populations that are dependent on the wider habitat network of heath and forest beyond the designated site boundaries are vulnerable to changes within that wider network.

Wildfire/ arson

Fire predominantly affects the urban heaths (about a third of the heathland area in and around Poole and Bournemouth) which are subject to arson. The increased frequency of fires and the timing of these (in spring and summer) may adversely affect the SPA's designated heathland birds.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- the population of each of the qualifying features; and
- the distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Dorset Heathlands Ramsar site

Site area: 6730.15 ha

Overview of site and its location

Extensive and fragmented, these heathland areas are centred around the estuary of Poole Harbour and are adjacent to the urban conurbation of Bournemouth and Poole. The heathland contains numerous examples of wet heath and acid valley mire, habitats that are restricted to the Atlantic fringe of Europe. These heath wetlands are among the best of their type in lowland Britain. There are also transitions to coastal wetland and fen habitat types. The wetland flora and fauna includes a large assemblage of nationally rare and scarce species, especially invertebrates.

Qualifying Features

Criterion 1: Contains particularly good examples of (i) northern Atlantic wet heaths with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and (ii) acid mire with *Rhynchosporion*.

Contains largest example in Britain of southern Atlantic wet heaths with Dorset heath *Erica ciliaris* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*.

Criterion 2: Supports 1 nationally rare and 13 nationally scarce wetland plant species, and at least 28 nationally rare wetland invertebrate species.

Criterion 3: Has a high species richness and high ecological diversity of wetland habitat types and transitions, and lies in one of the most biologically-rich wetland areas of lowland Britain, being continuous with three other Ramsar sites: Poole Harbour, Avon Valley and The New Forest.

Pressures and threats

Acid rain

Modelling by the relevant air quality authority indicates that the average or minimum deposition from airborne SOx and NOx exceed the maximum critical load for acidity on at least part of the site.

Pollution – unspecified

No information available.

Conservation objectives

None available

The New Forest SAC

Site area: 29213.57 ha

Overview of site and its location

The New Forest is a large and complex ecosystem and one of the largest remaining relatively wild areas in the South of England attracting enormous numbers of visitors each year.

The New Forest SAC supports an extensive and complex mosaic of habitats including wet and dry heaths and associated bogs and mires, wet and dry grasslands, ancient pasture woodlands, frequent permanent and temporary ponds and a network of streams and rivers. These habitats support an exceptional variety of flora and fauna including internationally important populations of breeding and over-wintering birds and other notable species such as southern damselfly, stag beetle and great crested newt.

The New Forest is one of the most important sites for wildlife in the UK and recognised as being of exceptional importance for nature conservation throughout the European Union. Over 90% of the SAC comprises the unenclosed land of the Crown Lands and adjacent commons, while the remainder is managed by private owners and occupiers. Of fundamental importance to sustaining the exceptional quality on the open forest is the persistence of commoning- the commoners stock roam freely, maintaining the structural diversity and richness of the habitats complemented by annual heathland cutting and burning programmes.

There are many pressures and threats to the condition of the New Forest SAC the main ones being:

- A significant long term reduction in grazing pressure through loss of commoning. This would lead to a dramatic change in the flora and fauna of the New Forest and the impoverishment of the special features for which is was designated.
- Impacts of recreation including disturbance to qualifying species and compaction, abrasion and other modifications to vegetation, soils and watercourses.
- Historic drainage of wetlands which leads to a loss of extent of wetland habitats such as wet heath, mire, riverine and bog woodland.
- Silviculture plantations with recognisable remnants of SAC Annex 1 habitats such as heathland, mire, lawn, riverine and bog woodland.
- Loss of traditional management practices which can lead to a loss of extent and diversity of open habitats.

The main stakeholders within the New Forest are committed to its protection and as a result there are some key mechanisms already in place:

- Recreational Management Strategy - The Strategy seeks to guide and influence recreation and spatial planning policy and implementation across the whole of the National Park and adjoining areas. The implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by the RMS Steering Group of key statutory bodies this currently consists of the Forestry Commission, the National Park Authority, the Verderers and Natural England.

- Higher Level Environmental Stewardship - currently supports major projects such as restoring wetlands and grasslands, tackling conifer regeneration and restoring plantations, supporting commoning and undertaking surveys of SPA bird populations and other species.
- The Forest Design Plan for the New Forest Inclosures was produced by the Forestry Commission in 2007 and sets out the management proposals for a period of twenty years for the Crown Land inclosure woodlands.
- Commoners Dwelling Scheme - provides a way for commoners to enter into a legal agreement which allows them to apply for planning permission so they can build a home outside the New Forest villages and continue their tradition of commoning in the forest.
- Local Development Plans - both the New Forest National Park and District Council have policies and/or supplementary planning guidance which secures financial contributions (and direct delivery of open space in the case of larger developments in NFDC) to fund the delivery of new open space provision, access management initiatives and other management measures in order to ensure the impacts of new residential developments are avoided or mitigated.

Qualifying Features

H7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs

H7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*

H3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*)

H3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*

H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*

H4030 European dry heaths

H6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)

H7230 Alkaline fens

H9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrub layer (*Quercion roboripetraeae* or *Ilici-Fagenion*)

H9130 *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests

H9190 Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains

Pressures and threats

Drainage

A legacy of 150 years of drainage of mires, wet heathlands, wet grasslands and streams to improve grazing has led to a loss of peat, reduction of habitat condition, bracken and scrub encroachment. A programme of restoration has been going on for the past 10 years and around 3500ha of mire and streams has been identified as still requiring restoration.

