www.rbwm.gov.uk

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 23RD OCTOBER, 2019

At 7.30 pm

in the

DESBOROUGH SUITE - TOWN HALL,

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART I

This page is intentionally left blank

INSERT FRONT PAGE

LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan

DRAFT

Report to Inform the HRA

LC-538	Document Control Box
Client	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council
Report Title	Report to Inform the HRA
Status	Draft for Client Comment
Filename	LC-575_BLPSV-PC_Report to Inform HRA_6_141019SC.docx
Date	October 2019
Author	SC
Reviewed	RG
Approved	NJD

Photo: to be inserted.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acronyms

AA	Appropriate Assessment
AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
APIS	Air Pollution Information System
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
BBOWT	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
BLP	Borough Local Plan
DfT	Department for Transport
DMRB	Design Manual for Roads and Bridges
DTA	David Tyldesley and Associates
EEC	European Economic Community
g	Grams
GIS	Geographic Information System
ha	Hectares
HDV	Heavy Duty Vehicles
HRA	Habitat Regulation Assessment
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Kg	Kilograms
Km	Kilometre
LSE	Likely Significant Effect
m	Meters
m3	Meters cubed
N	Nitrogen
NE	Natural England
NO2	Nitrogen Dioxide
NOx	Nitrogen Oxides
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PRoW	Public Right of Way
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RBWM	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SIP	Site Improvement Plan
SPA	Special Protection Area

SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage
UK	United Kingdom
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WwTW	Waste Water Treatment Works
µg	Microgram

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Lepus Consulting has prepared this report to inform the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) Borough Local Plan Submission Version – Proposed Changes (BLPSV-PC) (referred to hereafter as the 'Local Plan') on behalf of RBWM Council. The Local Plan covers the period from 2013 to 2033 and will cover the whole of the RBWM Council area (referred to hereafter as the Plan area).

1.1.2 The HRA has been prepared in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[1] (the Habitats Regulations). When preparing development plan documents, the Council is required by law to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The requirement for authorities to comply with the Habitats Regulations when preparing a Local Plan is also noted in the Government's online planning practice guidance.

1.2 The HRA process

1.2.1 The HRA process assesses the potential effects of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of European sites designated under the Habitats[2] and Birds[3] Directives. These sites form a system of internationally important sites throughout Europe known collectively as the 'Natura 2000 Network'.

[1] The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (2017) SI No. 2017/1012, TSO (The Stationery Office), London.

[2] Official Journal of the European Communities (1992). Council Directive 92 /43 /EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

[3] Official Journal of the European Communities (2009). Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds.

1.2.2 European sites provide valuable ecological infrastructure for the protection of rare, endangered and/or vulnerable natural habitats and species of exceptional importance within the EU. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under European Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive), and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), classified under European Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive). Additionally, paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[4] requires that sites listed under the Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat) are to be given the same protection as fully designated European sites.

1.2.3 There is no set methodology or specification for carrying out and recording the outcomes of the HRA assessment process. The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, produced by David Tyldesley Associates (referred to hereafter as the 'DTA Handbook') provides an industry recognised good practice approach to HRA. The DTA Handbook, and in particular 'Practical Guidance for the Assessment of Plans under the Regulations[5], which forms part F, was therefore used to prepare this report. The DTA Handbook is used by Natural England, the Government's statutory nature conservation organisation and is widely considered to be an appropriate basis for the HRA of plans, as.

1.2.4 A step-by-step guide to the HRA methodology adopted in this assessment, as outlined in the DTA Handbook, is illustrated in **Figure 1.1**. In summary, the four key stages of the HRA process are as follows:

- **Stage 1. Screening:** Screening to determine if the Local Plan would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site. This stage comprises the identification of potential effects associated with the Local Plan on European sites and an assessment of the likely significance of these effects.
- **Stage 2. Appropriate Assessment and the 'Integrity Test'**: An assessment to ascertain whether or not the Local Plan would have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site to be made by the Competent Authority (in this instance RBWM). This stage comprises an impact assessment and evaluation in view of a European site's conservation objectives. Where adverse impacts on

[4] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019). National Planning Policy Framework.

[5] Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (September) (2013) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited. Available at www.dtapublications.co.uk

site integrity are identified, consideration is given to alternative options and mitigation measures which are tested.

- **Stage 3. Alternative solutions:** Deciding whether there are alternative solutions which would avoid or have a lesser effect on a European site.
- **Stage 4. Imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures:** Considering imperative reasons of overriding public interest and securing compensatory measures.

1.2.5 This report presents the methodology and findings of Stages 1 and 2 of the HRA process.

1.2.6 This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction;
- **Chapter 2:** Local Plan;
- **Chapter 3:** Methodology;
- **Chapter 4:** Screening;
- **Chapter 5** to **7:** Appropriate Assessment; and
- **Chapter 8:** Next Steps.

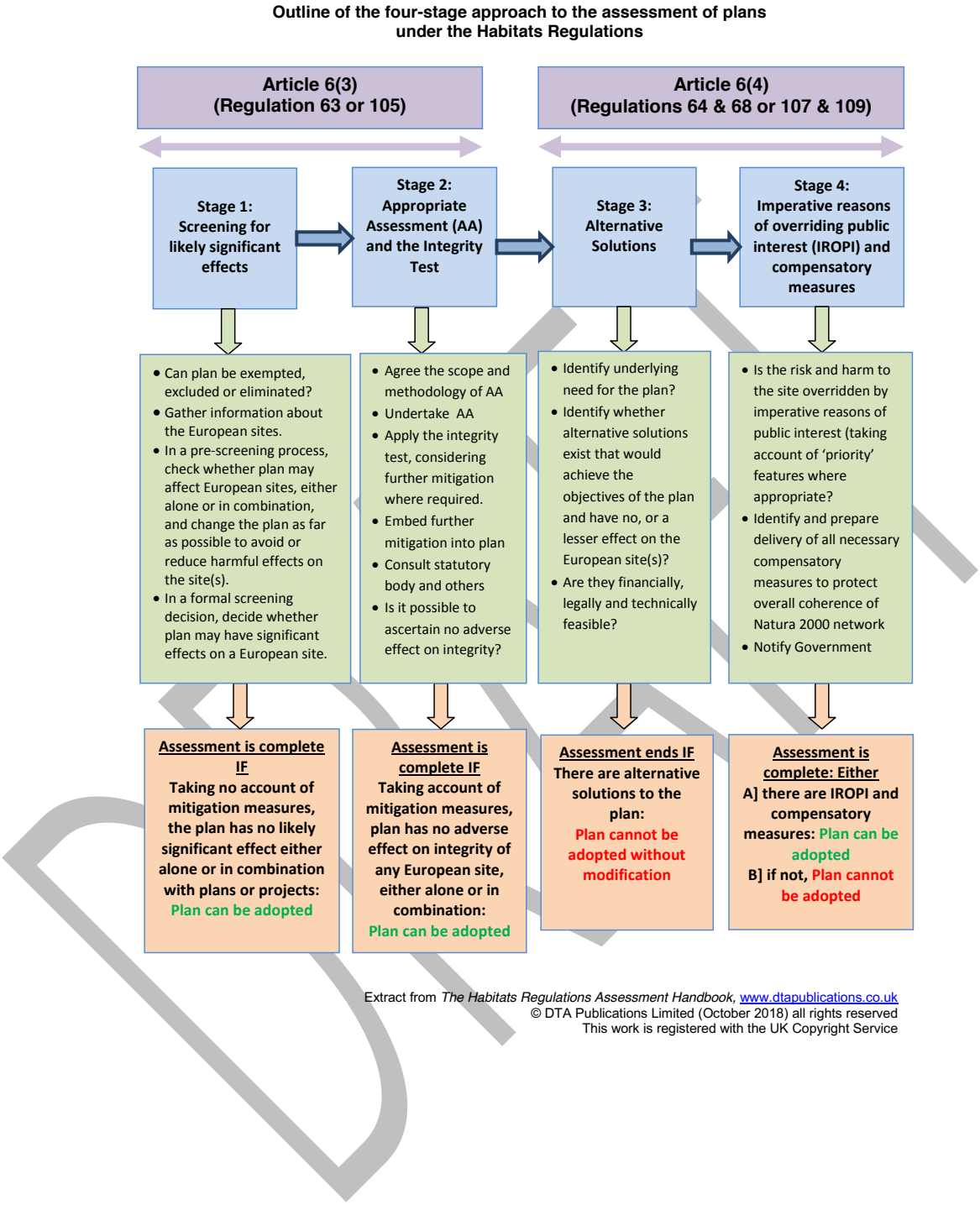


Figure 1.1: *Stages in the Habitats Regulations Assessment*[6].