Inappropriate Scrub Control

Lack of management and grazing, and inappropriate drainage has led to the loss of open habitats through encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland.

Fish Stocking

Hatchet Pond, whilst not actively stocked, is managed as a coarse fishery including carp and bream. The common practice of ground baiting, which is popular with carp fisherman, can introduce nutrients and there may also be deliberate extra feeding to encourage growth of specimen sized fish. In addition, benthivorous fish contribute nutrient through their feeding habits. This has contributed to high turbidity and algal biomass putting the submerged flora at risk. Public disturbance and invasive species have also contributed to the declining condition of Hatchet Pond.

Deer

High levels of browsing prevent regeneration and cause a decline in the shrub and field layer of woodlands. The Forestry Commission and other land owners are actively managing the deer population and cooperating in existing strategies but levels are still perceived to be high.

Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Air pollution impacts on vegetation diversity. Aerial deposits of nitrogen may exceed the threshold limits above which the quality and character of vegetation begins to be altered and adversely impacted. This could potentially lead to a loss or change of habitat type which in turn will impact on species reliant on that habitat.

Public Access/Disturbance

The New Forest attracts high numbers of visitors annually and there is an assumption that disturbance affects SAC habitats through erosion, compaction and damage to vegetation and water bodies. Investigation into understanding the impact of recreation is required and recreation should be managed to minimise the impact and protect the European features. Hatchet pond attracts high numbers of visitors, walkers along the shoreline have eroded the banks and introduced sediment into the water, this together with feeding of birds and fishing activities has polluted the water and put the habitat at risk. Many of the10 designated campsites within the New Forest are located in sensitive areas and have impoverished vegetation due to trampling and infrastructure. Sites in or adjacent to pasture woodland in particular are likely to progressively decline due to the impact on tree regeneration, levels of dead wood, lichens and ground flora.

Change in land management

Restoration of conifer plantation to heathland and grassland habitats is taking place throughout the New Forest on private land, on the adjacent commons and on the Crown Lands where the Verderers Inclosures are being returned to open forest. Following initial felling there is often extensive regeneration of conifer which requires management. Lack of funds for follow-up management could lead to a failure of the restoration.

Water Pollution

Many villages have properties that are not on mains sewerage and have domestic treatment units which discharge into ditches and streams that are either within or flow into the SAC. The ditches and streams have seasonal flow and this in combination with a number of properties all discharging into the same channel could lead to an increase in nutrient levels impacting on the habitats they flow through, reducing species richness and diversity.

Forestry and woodland management

Lack of management of woodlands in private ownership has led to loss of characteristic ground flora and shrubs and threat from non-natives such as scots pine, turkey oak and rhododendron. Artificial drainage can impact on wetter habitats leading to loss of sphagnum and bryophytes.

Inappropriate ditch management

Ditches alongside tracks, roads, private property and for forestry practices can impact on wet habitats which causes a loss or conversion of habitat. Drainage into streams and bogs can carry silt adding nutrients and negatively impacting on species relying on the low nutrient status of the habitats.

Invasive species

A wide range of non-native invasive species such as *Crassula helmslii*, parrots feather, pitcher plant, rhododendron, turkey oak and Himalayan balsam can be found within the SAC habitats of the New Forest. Many non-native species invade and out compete native species.

Parking

Much of the SAC is unfenced with open access and numerous roads crisscrossing the site. Although the area is well served by car parks, parking on the verges is common, this is a particular problem in villages with parking on verges outside properties, village greens and Manorial wastes. This leads to a loss of vegetation, compaction of the soil and pollution. There are a variety of solutions available but funding will be required.

Inappropriate cutting/mowing

Loss of traditional hay cutting, grazing and scrub management in privately owned meadows and heathlands leading to a loss or conversion of habitat.

Direct impact from 3rd party

Private property owners modify verges which are SAC habitats outside of their ownership. Issues include: creating new drives; re-turfing; planting hedges; encroachment by moving boundaries, and storage of material and equipment.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;
- the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely;
- the populations of qualifying species; and
- the distribution of qualifying species within the site.

New Forest SPA

Site area: 27968.96 ha

Overview of site and its location

The New Forest is a large and complex ecosystem and one of the largest remaining relatively wild areas in the South of England attracting enormous numbers of visitors each year.

Further description of the site is provided under New Forest SAC above

There are many pressures and threats to the condition of the New Forest SPA the main ones being:

- Impacts of recreation including disturbance to qualifying SPA species.
- The pressures and threats described for the New Forest SAC (above), resulting in changes to the flora and fauna of the New Forest and the SPA birds that use these for habitat

This plan does not cover issues where mechanisms are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for maintenance. Existing mechanisms for protection of the New Forest and its designated features are described under New Forest SAC above.

Qualifying Features

A072(B) *Pernis apivorus*: European honey-buzzard

A082(NB) *Circus cyaneus*: Hen harrier

A099(B) *Falco subbuteo*: Eurasian hobby

A224(B) *Caprimulgus europaeus*: European nightjar

A246(B) *Lullula arborea*: Woodlark

A302(B) *Sylvia undata*: Dartford warbler

A314(B) *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: Wood warbler

Pressures and threats

Inappropriate scrub control

Lack of management and grazing, and inappropriate drainage has led to the loss of open habitats through encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland with potential knock-on effects on the SPA bird species using these habitats.

Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition#

Air pollution impacts on vegetation diversity. Aerial deposits of nitrogen may exceed the threshold limits above which the quality and character of vegetation begins to be altered and adversely impacted. This could potentially lead to a loss or change of habitat type which in turn will impact on species reliant on that habitat.

Public Access/Disturbance

The New Forest attracts high numbers of visitors annually and there is an assumption that disturbance affects the breeding success of SPA birds. The pressures are not fully understood but a recent study concluded that nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler densities are notably low compared with other large heathland areas such as the Dorset Heaths and Thames Basin Heaths. Investigation into understanding the impact of recreation is required and recreation should be managed to minimise the impact and protect the European designated features.

Change in land management

Restoration of conifer plantation to heathland and grassland habitats is taking place throughout the New Forest on private land, on the adjacent commons and on the Crown Lands where the Verderers Inclosures are being returned to open forest. Following initial felling there is often extensive regeneration of conifer which requires management. Lack of funds for follow-up management could lead to a failure of the restoration with potential knock-on effects on the SPA birds that rely on open habitats.

Inappropriate cutting/mowing

Loss of traditional hay cutting, grazing and scrub management in privately owned meadows and heathlands leading to a loss or conversion of habitat with potential knock-on effects on the SPA birds that rely on open habitats.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- the population of each of the qualifying features; and
- the distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

The New Forest Ramsar site

Site area: 28002.81 ha

Overview of site and its location

The New Forest is an area of semi-natural vegetation including valley mires, fens and wet heath within catchments whose uncultivated and undeveloped state buffer the mires against adverse ecological change. The habitats present are of high ecological quality and diversity with undisturbed transition zones.

The suite of mires is regarded as the locus classicus of this type of mire in Britain. Other wetland habitats include numerous ponds of varying size and water chemistry including several ephemeral ponds and a network of small streams mainly acidic in character which have no lowland equivalent in the UK. The plant communities in the numerous valleys and seepage step mires show considerable variation, being affected especially by the nutrient content of groundwater. In the most nutrient-poor zones, Sphagnum bog-mosses, cross-leaved heath, bog asphodel, common cottongrass and similar species predominate. In more enriched conditions the communities are more fen-like

Qualifying Features

Criterion 1: Valley mires and wet heaths are found throughout the site and are of outstanding scientific interest. The mires and heaths are within catchments whose uncultivated and undeveloped state buffer the mires against adverse ecological change. This is the largest concentration of intact valley mires of their type in Britain.

Criterion 2: The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals including several nationally rare species. Seven species of nationally rare plant are found on the site, as are at least 65 British Red Data Book species of invertebrate.

Criterion 3: The mire habitats are of high ecological quality and diversity and have undisturbed transition zones. The invertebrate fauna of the site is important due to the concentration of rare and scare wetland species. The whole site complex, with its examples of semi-natural habitats is essential to the genetic and ecological diversity of southern England.

Pressures and threats

Commercial-scale forest exploitation

No information available.

Drainage/land-claim (unspecified)

No information available.

Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species

No information available.

Recreational/tourism disturbance (unspecified)

No information available.

Conservation objectives

None available.

Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC

Site area: 37.93 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC on the south coast of England encompasses a series of coastal lagoons, including percolation, isolated and sluiced lagoons. The site includes a number of lagoons in the marshes in the Keyhaven – Pennington area, at Farlington Marshes in Langstone Harbour, behind the sea-wall at Bembridge Harbour and at Gilkicker, near Gosport.

The lagoons show a range of salinities and substrates, ranging from soft mud to muddy sand with a high proportion of shingle, which support a diverse fauna including large populations of three notable species: the nationally rare foxtail stonewort *Lamprothamnium papulosum*, the nationally scarce lagoon sand shrimp *Gammarus insensibilis*, and the nationally scarce starlet sea anemone *Nematostella vectensis*.

Qualifying Features

H1150 Coastal lagoons

Pressures and threats

Hydrological changes

Sluices around the lagoons, particularly in East Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are in poor condition/potentially not functioning fully. This causes water quality issues and changes in the hydrology of the lagoons. Freshwater streams and land and golf course drainage also threaten the salinity and water quality of the lagoons. Lagoon habitat is being created where tidal sluices are not functioning as originally designed and are letting in sea water resulting in good quality lagoon habitat in new areas. Inclusion of the lagoons into the designation will enable effective management of this habitat and ensure the designation is scientifically robust

Inappropriate weed control

There is a history of algaecide application to the Gilkicker lagoons during the management of the golf course. The algaecide can have detrimental effects on the lagoonal vegetation and associated specialist fauna. Should this practice continue unmanaged this could impact on the SAC.

Coastal squeeze

Sea level rise and coastal defence threaten salinity and area of lagoons. Flooding, percolation and infiltration from sea level rise and extreme weather can alter the salinity balance of the lagoons. Flood defences or managed retreat may reduce the area of low-lying fringe habitats. Current compensation provides required habitat for Epoch 1 of the Shoreline Managemen Plan 2 (SMP2), further investigation is required for Epoch 2 and 3. This project will utilise outputs from Shoreline Management Plans, the Environment Agency's Regional Habitat Creation Project and the New Forest District Council/Channel Coastal Observatory's Solent Dynamic Coast Project.

Invasive species

Marine Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) are known to be introduced and subsequently spread through commercial shipping (through the release of ballast water and biofouling on hulls); recreational boating (through biofouling on hulls); aquaculture (through contamination of imported/moved stock or escaped stock), and natural dispersal. If present, INNS pose a threat to SAC lagoon habitats by displacing or preying upon native species, by destroying habitats, or by introducing new diseases or parasites.

Air pollution

Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site. This requires further investigation.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats
- the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and
- the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely

Solent Maritime SAC

Site area: 11243.12 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Solent is a complex site encompassing a major estuarine system on the south coast of England. The Solent and its inlets are unique in Britain and Europe for their hydrographic regime with double tides, as well as for the complexity of the marine and estuarine habitats present within the area. Sediment habitats within the estuaries include extensive areas of intertidal mudflats, often supporting eelgrass Zostera spp. and green algae, saltmarshes and natural shoreline transitions, such as drift line vegetation.

All four species of cordgrass found within the UK are present within the Solent and it is one of only two UK sites with significant amounts of the native small cordgrass *Spartina maritima*. The SAC contains rich intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, shingle beaches and adjacent coastal habitats, including grazing marsh, reedbeds and damp woodland.

Qualifying Features

H1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time

H1320 Spartina swards (*Spartinion maritimae*)

H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

S1016 *Vertigo moulinsiana*: Desmoulin`s whorl snail

H1130 Estuaries

H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines

H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks

H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")

H1150 Coastal lagoons

H1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand

Pressures and threats

Public Access/Disturbance

Recreational activities can affect annual vegetation of drift lines (H1210) and the vegetation of stony banks (H1220).

Coastal squeeze

Habitats are being lost as they are squeezed between rising sea levels and hard coastal defences that are maintained. There is a direct impact due to loss of the SAC habitats such as saltmarsh. In some areas rising sea levels will result in coastal grasslands being lost to more saline grasslands. The habitats that are lost could be created elsewhere, but there is difficulty in finding suitable areas. The neutral grassland habitats will take a long time to create as mitigation, but intertidal habitat can be created relatively quickly. Current compensation provides required habitat for Epoch 1 of the Shoreline Management Plan

2, further investigation is required for Epoch 2 and 3. This project will utilise outputs from Shoreline Management Plans, the Environment Agency's Regional Habitat Creation Project and the New Forest District Council/Channel Coastal Observatory's Solent Dynamic Coast Project.

Water pollution

Water pollution affects a range of habitat at the site through eutrophication and toxicity. Sources include both point source discharges (including flood alleviation / storm discharges) and diffuse water pollution from agriculture / road runoff, as well as historic contamination of marine sediments, primarily from copper and Tributyltin (TBT). A position statement from the Environment Agency and Natural England on water quality in the Solent and housing growth confirms the need to control nitrogen inputs to the Solent from development growth.[36] Environment Agency flood event discharge consents allow untreated waters to be discharged which end up in the SAC and are likely to have a negative impact. There is a threat of spillage from oil transportation and transfer and by the usage by ships and pilotage.

Changes in species distributions

Areas of salt-marsh are eroding and decreasing.

Climate change

Climate change has resulted in rising sea level causing flooding to habitats.

Change to site conditions

There is an increasing loss of salt-marsh in much of the Solent for reasons unknown, and this needs to be investigated.

Invasive species

The highest risk pathways through which marine INNS are introduced and then spread have been identified as: commercial shipping (through release of ballast water, and biofouling on hulls); recreational boating (through biofouling on hulls); aquaculture (through contamination of imported or moved stock - or escaped stock in the case of the pacific oyster), and natural dispersal.

Direct land take from development

Private sea defences are causing disruption to the natural processes of allowing erosion to move sediments around the SAC.

Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads. Locally observed effects are unknown.

Hydrological changes

Titchfield Haven has a high level of water abstraction licences - if all were used then water levels would be too low in the SAC. Percolation of sea water through sea walls is causing saline intrusion into non-saline grassland habitats and changing them.

Direct impact from 3rd party

Off-roading is causing damage to some areas of grassland. Private sea defences are causing disruption to the natural movement processes of natural materials along the coast. House boats are unlicensed and have the potential to cause damage to intertidal habitats. Fly grazing is causing issues affecting large areas of Chichester Harbour.

Extraction: non-living resources

Shingle extraction for aggregates may have an adverse impact upon intertidal fauna and flora, and may affect the movement of coastal sediments that would in turn have an impact upon intertidal habitats.

Other

SAC boundary may not cover the extent of all Annex 1 and Annex 2 features and/or supporting habitats.

[36] Addressing the needs of housing growth and protecting the marine environment in the Solent area, Environment Agency and Natural England, 2015.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- the populations of qualifying species; and
- the distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Solent and Southampton Water SPA

Site area: 5401.12 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Solent is a complex site encompassing a major estuarine system on the south coast of England. The Solent and its inlets are unique in Britain and Europe for their hydrographic regime with double tides, as well as for the complexity of the marine and estuarine habitats present within the area. Sediment habitats within the estuaries include extensive areas of intertidal mudflats, often supporting eelgrass Zostera spp. and green algae, saltmarshes and natural shoreline transitions, such as drift line vegetation.

The rich intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, shingle beaches and adjacent coastal habitats, including grazing marsh, reedbeds and damp woodland, support nationally and internationally important numbers of migratory and over-wintering waders and waterfowl as well as important breeding gull and tern populations.