[6] Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (October) (2018) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited. Available at www.dtapublications.co.uk

2 Local Plan

2.1 Borough Local Plan

2.1.1 The Local Plan is a plan for the future development of the local area. It will guide the location and nature of future development and inform decisions on whether or not planning applications can be granted. Once adopted the Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan[7] and some policies in the Maidenhead Town Centre Action Area Plan[8] and will direct new development in the Borough up to 2033.

2.1.2 The Local Plan identifies how much development is being planned in the borough for the period to 2033 and shows, through the spatial strategy, how this will be distributed. It includes policies on a range of issues, including natural resources, housing, economy and infrastructure, and site allocations. The Local Plan has been through a number of stages in the plan-making process.

2.2 Background to the Local Plan development

2.2.1 The Regulation 18 consultation of the Local Plan aimed to engage with local residents and relevant organisations to identify how planning policy could be used to address issues within the Plan area. It also highlighted the preferred approaches to address these issues through planning policy. A consultation on the draft Local Plan was prepared in December 2017[9]. This was supported by an HRA Screening Report[10].

[7] RBWM, 2003. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan. Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/downloads/download/154/local_plan_documents_and_appendices

[8] RBWM, 2011. Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan. Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200209/planning_policy/1344/maidenhead_town_centre_area_action_plan

[9] RBWM, 2017. Borough Local Plan 2013 - 2033. Regulation 18. Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201026/borough_local_plan/1349/regulation_18_consultation

[10] RBWM, 2016. HRA Screening Report. Available at: http://consult.rbwm.gov.uk/portal/blp/blp/blp?tab=files

2.2.2 At Regulation 19, the Council published the final version of the Local Plan[11] for consultation. The Local Plan at this stage was supported by an updated HRA Screening Report[12].

2.2.3 Following the Regulation 19 publication stage, the Local Plan, together with all supporting documents and any comments that had been received, were submitted in January 2018 to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Inspector. These supporting documents included the above HRA Screening Reports and also an HRA Air Quality Assessment update[13].

2.2.4 The Local Plan is now being independently examined by the Planning Inspector through the examination process. A short series of hearings were held in June 2018. Following these, the Council has sought to provide further information in response to issues raised during the hearings. As part of this process the Council has updated its Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The Council has subsequently identified some new allocations and modified some planning policies. Collectively, these are known as the BLPSV-PC. Consequently, the HRA process is being used to assess the implications of BLPSV-PC on European sites.

2.3 Local Plan policies and allocations

2.3.1 The policies that form the Local Plan sit under a number of themes as follows.

- Spatial portrait;
- Quality of place;
- Housing;
- Economy;
- Town centres and retail;
- Visitors and tourism;
- Historic environment;
- Natural resources;
- Environmental protection; and

[11] RBWM, 2017. Borough Local Plan 2013 – 2033. Submission Version. Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201026/borough_local_plan/1348/regulation_19_publication_stage

[12] RBWM, 2017. HRA Screening Report. Available at: http://consult.rbwm.gov.uk/portal/blp/blpr19/blpr19?tab=files

[13] Ricardo, 2018. Habitats Regulations and Air Quality Assessment Update. Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201026/borough_local_plan/1351/submission

- Infrastructure.

2.3.2 The policies will be implemented through the delivery of a number of allocations for housing, employment and green infrastructure. **Figure 2.1 [to follow]** below shows the location of each allocation with full detail provided at **Appendix B**.

2.4 Previous HRA work

2.4.1 **Table 2.1** summarises the outcome of the HRA work that has been undertaken to date to support the plan-making process.

2.4.2 Natural England raised some concerns in relation to the outcomes of the draft HRA (dated 2017) as part of their response to the Regulation 19 publicity period for the Borough Local Plan 2013 – 2033. This led to a challenge of the soundness of the Local Plan.

2.4.3 In response, RBWM carried out further work, in the form of the Air Quality Assessment Update January 2018. A Statement of Common Ground was then agreed between Natural England and RBWM in May 2018 (provided in **Appendix C**). In addition, RBWM continue to work proactively on the issues raised by Natural England concerning the provision of sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The Council has an adopted Supplementary Planning Document on this matter[14].

Table 2.1: *Findings of previous HRA documents prepared to support the plan-making process*

HRA Report	Findings
HRA Screening Report December 2016 Author: RBWM	The 2016 Screening Report was prepared to support a consultation draft of the Local Plan at Regulation 18. The key issues identified included fly tipping and effects on flight paths. Taking into consideration policies (such as NE2: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) and other mitigation such as Council bin collections and restrictions in regard to high rise buildings (Policy SP3: Design and Policy NE1: Nature Conservation) it was concluded that the Local Plan at that stage was unlikely to have significant effects on the integrity of designated sites, and that therefore a full Appropriate Assessment of the plan was concluded not to be required.

[14] RBWM. July 2010. Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Development Framework. Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (Part 1). Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3227/thames_basin_heaths_special_protection_area_spd.pdf Date Accessed: 01/10/19.

HRA Report	Findings
	It is noted that this screening exercise was undertaken before the 2018 'Sweetman ruling' (see **Section 3** for further details).
HRA Screening Report June 2017 Author: RBWM	The Scoping Report was prepared to support the final version of the Local Plan at Regulation 19. Similar conclusions were drawn to those outlined above for the 2016 HRA Screening Report. It is noted that this screening exercise was undertaken before the 2018 'Sweetman ruling' (see **Section 3** for further details).
Habitats Regulation and Air Quality Assessment Update January 2018 Author: Ricardo	The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the potential effects of development on air quality within Natura 2000 sites. This was intended to reflect developments in and the progress of the planning system in relation to air quality and, in part, to take into consideration the implications of the Sweetman ruling. The air quality modelling undertaken indicated that alone the Local Plan would have no adverse air quality impacts with the exception of a small component of the Bisham Woods SSSI, part of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC. In-combination effects were identified as likely at the following sites: - Chiltern Beechwoods SAC - Thames Basin Heaths SPA - Thursley, Ash and Pirbirght & Chobham SAC - Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC - Burnham Beeches SAC The assessment recommended that the relevant authorities work together to further investigate these impacts and develop mitigation.
RBWM Borough Local Plan: Air Quality Assessment of Chilterns Beechwoods SAC February 2019 Author: Ricardo	Following completion of the HRA Air Quality Assessment (January 2018) more detailed work was undertaken to further define air quality impacts at Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (in particular, Bisham Woods SSSI). This assessment took account of the Sweetman case in its consideration of mitigation measures. This assessment included a detailed National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of the area of Bisham Woods likely to experience an increase in nitrogen deposition above the 1% screening threshold. The report concluded that due to the small size of this area, the absence of any apparent health issues within the woodland and mitigation in the form of policies to address recreational pressure and air quality (IF4 Open Space, EP2 Air Pollution and IF2 Sustainable Transport Policies [note: these policy numbers refer to previous version of the Local Plan]) that there would be no adverse impacts on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC of the Local Plan alone.

2.5 Purpose of report

2.5.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the HRA of this stage of the Local Plan using best available information. The Council, as the Competent Authority, will have responsibility to make the Integrity Test, which can be undertaken in light of the conclusions set out in this report.

3 Methodology

3.1 HRA guidance

3.1.1 As noted above, the application of HRA to land-use plans is a requirement of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the UK's transposition of European Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). HRA applies to plans and projects, including all Local Development Documents in England and Wales.

3.1.2 This report has been informed by the following guidance:

- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites' - European Commission, 2001[15];
- Planning Practice Guidance: Appropriate Assessment[16];
- The Habitat Regulations Assessment Handbook - David Tyldesley and Associates (referred to hereafter as the DTA Handbook), 2013 (in particular Part F: '*Practical Guidance for the Assessment of Plans under the Regulations*'); and
- The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England – A Guide to How, When and Why to do it - RSPB, 2007[17].

3.2 Identification of European sites

3.2.1 There is no guidance that defines the study area for inclusion in HRA. Planning Practice Guidance for Appropriate Assessment (listed above) indicates that:

[15] Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting European 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

[16] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (July 2019) Planning Practice Guidance Note, Appropriate Assessment, Guidance on the use of Habitats Regulations Assessment

[17] RSPB (2007). The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England. A Guide to How, When and Why to do it.

3.2.2 "*The scope and content of an appropriate assessment will depend on the nature, location, duration and scale of the proposed plan or project and the interest features of the relevant site. 'Appropriate' is not a technical term. It indicates that an assessment needs to be proportionate and sufficient to support the task of the competent authority in determining whether the plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site*".

3.2.3 Therefore, in order to determine a study area for the HRA, consideration has been given to the nature and extent of potential impact pathways from the Local Plan and their relationship to European sites.

3.2.4 The 2016 and 2017 HRA Screening reports (see **Table 2.1**) consider a 5km study area from the Local Plan area on the basis of identified impact pathways and previous HRA work undertaken for RBWM. These Screening Reports provided an assessment of the Local Plan on six European sites within this study area. The European sites assessed at this stage include the following:

- Burnham Beeches SAC;
- Chiltern Beechwoods SAC;
- South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar;
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA;
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC; and
- Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC.

3.3 HRA methodology

3.3.1 HRA is a rigorous precautionary process centred around the conservation objectives of a European site's qualifying interests. It is intended to ensure that designated European sites are protected from impacts that could adversely affect their integrity, as required by the Birds and Habitats Directives. A step-by-step guide to this methodology is outlined in the DTA Handbook and has been reproduced in **Figure 1.1**. This report comprises Stage 1 and 2 of the HRA process.

3.4 Stage 1: Screening for likely significant effects

3.4.1 The first stage in the HRA process comprises the screening stage. This process identifies Likely Significant Effects (LSE) of a plan or project upon a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This stage considers the potential 'significance' of adverse effects. Where elements of the plan will not result in an LSE on a European site these may be screened out and not considered in further detail in the process.

3.4.2 The screening stage follows a number of steps which are outlined in **Figure 3.1**.

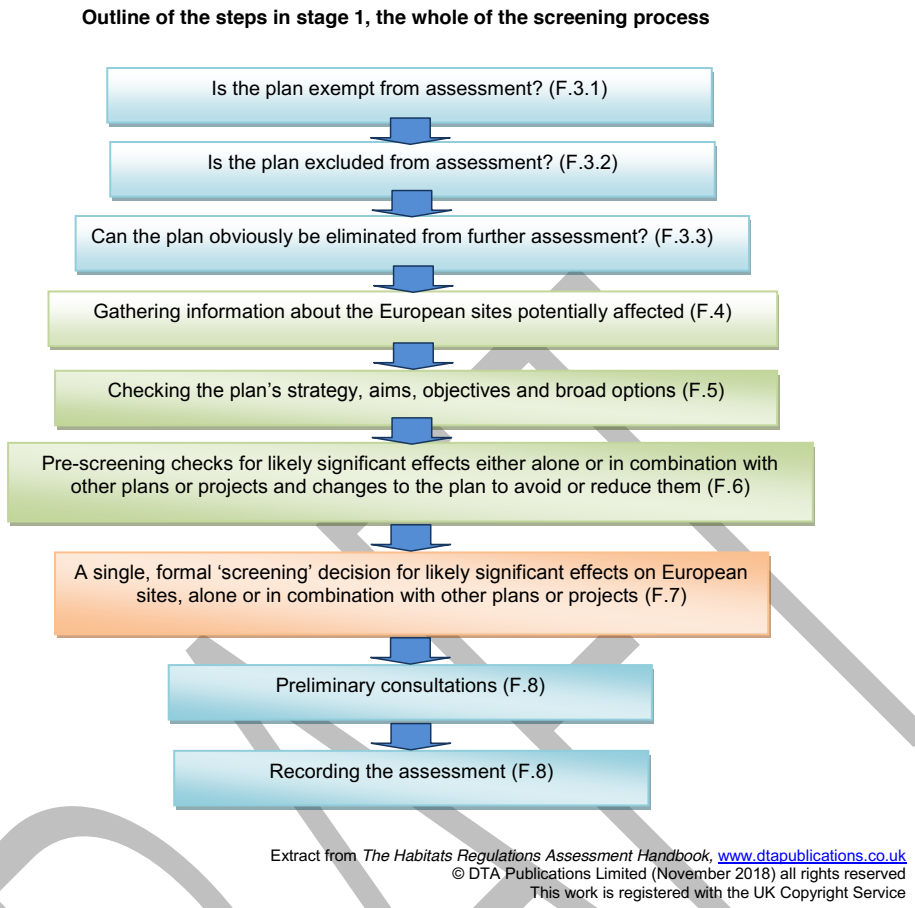


Figure 3.1: *Outline of steps in stage 1; the screening process*

3.4.3 The screening process uses a number of evaluation codes to summarise whether or not a plan component is likely to have significant effects alone or in-combination, see **Table 3.1.**

Table 3.1: *Assessment and reasoning categories from Part F of the DTA Handbook*

Assessment and reasoning categories from Part F of The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (DTA Publications, 2013):
A. General statements of policy / general aspirations.
B. Policies listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals.
C. Proposal referred to but not proposed by the plan.
D. General plan-wide environmental protection / site safeguarding / threshold policies.
E. Policies or proposals that steer change in such a way as to protect European sites from adverse effects.
F. Policies or proposals that cannot lead to development or other change.
G. Policies or proposals that could not have any conceivable or adverse effect on a site.
H. Policies or proposals 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).
I. Policies or proposals with a likely significant effect on a site alone.
J. Policies or proposals unlikely to have a significant effect alone.
K. Policies or proposals unlikely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination.
L. Policies or proposals which might be likely to have a significant effect in combination.
M. Bespoke area, site or case-specific policies or proposals intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on a European site.

3.5 What is a Likely Significant Effect?

3.5.1 HRA screening provides an analysis of LSEs. It considers the nature, magnitude and permanence of potential effects in order to inform the plan-making process.

3.5.2 The DTA Handbook guidance provides the following interpretation of LSEs:

3.5.3 *"In this context, 'likely' means risk or possibility of effects occurring that cannot be ruled out on the basis of objective information. 'Significant' effects are those that would undermine the conservation objectives for the qualifying features potentially affected, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects… even a possibility of a significant effect occurring is sufficient to trigger an 'appropriate assessment'."*[18]

[18]Tyldesley, D. (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook – Chapter F. DTA Publications

3.5.4 With reference to the conservation status of a given species in the Habitats or Birds Directives, the following examples would be considered to constitute a significant effect:

- Any event which contributes to the long-term decline of the population of the species on the site;
- Any event contributing to the reduction, or to the risk of reduction, of the range of the species within the site; and
- Any event which contributes to the reduction of the size of the habitat of the species within the site.

3.5.5 Rulings from the 2012 'Sweetman[19]' case provide further clarification:

3.5.6 "*The requirement that the effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis 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.*"

3.5.7 Therefore, it is not necessary for the Council to show that the Local Plan will result in no effects whatsoever on any European site. Instead, the Council is required to show that the Local Plan, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, will not result in an effect which undermines the conservation objectives of one or more qualifying features.