Qualifying Features

A046a(NB) *Branta bernicla bernicla*: Dark-bellied brent goose

A052(NB) *Anas crecca*: Eurasian teal

A156(NB) *Limosa limosa islandica*: Black-tailed godwit

Waterbird assemblage

A176(B) *Larus melanocephalus*: Mediterranean gull

A191(B) *Sterna sandvicensis*: Sandwich tern

A192(B) *Sterna dougallii*: Roseate tern

A193(B) *Sterna hirundo*: Common tern

A195(B) *Sterna albifrons*: Little tern

A137(NB) *Charadrius hiaticula*: Ringed plover

Pressures and threats

Public Access/Disturbance

Many human activities in the area can disturb birds. This includes activities such as walking; dog walking; bird watching; boating; kayaking; kite surfing; hang gliding; paramotors; jet skis; wildfowling; model helicopters/aircraft; boat mooring, and hovercraft usage.

Coastal squeeze

Habitats are being lost as they are squeezed between rising sea levels and hard coastal defences that are maintained. There is an impact on birds due to the loss of habitat for feeding, roosting and breeding. In some areas rising sea levels will result in coastal grasslands being lost to more saline grasslands, thus losing habitat for some breeding waders of the waterbird assemblage. The habitats that are lost could be created elsewhere, but there is difficulty in finding suitable areas. The neutral grassland habitats will take a long time to create as mitigation, but intertidal habitat can be created relatively quickly. Current compensation provides required habitat for Epoch 1 of the Shoreline Management Plan 2, further investigation is required for Epoch 2 and 3. This project will utilise outputs from Shoreline Management Plans, the Environment Agency's Regional Habitat Creation Project and the New Forest District Council/Channel Coastal Observatory's Solent Dynamic Coast Project.

Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine

Towed gear, hand gathering of shellfish, bait digging and aquaculture are the main fishery activities in this site. These have the potential to adversely affect the prey species on which the designated bird species rely in not appropriately managed.

Water pollution

Water pollution affects a range of habitat and bird species at the site through eutrophication and toxicity. Sources include both point source discharges (including flood alleviation / storm discharges) and diffuse water pollution from agriculture / road runoff, as well as historic contamination of marine sediments, primarily from copper and Tributyltin (TBT). A position statement from the Environment Agency and Natural England on water quality in the Solent and housing growth confirms the need to control nitrogen inputs to the Solent from development growth.[37] Environment Agency flood event discharge consents allow untreated waters to be discharged which end up in the SAC and are likely to have a negative impact. There is a threat of spillage from oil transportation and transfer and by the usage by ships and pilotage.

Changes in species distributions

Many waders and wildfowl are decreasing in the Solent probably as they move north and east under national trends. Some fish, such as sand eels, may be moving their breeding grounds resulting in less food availability for breeding terns. Invertebrate populations in the intertidal muds are changing and this may disadvantage some wintering wader species. Areas of salt-marsh are eroding and decreasing resulting in decreasing breeding gulls and terns as their habitat decreases and decreasing plant species of salt-marshes.

Climate change

Climate change has impacts upon coastal species, in that gull and tern colonies are more frequently washed out with rising sea levels when storm surges cause flooding to habitats.

Change to site conditions

There is an increasing loss of salt-marsh in much of the Solent for reasons unknown, and this needs to be investigated.

Invasive species

The highest risk pathways through which marine INNS are introduced and then spread have been identified as: commercial shipping (through release of ballast water, and biofouling on hulls); recreational boating (through biofouling on hulls); aquaculture (through contamination of imported or moved stock - or escaped stock in the case of the pacific oyster), and natural dispersal.

Biological resource use

Gull egg collecting occurs in some places, and wildfowling occurs in several places. These activities are likely to be disturbing to breeding and wintering birds even though they are licenced/consented at the moment.

[37] Addressing the needs of housing growth and protecting the marine environment in the Solent area, Environment Agency and Natural England, 2015.

Inappropriate pest control

Predator control is decreasing, resulting in increased predation by foxes etc. and this is the likely cause of decrease in successful breeding of gulls and terns.

Direct impact from 3rd party

Military helicopters cause disturbance to wintering birds.

Other

SPA boundaries may not cover the extent of all Annex 1 and Annex 2 features and/or supporting habitats.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- the population of each of the qualifying features; and
- the distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site

Site area: 5346.44 ha

Overview of site and its location

The area covered extends from Hurst Spit to Gilkicker Point along the south coast of Hampshire and along the north coast of the Isle of Wight. The site comprises of estuaries and adjacent coastal habitats including intertidal flats, saline lagoons, shingle beaches, saltmarsh, reedbeds, damp woodland, and grazing marsh. The diversity of habitats support internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl, important breeding gull and tern populations and an important assemblage of rare invertebrates and plants.

Qualifying Features

Criterion 1: The site is one of the few major sheltered channels between a substantial island and mainland in European waters, exhibiting an unusual strong double tidal flow and has long periods of slack water at high and low tide. It includes many wetland habitats characteristic of the biogeographic region: saline lagoons, saltmarshes, estuaries, intertidal flats, shallow coastal waters, grazing marshes, reedbeds, coastal woodland and rocky boulder reefs.

Criterion 2: The site supports an important assemblage of rare plants and invertebrates. At least 33 British Red Data Book invertebrates and at least eight British Red Data Book plants are represented on site.

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance

- Species with peak counts in winter: 51343 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003)

Criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

- Species with peak counts in spring/autumn: Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
- Species with peak counts in winter: Dark-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla,* Eurasian teal *Anas crecca,* Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*

Pressures and threats

Erosion

No information available.

Conservation objectives

None available.