3.5.8 Determining whether an effect is significant requires careful consideration of the environmental conditions and characteristics of the European site in question, as per the 2004 'Waddenzee[20]' case:

3.5.9 *"In assessing the potential effects of a plan or project, their significance must be established in the light, inter alia, of the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the site concerned by that plan or project*".

[19] Source: EC Case C-258-11 Reference for a Preliminary Ruling, Opinion of Advocate General Sharpston 'Sweetman' delivered on 22nd November 2012 (para 48)

[20] Source: EC Case C-127/02 Reference for a Preliminary Ruling 'Waddenzee' 7th Sept 2004 (para 48)

3.6 In-combination effects

3.6.1 As well as considering the LSEs of the Local Plan policies alone on European sites at the screening stage, it is also necessary to consider whether the effects of the policies in-combination with other plans and projects would combine to result in an LSE on any European site. It may be that the Local Plan alone may not have a significant effect but could have a residual effect that may contribute to in-combination effects on a European site.

3.6.2 The in-combination assessment presented in Chapter F of the DTA Handbook comprises a ten-step approach as illustrated in **Figure 3.2** below.

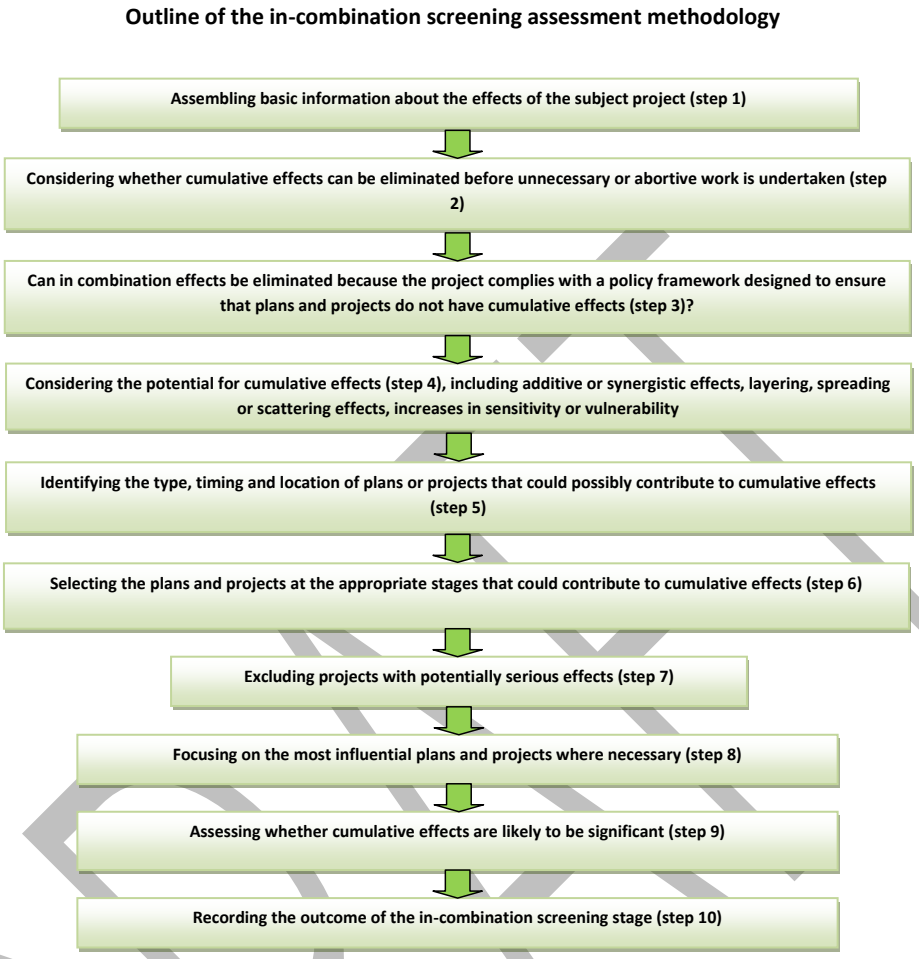


Figure 3.2: *Outline of the in-combination pre-screening assessment methodology*

3.6.3 For the purpose of the HRA of the Local Plan it has been determined that, due to the nature of likely impact pathways, the most relevant plans and projects for consideration in the in-combination assessment will be those that increase housing and commercial development within the study area. In addition, other plans and projects with the potential to increase traffic across the study area which may act in-combination with the Local Plan, such as transport, waste and mineral plans and projects, have also been taken into consideration. Finally, plans which allocate water resources for the area have been considered.

3.6.4 The following neighbouring local authorities' Local Plans and other relevant plans and projects and their HRA work was reviewed as part of this assessment. This reflects the scope of the in-combination assessment previously considered in the HRA process and in particular in the Air Quality Assessment Update (see **Table 2.1**).

- Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- London Borough of Hillington;
- Reading Borough Council;
- Runnymede Borough Council;
- Rushmoor Borough Council;
- Slough Borough Council;
- South Oxfordshire District Council;
- Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire Borough Councils;
- Surrey Heath Borough Council;
- Spelthorne Borough Council;
- Woking Borough Council;
- Wycombe District Council;
- Central and Eastern Berkshire Authorities Minerals and Waste Plan;
- Heathrow airport development;
- Western Rail Link to Heathrow;
- M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Smart Motorway improvements; and
- North London Heat and Power Project.

3.6.5 In terms of projects, major developments in the UK which could potentially affect European sites under consideration were identified from the National Infrastructure Planning website. All live projects were identified which were: (a) located within the HRA study area, and (b) had the potential to adversely affect one of the European sites that forms the focus of this HRA. These projects included both road and non-road strategic developments. Published information relevant to these developments was obtained from the National Infrastructure Planning website (for current and determined applications)[21]. In addition, the Council was consulted to determine other relevant projects for inclusion it the in-combination assessment.

3.7 Case law

3.7.1 The European Court Judgement on the interpretation of the Habitats Directive in the case of People Over Wind and Sweetman vs Colitte Teoranta (Case C-323/17[22]) determined that mitigation measures are only permitted to be considered as part of an Appropriate Assessment (**Box 1**).

Box 1: The Sweetman Case (April 2018)

A recent decision by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17) (from here on known as the 'Sweetman Case') has important consequences for the HRA process in the UK.

In summary, the ruling reinforces the position that if an LSE is identified during the HRA screening process it is not appropriate to incorporate mitigation measures to prevent the LSE at this stage. An appropriate assessment (AA) of the potential effects and the possible avoidance or mitigation measures must be undertaken. The 're-screening the Plan after mitigation has been applied' is no longer an option which would be legally compliant:

"*Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out, subsequently, an appropriate assessment of the implications, for a site concerned, of a plan or project, it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site.*"

3.7.2 In light of the above, it is necessary to further define mitigation measures. The DTA Handbook notes that there are two types of measures as follows:

[21] https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/ Accessed: 10.07.19

[22] Available at: http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=200970&doclang=EN

- *"Measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on a European site; or*
- *Features or characteristics of a plan which are essential in defining the nature, scale, location, timing, frequency or duration of the plan's proposals, or they may be inseparable aspects of the plan, without which an assessment of the plan could not properly be made, in the screening decision, even though these features or characteristics may incidentally have the effect of avoiding or reducing some or all of the potentially adverse effects of a plan"*.

3.7.3 The HRA screening stage for the Local Plan has not taken account of incorporated mitigation or avoidance measures that are intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on a European site when assessing the LSEs of the plan on European sites. These are measures, which if removed (i.e. should they no longer be required for the benefit of a European site), would still allow the lawful and practical implementation of a plan.

3.7.4 Traffic and roads present a cross boundary issue. On 20th March 2017 a high court ruling[23] found that traffic increases and subsequent air pollution on roads within 200m of a European site also requires an in-combination approach that considers the development of neighbouring and nearby authorities (**Box 2**).

Box 2: The Wealden Case (March 2017)

On 20th March 2017 a high court ruling found that traffic increases and subsequent air pollution on roads within 200m of an EU site requires an in-combination approach that considers the development of neighbouring and nearby authorities. This is because projects and plans that increase road traffic flow have a high likelihood of acting together, or 'in-combination', with other plans or projects that would also increase traffic on the same roads. If the combined effects of districts' development will lead to increases of traffic of more than 1,000 cars a day, further consideration of the issue is required. This would be through traffic and air quality modelling.

It is therefore necessary to consider the potential impact of the Plan on roads within 200m of each EU site both alone and in-combination with relevant plans and projects.

3.7.5 Consideration has therefore been given at the screening stage to LSEs of both the Local Plan both alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. This approach is compliant with the Wealden Judgement.

[23] Wealden District Council & Lewes District Council before Mr Justice Jay, available online at: http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2017/351.html

3.8 Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment and Integrity Test

3.8.1 Stage 2 of the HRA process comprises the appropriate assessment and integrity test. The purpose of the appropriate assessment (as defined by the DTA Handbook) is to "*undertake an objective, scientific assessment of the implications for the European site qualifying features potentially affected by the plan in light of their conservation objectives and other information for assessment*".

3.8.2 As part of this process decision makers should take account of the potential consequences of no action, the uncertainties inherent in scientific evaluation and should consult interested parties on the possible ways of managing the identified adverse effects, for instance, through the adoption of mitigation measures. Mitigation measures should aim to avoid, minimise or reduce significant effects on European sites. Mitigation measures may take the form of policies within the Local Plan or mitigation proposed through other plans or regulatory mechanisms. All mitigation measures must be deliverable and able to mitigate adverse effects for which they are targeted.

3.8.3 The appropriate assessment aims to present information in respect of all aspects of the Local Plan and ways in which it could, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, affect a European site.

3.8.4 The plan-making body (as the Competent Authority) must then ascertain, based on the findings of the appropriate assessment, whether the Local Plan will adversely affect the integrity of a European site either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. This is referred to as the Integrity Test.

3.9 Dealing with uncertainty

3.9.1 Uncertainty is an inherent characteristic of HRA and decisions can be made only on currently available and relevant information. This concept is reinforced in the 7th September 2004 'Waddenzee' ruling[24]:

[24]EC Case C-127/02 Reference for a Preliminary Ruling 'Waddenzee' 7th September 2004 Advocate General's Opinion (para 107)

3.9.2 *"However, the necessary certainty cannot be construed as meaning absolute certainty since that is almost impossible to attain. Instead it is clear from the second sentence of Article 6(3) of the habitats directive that the competent authorities must take a decision having assessed all the relevant information which is set out in particular in the appropriate assessment. The conclusion of this assessment is, of necessity, subjective in nature. Therefore, the competent authorities can, from their point of view, be certain that there will be no adverse effects even though, from an objective point of view, there is no absolute certainty."*

3.10 The Precautionary Principle

3.10.1 The HRA process is characterised by the precautionary principle. This is described by the European Commission as being:

3.10.2 *"If a preliminary scientific evaluation shows that there are reasonable grounds for concern that a particular activity might lead to damaging effects on the environment, or on human, animal or plant health, which would be inconsistent with protection normally afforded to these within the European Community, the Precautionary Principle is triggered."*

4 Screening

4.1 Background

4.1.1 As noted above, the HRA has been an iterative process undertaken alongside the development of the Local Plan. The outputs of this assessment have informed the plan-making process.

4.1.2 The screening stage identifies Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) of the Local Plan upon European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This section considers the potential 'significance' of adverse effects. Where elements of the plan will not result in an LSE on a European site these have been screened out and not considered in further detail in the HRA process.

4.2 European sites

4.2.1 Each site of European importance has its own intrinsic qualities, besides the habitats or species for which it has been designated, that enables the site to support the ecosystems that it does. An important aspect of this is that the ecological integrity of each site can be vulnerable to change from natural and human induced activities in the surrounding environment (known as pressures and threats). For example, sites can be affected by land use plans in a number of different ways, including the direct land take of new development, the type of use the land will be put to (for example, an extractive or noise-emitting use), the pollution a development generates, and the resources used (during construction and operation for instance).

4.2.2 An intrinsic quality of any European site is its functionality at the landscape ecology scale. This refers to how the site interacts with the zone of influence of its immediate surroundings, as well as the wider area. This is particularly the case where there is potential for developments resulting from the plan to generate water or air-borne pollutants, use water resources or otherwise affect water levels. Adverse effects may also occur via impacts to mobile species occurring outside a designated site, but which are qualifying features of the site. For example, there may be effects on protected birds that use land outside the designated site for foraging, feeding, roosting or other activities.

4.2.3 The 2016 and 2017 HRA Screening Reports (see **Table 2.1** for a summary) provided an assessment of adverse effects associated with the Local Plan at seven European sites. The location of these European sites is shown in **Figure 4.1**.

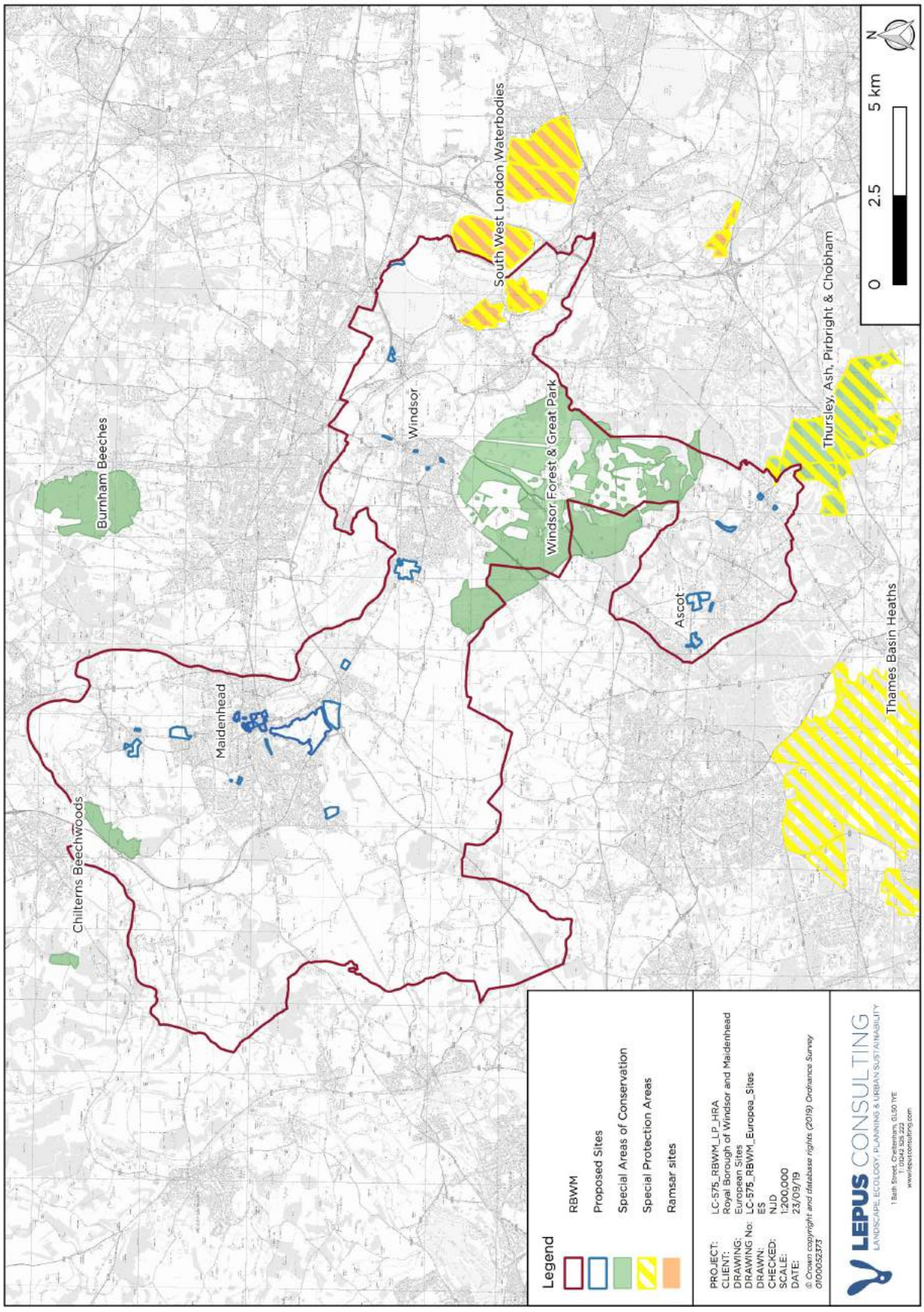


Figure 4.1: *European sites considered in the HRA.*

4.3 Ecological information

4.3.1 The CJEU ruling in the Holohan case (C-461/17[25]) confirmed that appropriate assessment should: (i) catalogue (i.e. list) all habitats and species for which the site is protected and (ii) include in its assessment other (i.e. non-protected) habitat types or species which are on the site and habitats and species located outside of the site if they are necessary to the conservation of the habitat types and species listed for the protected area (**Box 3**).