Mottisfont Bats SAC

Site area: 196.55 ha

Overview of site and its location

The Mottisfont woodland, which is near Romsey in Hampshire, supports an important population of the rare Barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*. Mottisfont contains a mix of woodland types including hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice with standards, broadleaved plantation and coniferous plantation which the bats use for breeding, roosting, commuting and feeding.

Qualifying Features

S1308 Barbastella barbastellus: Barbastelle bat

Pressures and threats

Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown

Barbastelle bats use a number of sites for roosts through the breeding season. The last full survey which involved radio-tracking to identify the distribution of bats around the site was carried out in 2002. The current annual Bat Conservation Trust survey contract provides basic presence information on an annual basis in two thirds (4 of 6 compartments) of the designated site through bat detector surveys. Annual knowledge and detailed knowledge of the presence and distribution of the bats over the remaining one third of the site are both needed.

Forestry and woodland management

There are existing felling licences and England Woodland Grant Scheme agreements which do not take account of the designation and are not managing the habitat with the Barbastelle bat population in the woodland in mind.

Offsite habitat availability/ management

Offiste areas of habitat may be important for the SAC bat population but insufficient information is available to guide management of these.

Conservation objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- the extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species;
- the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;
- the supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely;
- the populations of qualifying species; and
- the distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Appendix 2
Review of other plans and projects

District level Local Plans (strategic issues / 'core strategies') providing for development

Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan DPD 2011-2029	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Test Valley Borough Council
Related HRA/AA:	Revised Local Plan DPD 2011 – 2029 Regulation 22, July 2014 HRA Assessment for Revised Local Plan DPD, June 2014
Notes on Plan documents:	Plan adopted January 2016. Development provided for includes 10,584 new homes and allocation of 63,000 sq m of employment land between 2011 and 2029.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

Recreational disturbance was identified as a likely potential threat to European designated sites. The policies relating to this include:

- *COM1 Housing Provision 2011 – 2029*
- *COM3 New Neighbourhood at Whitenap, Romsey;*
- *COM4 New Neighbourhood at Hoe Lane, North Baddesley*

These policies are likely to cause disturbance to species in the New Forest SPA/ Ramsar and Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar through increased visitor numbers from new housing developments. *COM1* recognises the necessity to identify any impacts to European sites from any future development plans. The potential impacts of strategic allocations provided for by *COM3* and *COM4* are mitigated by the requirement within these policies to provide 8.0 Ha of alternative recreation space per 1,000 population at Beggarspath Wood and Luzborough Plantation. *Policy E5* requires developments to comply with the Habitats Regulations, including provision of measures to mitigate adverse effects; supporting text states that the Council will seek developer contributions towards a range of mitigation measures, including securing access to new areas of land for informal recreation. In this regard, the supporting text also notes partnership work to mitigate recreational pressures on the New Forest and Solent European sites. In the short term, the Council has approved interim mitigation packages in respect of both of the New Forest[38] and Solent Coast[39]. Potential in-combination effects from the Test Valley Revised Local Plan are therefore considered to have been fully mitigated.

Southampton Core Strategy Partial Review and City Centre Action Plan	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Southampton City Council
Related HRA/AA:	Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment Summary Report
Notes on Plan documents:	Plan adopted January 2010; partial review adopted March 2015. Development provided for includes 16,300 new homes, 110,000 sq m of office development and 97,000 sq m of industrial/warehouse development between 2006 and 2026.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The following likely significant effects were identified:

Coastal Squeeze: this is likely to have a significant effect on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site and Solent Maritime SAC. The forthcoming North Solent Shoreline Management Plan is expected to be addressed and mitigate for the impacts of coastal squeeze.

Recreational disturbance: an increase in visitor numbers could potentially cause significant impacts on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site, Solent Maritime SAC and the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site. A Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Study will e undertaken to identify the potential impacts of recreation. Appropriate

[38] New Forest Interim Mitigation Framework 2014 requires mitigation where there would be a net gain in dwellings within 13.6 km of New Forest SPA

[39] Requires mitigation where there would be a net gain in dwellings within 5.6 km of Solent and Southampton Water SPA

Southampton Core Strategy Partial Review and City Centre Action Plan

mitigation measures can be devised from this.

Air pollution: could potentially cause significant impacts on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site and Solent Maritime SAC and the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar. There is potential for in combination effects with Draft South East Plan and Southampton Airport.

Tall buildings and flight/view lines: there is potential for likely significant effects Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar, however there is insufficient information to assess this.

Increased effluent discharge: has potential likely significant impact on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar, Solent Maritime SAC, the New Forest SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar. There is potential for in combination effects with Draft South East Plan.

Increased water demand: this could cause likely significant effects on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar, Solent Maritime SAC, the New Forest SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar. This is also considered to be an adverse effect of the Draft South East Plan.

Noise/Light pollution: impacts are currently uncertain.

Isle of Wight Island Plan Core Strategy

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Isle of Wight Council
Related HRA/AA:	Habitats Regulation Assessment for the Isle of Wight Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment Report April 2011[40]
Notes on Plan documents:	Plan adopted March 2012. Development provided for include 8320 dwellings and 42 ha of new economic development land between 2011 and 2027.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The HRA concluded that there would be no likely significant effects as a result of strategic-level Core Strategy policies.

Further assessment will be required when identifying site allocations for Area Action Plan DPDs. For example *AAP1: Medina Valley and AAP2: Ryde* both have the potential to cause likely significant effects to the Solent and Southampton Waters SPA, as a result of recreational disturbance from increased visitor pressure. To further understand the impacts project level HRA's will be required for each site allocation.