Box 3: Holohan v An Bord Pleanala (November 2018)

"Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora must be interpreted as meaning that an 'appropriate assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.

Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 must be interpreted as meaning that the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 must be interpreted as meaning that, where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'appropriate assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned".

4.3.2 This Report to Inform the HRA fully considers the potential for effects on species and habitats. This includes those not listed as a qualifying feature for the European site, but which may be important to achieving its conservation objectives. This ensures that the functional relationships underlying European sites and the achievement of their conservation objectives are adequately understood.

[25] Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:62017CJ0461&from=EN

4.3.3 **Appendix D** identifies the qualifying features of each of these sites and presents details of their conservation objectives. This information is drawn from the Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC)[26] and Natural England[27].

4.3.4 SSSI are protected areas in the United Kingdom designated for conservation. SSSIs are the building blocks of site-based nature conservation in the UK. A SSSI will be designated based on the characteristics of its fauna, flora, geology and / or geomorphology. Whilst typically analogous in ecological function, the reasons for its designation can be entirely different to those for which the same area is designated as a SAC, SPA or Ramsar.

4.3.5 Natural England periodically assesses the conservation conditions of each SSSI unit, assigning it a status. SSSIs located either entirely or partially within the European sites considered in this report are listed in **Appendix E** along with their current conservation status. The conservation status of each SSSI highlights any SAC/SPA that is currently particularly vulnerable to threats/pressures. Conservation status is defined as follows:

- Favourable;
- Unfavourable – recovering;
- Unfavourable – no change; or
- Unfavourable – declining.

4.3.6 SSSI units in either an 'Unfavourable – no change' or 'Unfavourable – declining' condition indicate that the European site may be particularly vulnerable to certain threats or pressures. It is important to remember that the SSSI may be in an unfavourable state due to the condition of features unrelated to its European designation. However, it is considered that the conservation status of SSSI units that overlap with European designated sites offer a useful indicator of habitat health at that location.

[26] JNCC. http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1458.

[27] Natural England. http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication.

4.3.7 Natural England defines zones around each SSSI which may be at risk from specific types of development, these are known as Impact Risk Zones (IRZ). These IRZs are *"a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks to SSSIs posed by development proposals. They define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts. The IRZs also cover the interest features and sensitivities of European sites, which are underpinned by the SSSI designation and "Compensation Sites", which have been secured as compensation for impacts on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites"*[28]. The location of IRZs has been taken into consideration in this assessment as they provide a useful guide as to the location of functionally linked land and likely vulnerabilities to development proposed within the Local Plan.

4.4 Threats and pressures

4.4.1 Threats and pressures to which each European site is vulnerable have been identified through reference to data held by the JNCC on Natura 2000 Data Forms, Ramsar Information Sheets and Site Improvement Plans (SIPs). This information provides current and predicted issues at each European site. The full range of threats and pressures at each European site is provided at **Appendix F**.

4.4.2 Supplementary advice notices prepared by Natural England provide more recent information on threats and pressures upon European sites than SIPs. Additional threats flagged up by supplementary advice notices have also been screened.

4.4.3 A number of similar threats and pressures have been considered together, for instance 'recreation' is considered under 'public access and disturbance'. Furthermore, a number of threats and pressures are considered to be beyond the scope of the potential impacts of the Local Plan. The following threats and pressures are, therefore, not considered further in this assessment:

- Deer;
- Forestry and woodland management;
- Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown;

[28] Natural England. 2018. User Guide. Available at: https://magic.defra.gov.uk/Metadata_for_magic/SSSI%20IRZ%20User%20Guidance%20MAGIC.pdf

- Disease;
- Changes in species distribution;
- Undergrazing;
- Inappropriate scrub and weed control;
- Natural changes to site conditions;
- Invasive species;
- Species decline;
- Changes in land management;
- Fisheries: Fish stocking;
- Military;
- Abiotic (slow) natural processes;
- Changes in biotic conditions;
- Grazing;
- Interspecific floral relations; and
- Problematic native species.

4.4.4 Following a review of HRA work undertaken to date for the Local Plan (see **Table 2.1**), the remaining threats and pressures that were considered to be within the scope of influence of the Local Plan are summarised in **Table 4.1** and include:

- Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition;
- Public access and disturbance (to include outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities and other human intrusions and disturbances);
- Hydrological changes (to include water quality and quantity);
- Habitat fragmentation and loss; and
- Wildfire / arson.

Table 4.1: *Pressures and threats for European sites that may potentially be affected by the Local Plan.*

	Pressures/ threats				
European sites	Air Pollution	Public access/ disturbance	Hydrological changes	Habitat fragmentation / loss	Wildfire and arson
Burnham Beeches SAC[29]	All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)		All qualifying features (SIP)	
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC[30]	All qualifying features (SIP)	S1083 Stag beetle (SIP)			
South West London Waterbodies SPA[31]		All qualifying features (SIP)			
South West London Waterbodies Ramsar[32]					
Thames Basin Heath SPA[33]	All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H7150 Depressions on peat substrates (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)
Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC[34]	All qualifying features (SIP)		H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H7150 Depressions on peat substrates (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)
Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC[35]	H9120 Beech forests on acid soils, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland (SIP)				

[29] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: Burnham Beeches. Natural England (2015) Site Improvement Plan: Burnham Beeches

[30] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: Chilterns Beechwoods. Natural England (2015) Site Improvement Plan: Chilterns Beechwoods

[31] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: South West London Waterbodies. Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: South West London Waterbodies

[32] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: South West London Waterbodies. Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: South West London Waterbodies

[33] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: Thames Basin Heaths. Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: Thames Basin Heaths

[34] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham. Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham

[35] JNCC (2015), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form: Windsor Forest & Great Park. Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: Windsor Forest & Great Park

4.5 Screening out sites

4.5.1 For the six European sites set out in **Table 4.1**, the screening stage has considered LSEs on each European site in the context of the threat and pressure identified above. The results of the screening assessment are set out in further detail below by topic.

4.5.2 Whilst the Ramsar information sheet identifies no adverse ecological impacts for South West London Waterbodies Ramsar, the site will still be considered in this report as current treats and pressures were identified in the SIP for South West London Waterbodies SPA.

4.6 Air quality

4.6.1 Air pollution can affect European sites if it has an adverse effect on its features of qualifying interest. The main mechanisms through which air pollution can have an adverse effect is through eutrophication (nitrogen), acidification (nitrogen and sulphur) and direct toxicity (ozone, ammonia and nitrogen oxides)[36]. Deposition of air pollutants can alter the soil and plant composition and species which depend upon these.

4.6.2 As noted in **Table 4.1** air pollution, and in particular atmospheric nitrogen deposition, has been identified as a threat or pressure for qualifying features of the following European sites within the relevant SIPs:

- Burnham Beeches SAC;
- Chiltern Beechwoods SAC;
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA;
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC; and
- Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC.