Further work is also necessary to provide evidence that appropriate mitigation will be delivered from the GI strategy. This strategy, along with Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit will be able to identify more spaces for recreation.

The HRA assessment has also recommended that certain housing development site allocations are not progressed due to adverse impacts on European sites.

Christchurch and East Dorset Joint Core Strategy

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council
Related HRA/AA:	Christchurch and East Dorset Joint Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment
Notes on Plan documents:	Plan adopted April 2014. Development provided for include 8,490 new homes and 80 ha of employment land between 2013 and 2028.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The HRA Appropriate Assessment ruled out any adverse effects on European sites. The following types of potential likely significant effect were identified:

[40] https://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/2782-FA4-HRA-of-the-IW-Core-Strategy-Appropriate-Assessment-Report.pdf

Christchurch and East Dorset Joint Core Strategy

Habitat loss: *Policy KS9* and *KS10*: There was an element of uncertainty at the screening stage, in regards to these policies and whether proposed development and inclusion of cycle and walking routes would result in habitat loss at Dorset Heath SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar, River Avon SAC, and Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar. It is recommended that habitat loss does not occur from proposals and if that is unavoidable then appropriate compensation should be implemented.

Physical disturbance/damage: *Policy CN3*: proposes development directly adjacent to the Avon SPA/Ramsar and within close proximity to the Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar, Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar are likely to result on significant effects, as a result of recreational pressure. Equally, *Policy KS10:* proposes improvements to the A35, which could have an adverse impact on the River Avon SAC and Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar, due to physical disturbance and damage. Policies relating to gypsy and traveller sites and rural exception sites also haves the potential to cause significant adverse impacts as a result of development within 500m of the Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar site, River Avon SAC and/or Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar site. It has been concluded that there will be no significant impacts to the European sites, as long as mitigation proposed in *Policies ME1 and ME2*.

Recreational disturbance: *Policy CN3:* the close proximity of proposed development to Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar site, the River Avon SAC, Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar site and the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar were considered to have adverse effects, in regards to increased visitor pressure. The provision of mitigation from *Policies ME1, ME2 and ME3* was considered adequate in preventing adverse effects on the European sites.

Noise, vibration and light pollution: New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar site are all vulnerable to significant adverse effects. However, the provision of mitigation from *Policies ME1 and ME2* can rule out any significant effects on European sites.

Air pollutions: Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar site, the River Avon SAC, Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar site and the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site were considered to be affected by likely significant effects. It was concluded that it was unlikely for there to be significant adverse effects, as long as appropriate mitigation was implemented.

In-combination plans: It is concluded that there will be no adverse effects on European sites, including Dorset Heaths SAC and Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar site if recommendations made within the HRA are implemented.

Wiltshire Core Strategy

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Wiltshire Council
Related HRA/AA:	Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment[41]
Notes on Plan documents:	Plan adopted January 2015. Development provided for include at least 42,000 new homes and 178 ha of new employment land.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The following likely significant impacts in combination with other plans were identified:

Water abstraction and pollution: additional housing from policies *CP2 – Delivery Strategy, CP4 – Amesbury, CP17 – Mere, CP24 – Southern Wiltshire, Cp26 – Tidsworth and Ludgershall and CP31 – Warminster* had the potential to contribute to likely significant impact. However, Wessex Water and Thames Water have confirmed that the increased housing numbers can be supplied within licensed abstraction headroom and sewage discharge accommodated for at the Sewage Treatment Works. It was concluded that there would be no adverse effect on the River Avon SAC

Recreation: proposed housing within the South Wiltshire CA was considered to marginally increase recreational pressure to the New Forest SAC. *CP50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity* and Recreational Management Strategy were found to be valid and effective.

Air pollution: there is potential for likely significant effects for any European designated site as a result of increased traffic. The existing mitigation described in *CP55: Air Quality* is considered valid and that it will remain effective.

[41] http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/wiltshirecorestrategy/wiltshirecorestrategyexamination.htm

County level plans providing for development

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan[42]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Hampshire County Council and its partner authorities, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, New Forest National Park Authority and South Downs National Park Authority
Related HRA/AA:	Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan Assessment Under the Habitats Regulations, July 2013[43]
Notes on Plan documents:	Adopted October 2013 The Minerals and Waste Local Plan replaces the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and comprises of strategic approach and policies, strategic sites allocations considered necessary to deliver the Plan objectives and general and site-specific development management policies.
Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans The HRA concludes that there are no likely significant effects on any European sites, as a result of Hampshire's proposed policies on their own and in combination with other plans, as long as recommended measures to avoid and mitigate are implemented.	

Hampshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2031[44]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Hampshire County Council
Related HRA/AA:	Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Hampshire Local Transport Plan 3, March 2011[45]: Screening Statement for Part A 20 Year Strategy
Notes on Plan documents:	Approved February 2011 Transport priorities for Hampshire are: • Supporting the economy through resilient highways; • Management of traffic; • The role of public transport; • Quality of life and place; • Transport and growth areas.
Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans The HRA considers it unlikely that the proposed LTP3 Strategy will generate significant effects at any European site included in the assessment, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. A stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was not considered necessary.	