4.6.3 In addition, a review of supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features prepared by Natural England indicates that features within the South West London Waterbodies SPA are also sensitive to changes in air quality, in particular, in shallow areas where the majority of water supply is derived from rainfall[37].

[36] APIS. http://www.apis.ac.uk/ecosystem-services-and-air-pollution-impacts. [Date Accessed: 06.07.19].

[37] Natural England. 2018. European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Feature. South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) Site code: UK9012171. http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4901473695563776 Available at: [Date Accessed: 02/10/19].

4.6.4 Excess atmospheric nitrogen deposition within an ecosystem or habitat can disrupt the delicate balance of ecological processes interacting with one another. As the availability of nitrogen increases in the local environment, some plants that are characteristic of that ecosystem may become competitively excluded in favour of more nitrophilic plants. It also upsets the ammonium and nitrate balance of the ecosystem, which disrupts the growth, structure and resilience of some plant species.

4.6.5 Excess nitrogen deposition often leads to the acidification of soils and a reduction in the soils' buffering capacity (the ability of soil to resist pH changes). It can also render the ecosystem more susceptible to adverse effects of secondary stresses, such as frost or drought, and disturbance events, such as foraging by herbivores.

4.6.6 As an attempt to manage the negative consequences of atmospheric nitrogen deposition, 'critical loads' have been established for ecosystems in Europe. Each European site is host to a variety of habitats and species, the features of which are often designated a critical load for nitrogen deposition. The critical loads of pollutants are defined as a:

4.6.7 "*...quantitative estimate of exposure to one or more pollutants below which significant harmful effects on specified sensitive elements of the environment do not occur according to present knowledge*"[38].

[38] UNECE (date unavailable) ICP Modeling and Mapping Critical loads and levels approach, available at: http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/WorkingGroups/wge/definitions.html [Date Accessed: 07/08/19]

4.6.8 Natural England's advice on the assessment of air quality impacts under the Habitats Regulations states that consideration should be given to the risk of road traffic emissions associated with a Local Plan[39]. This advice states that an assessment of the risks from road traffic emissions can be expressed in terms of the Average Annual Daily Traffic flow (AADT) as a proxy for emissions. The use of the AADT screening threshold is advocated by Highways England in their Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). This screening threshold is intended to be used as a guide to determine whether a more detailed assessment of the impact of emissions from road traffic is required. This non-statutory or guideline threshold is based on a predicted change of daily traffic flows of 1,000 AADT or more (or heavy-duty vehicle flows on motorways (HDV) change by 200 AADT or more).

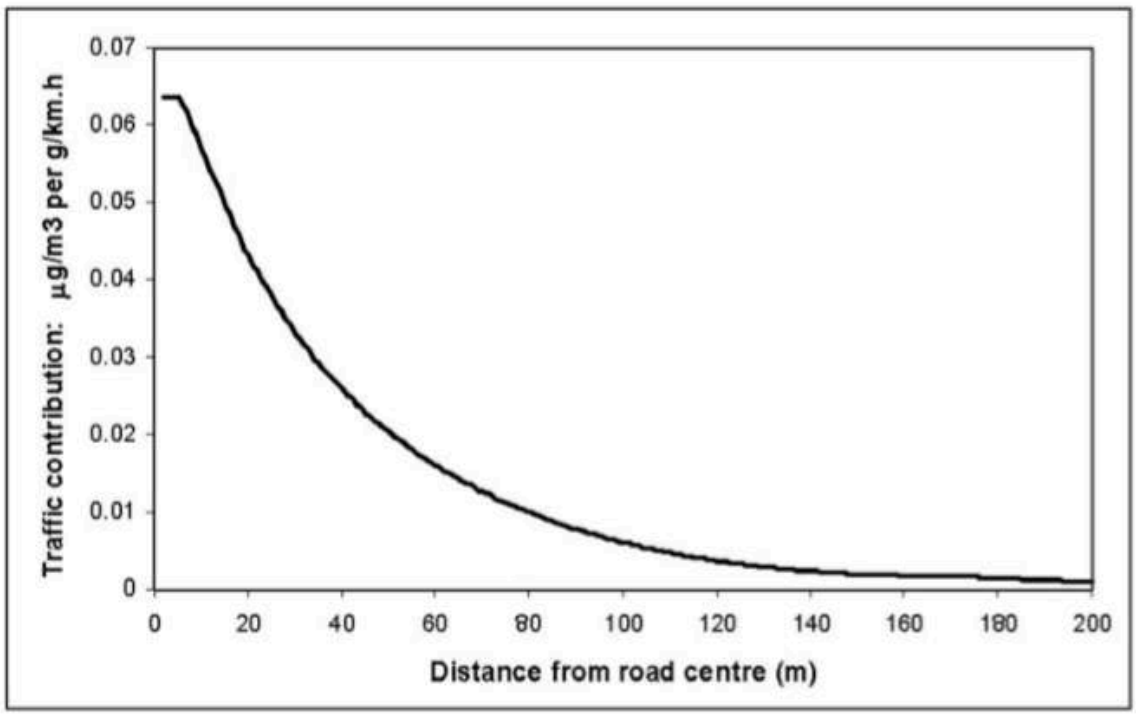
4.6.9 The AADT thresholds do not themselves imply any intrinsic environmental effects and are used solely as a trigger for further investigation. Widely accepted environmental benchmarks for imperceptible impacts are set at 1% of the critical load or level, which is considered to be roughly equivalent to DMRB thresholds for changes in traffic flow of 1,000 AADT and for HDV of 200 AADT. This has been confirmed by modelling using the DMRB Screening Tool that used average traffic flow and speed figures from the Department of Transport (DfT) data to calculate whether the NOx outputs could result in a change of >1% of critical load / level on different road types. A change of >1,000 AADT on a road was found to equate to a change in traffic flow which might increase emissions by 1% of the Critical Load or Level and might consequentially result in an environmental effect nearby (e.g. within 10 metres of roadside).

4.6.10 The AADT thresholds and 1% of critical load / level are considered by Natural England to be suitably precautionary as any emissions below this level are widely considered to be imperceptible and, in the case of AADT, undetectable through the DMRB model. There can, therefore, be a high degree of confidence in its application to screen for risks of an effect.

[39] Natural England. 2018. Natural England's approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations (NEA001)
http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4720542048845824

4.6.11 It is widely accepted that the effects of air pollutants from road transport decrease with distance from the source of pollution i.e. the road carriageway[40,41,42]. The Department for Transport (DfT) in their Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) consider that, "*beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels is not significant*" [43]. This is illustrated in **Figure 4.2**. This statement is supported by Highways England and Natural England based on evidence presented in a number of research papers[44,45]. However, it is also noted that effects can, in some circumstances, occur beyond 200m.

Figure 4.2: *Traffic contribution to pollution concentration at different distances from road centre*



[40] The Highways Agency, Transport Scotland, Welsh Assembly Government, The Department for Regional Development Northern Ireland. 2007. Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 11, Section 3, Part 1: Air Quality

[41] Natural England. 2016. The ecological effects of air pollution from road transport: an updated review. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR 199.

[42] Bignal, K., Ashmore, M. & Power, S. 2004. The ecological effects of diffuse air pollution from road transport. English Nature Research Report No. 580, Peterborough.

[43] TAG UNIT A3 Environmental Impact Appraisal https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/487684/TAG_unit_a3_envir_imp_app_dec_15.pdf'

[44] Bignal, K., Ashmore, M & Power, S. 2004. The ecological effects of diffuse air pollution from road transport. English Nature Research Report No. 580, Peterborough.

[45] Ricardo-AEA, 2016. The ecological effects of air pollution from road transport: an updated review. Natural England Commissioned Report No. 199.