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy[46]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole
Related HRA/AA:	Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Minerals Core Strategy Pre-Submission Draft Conservation Regulations Assessment, January 2013[47]
Notes on Plan documents:	Adopted May 2014 The Minerals Core Strategy replaces a number of saved minerals policies of the Dorset Minerals and Waste Local Plan (1999). The Minerals Core Strategy is part of the Minerals and

[42] http://www3.hants.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste/planning-policy-home.htm
[43] http://www3.hants.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste/planning-policy-home.htm
[44] http://www3.hants.gov.uk/transport/local-transport-plan.htm
[45] http://www3.hants.gov.uk/transport/local-transport-plan.htm
[46] https://www.dorsetforyou.com/mcs
[47] https://www.dorsetforyou.com/mcs/examination-library

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy[46]	
	Waste Development Framework, which also includes the Minerals Site Allocations Document and the Adopted Policies Map.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The HRA screening assessment finds all policies to be unlikely to have significant effects on European sites. Providing recommended additions and alterations in wording to policy, criteria and text are included, the Minerals Core Strategy is compliant with Habitat Regulations.

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Draft Waste Plan[48]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole
Related HRA/AA:	Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Draft Waste Plan Conservation Regulations Assessment Screening Report, July 2015[49]
Notes on Plan documents:	Consultation on the Draft Waste Plan took place from 15 July to 23 September 2015 The Waste Plan sets out policies and identifies locations to guide development proposals during the Plan period.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The HRA screening report concluded there were no likely significant impacts to European sites. However, there was an element of uncertainty with policies 1-8 and 10. To ensure there are no likely significant impacts to European sites the report recommends that text is incorporated in policies regarding specific allocation of sites for waste development or allow for waste development in general.

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Local Transport Plan[50]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole
Related HRA/AA:	Bournemouth, Poole & Dorset Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 Habitats Regulations Assessment Report, April 2011[51]
Notes on Plan documents:	Covers the period 2011-2026 and came into effect April 2011 Transport priorities for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole: • Enhanced quality of life and sense of place • Meeting the needs of children and young people • Meeting the needs of an ageing population • A thriving and prosperous economy • Safer and stronger communities • Inclusive neighbourhoods promoting equality of opportunity • Protect, respect and enhance the environment • Improved health and wellbeing

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

It is unlikely that the Local Transport Plan will have a significant effect on European designated sites, as long the recommendations provided the report are incorporated. The report recommends the addition of policies in section 9 regarding public transport alternatives to cars and the impacts of air pollution. Other recommendations include project level HRA for projects identified in the HRA screening to avoid or mitigate for impacts. Equally, the report suggests monitoring commitments from the Strategic Environmental Appraisal should be adhered to.

[48] https://www.dorsetforyou.com/waste-plan
[49] https://www.dorsetforyou.com/waste-plan
[50] https://www.dorsetforyou.com/article/417819/View-the-Local-Transport-Plan
[51] https://www.dorsetforyou.com/article/402212/Strategic-Environmental-Assessments

Wiltshire Minerals Core Strategy[52]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Wiltshire Council
Related HRA/AA:	Wiltshire & Swindon Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD Pre-Submission Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report, January 2012
Notes on Plan documents:	The Minerals Core Strategy (adopted June 2009) sets out the spatial vision, key objectives and overall principles for development covering minerals provision up to 2026.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The HRA identified three proposed extraction sites to lie in close proximity to European sites that may have potential significant effects. A detailed assessment concluded that these sites would not have a significant effect alone or in-combination with other plans on the European designated sites. Appropriate site level mitigation should be considered in regards to mineral extraction sites.

It is recommended that individual extraction sites should undergo project level HRA.

Wiltshire Waste Core Strategy[53]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Wiltshire Council
Related HRA/AA:	Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework, December 2011
Notes on Plan documents:	The Waste Core Strategy (adopted July 2009) sets out the spatial vision, key objectives and overall principles for development covering the provision of sustainable waste management facilities up to 2026.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local Plans

The HRA identified two of the 35 proposed sites were situated within a distance to the River Avon SAC and other European sites to have an adverse effect.

The implementation of robust site management plan and restricting the operation of facilities to daylight hours, were identified for waste development at the sites are considered to prevent significant adverse impacts. To address concerns about water pollution from Natural England, it is recommended that surface water management strategy that specifically considers the integration of surface water drainage systems is accompanied by any proposals for the two sites.

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan[54]	
Plan Owner/ Competent Authority:	Wiltshire Council
Related HRA/AA:	Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening, October 2010[55]
Notes on Plan documents:	The Wiltshire LTP sets out the council's objectives, plans and indicators for transport in Wiltshire. The third Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) covers the period from March 2011 to March 2026.

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of New Forest Local

[52] http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/mineralsandwastepolicy.htm#minerals_core_strategy
[53] http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/mineralsandwastepolicy.htm#minerals_core_strategy
[54] http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/howthecouncilworks/plansstrategiespolicies/transportpoliciesandstrategies/localtransportplan3.htm
[55] http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/howthecouncilworks/plansstrategiespolicies/transportpoliciesandstrategies/localtransportplan3.htm

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan[54]

Plans

The overall conclusion of the HRA is that there no significant effects on European sites, as long as recommended avoidance and mitigation measures are including in the LPT3 plan/daughter documents.

The HRA for the local transport plan of Wiltshire originally could not rule out the following significant effects:

Water quality: the HRA was unable to rule out significant affects to water quality of the River Avon SAC as a result of sedimentation from roads and bridleways. However, the implementation of a robust construction method statement for all works of any nature on roads adjacent to the SAC would remove any significant adverse effects on the features of the SAC.

Significant projects

None identified.