4.6.12 Advice from Natural England[46] states that a four-step process for screening should be adopted if there will be an LSE from air pollution, as follows:

- **Step 1:** Does the proposal give rise to emissions which are likely to reach a European site? As noted above, distance-based criteria have been established by Natural England and Highways England to determine the likely impact of air pollution from a road source on a European site. This distance was taken as 200m for the purposes of this assessment. For the purpose of this screening assessment it has been assumed that roads forming part of the strategic road network (motorways and 'A' roads) are likely to experience the most significant increases in vehicle traffic as a result of development (i.e. greater than 1,000 AADT). Where a European site is not located within 200 metres of a motorway or 'A' road, LSEs from traffic-related air pollution has therefore been screened out.
- **Step 2:** Are the qualifying features of sites within 200m of a road sensitive to air pollution? The sensitivity of qualifying features was determined following a review of broad category and site relevant information which in some cases required site surveys.
- **Step 3:** Could the sensitive qualifying features of the site be exposed to emissions?
- **Step 4**: Application of screening thresholds:
    - **Step 4a**: Apply the thresholds alone. Where a proposal is considered to have an LSE because it breaches the screening threshold alone it should go through to an appropriate assessment 'alone'. There is no need to consider the potential for in-combination effects at the screening step as an appropriate assessment is needed in any event. If the predicted change in traffic flow is less than 1000AADT (or the level of emissions is <1% of the critical load/level), the associated emissions are not likely to have a significant effect alone, but the risk of in-combination effects should be considered further.
    - **Step 4b**: Apply the threshold in-combination with emissions from other road traffic plans and projects. Where a proposal is below the screening threshold 'alone' (step 4a), step 4b must be considered to apply the same screening threshold 'in-combination'.
    - **Step 4c**: Apply the threshold in-combination with emissions from other non-road plans and projects. Consider non-road

[46] Natural England (2018). Natural England's approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations. Version June 2018.

plans and projects to recognise in-combination effects from other pollution sources.

4.7 Burnham Beeches SAC – air quality screening

4.8 Chiltern Beechwoods SAC – air quality screening

4.9 South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar – air quality screening

4.10 Thames Basin Heaths SPA – air quality screening

4.11 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC – air quality screening

4.12 Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC – air quality screening

4.13 Public Access and Disturbance

4.13.1 As noted in **Table 4.1** public access and associated disturbances, has been identified as a threat or pressure for qualifying features of the following European sites within the relevant SIPs:

- Burnham Beeches SAC;
- Chiltern Beechwoods SAC;
- South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar; and
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

4.13.2 In addition, a review of supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features prepared by Natural England indicates that features within Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC are also sensitive to public access and disturbance threats, in particular due to soil compaction around ancient trees from recreational related footfall and from illumination impacts[47].

4.13.3 Public access / disturbance can take a number of forms. Physical disturbance as a result of urbanisation may include damage to habitats through erosion, troubling of grazing stock, causing changes in behaviour to animals such as birds at nesting and feeding sites, spreading invasive species, litter and fly-tiping, tree climbing, wildfire and arson, noise and light pollution and vandalism. Typically, disturbance of habitat and species is the unintentional consequence of people's presence which can impact breeding success and survival. In particular, problems can be associated with dogs and cats, such as predation, disturbing birds and dog fouling.

[47] Natural England. 2019. European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Feature. Windsor Forest and Great Park (SAC) Site code: UK0012586. http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5175000009015296 Available at: [Date Accessed: 02/10/19].

4.13.4 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework[48] makes recommendations for accommodating development while also protecting the SPA's features of interest. This includes the recommendation of implementing a series of zones within which varying constraints would be placed upon development. The zone extending 400m from the SPA boundary concerns urbanisation (particularly predation of the chicks of ground-nesting birds by domestic cats). The delivery plan concludes that the adverse effects of any net increase in residential development located within 400m of the SPA boundary could not be mitigated since this was the range within which cats could be expected to roam as a matter of routine and there was no realistic way of restricting their movements. As such, no new housing is to be located within this zone.

4.13.5 In terms of recreational impacts, the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework states that within a 400m to 5km zone from the perimeter of a European Site avoidance measures are considered necessary to avoid recreational impacts. It also notes that applications for large scale development (i.e. those comprising more than 50 houses which are located between 5-7km from the edge of the European site) would be considered on a case-by- case basis. Whilst it is recognised that the European sites considered in this report, with the exception of the Thames Basin Health SPA itself, are designated for site specific qualifying features which do not reflect those for which the Thames Basin Heaths SPA has been designated, the Delivery Framework provides a conservative guide to the likely buffer zone within which public access and disturbance impacts can be experienced. Where other bespoke buffer zones are available for European sites these distances have been applied in lieu of the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework.

[48] Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (2009). Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework. https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/thames- basin-heaths-spa-delivery-framework.pdf. [Date Accessed: 08/08/19].

4.14 Burnham Beeches SAC - public access and disturbance screening

4.14.1 Burnham Beeches is owned jointly by the City of London and the Portman-Burtley Estate and comprises 220ha of public open space with the remaining 160ha being mainly in private ownership, along with a small section owned by the National Trust and a very small private garden. The area surrounding the site is heavily urbanised and densely populated with Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross to the north and Slough and Burnham to the south.

4.14.2 A report undertaken by Footprint Ecology in support of the HRA that was produced for the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036[49],[50] notes that, in terms of spatial planning and recreational impacts to Burnham Beeches SAC, consideration should focus on all development in areas directly adjacent to the SAC and within a 5.6km radius. It recommends that no development which would result in a net increase in housing takes place within 400m of this SAC. The Chiltern and South Bucks HRA concludes that any additional development within 5.6km of Burnham Beeches SAC is likely to result in a level of additional recreational visits which, without mitigation, would adversely affect the SAC.

4.14.3 One allocation in the Local Plan (Site AL38, Land East of Strande Park, Cookham for 20 dwellings) is located within 5.6km of this buffer zone. It is situated approximately 5.5km to the west of Burnham Beeches SAC.

4.14.4 There are no allocations located within 400m of Burnham Beeches SAC and therefore it is considered unlikely that LSEs associated with urbanisation (lighting, noise, fly tipping etc.) will occur at this SAC.

[49] Lepus Consulting. June 2019. Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan. Available at: https://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/sustainability

[50] Liley, D. (13.08.2019). Final. Impacts of urban development at Burnham Beeches SAC: update of evidence and potential housing growth, 2019. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology for Chiltern and South Bucks Councils.

4.14.5 Given the level of housing proposed at Site AL38 (20 dwellings) it is unlikely that the Local Plan will have adverse impacts at Burnham Beeches SAC alone. However, it is concluded that a potential LSE in-combination with other plans and projects, in particular the proposals in the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan (see the in-combination assessment in **Appendix G**), in terms of recreational impacts at Burnham Beeches SAC may occur. **This site has therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of public access and disturbance.**

4.15 Chilterns Beechwood SAC – public access and disturbance screening

4.15.1 Public access and associated disturbances have been recognised as a threat to the habitat and populations of stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) that are associated with Chiltern Beechwoods SAC. This is due to the removal of dead wood either by the public or in the name of safety or tidiness[51].

4.15.2 Chilterns Beechwoods SAC comprises nine separate sites scattered throughout the Chilterns AONB. It is estimated that over 55 million visits were made to these sites in 2007[52]. Despite the high visitor numbers, of the 29 SSSIs that intersect with the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, 23 are in a 'Favourable' state of conservation whilst the remaining eight are in a state of 'Unfavourable – recovering' (**Appendix E**).

4.15.3 Two components of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC lie within 5km of the Local Plan boundary. These include Bisham Woods SSSI, which lies within the Plan area and Hollowhill and Pullingshill Woods SSSI, which lies approximately 1.4km to the north west of the Plan area. Only Bisham Woods SSSI is located within 5km of an allocated site as shown in **Table 4.2**.

[51] Natural England. 2015. Site Improvement Plan Chiltern Beechwoods SAC. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6228755680854016 [Date Accessed: 09.10.19].

[52] Chilterns AONB (2007) www.chilternsaonb.org

Table 4.2: *Site allocations within 7km of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC*

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Proposed development
Site AL36: Cookham Gas holder, Whyteladyes Lane, Cookham.	1.7km	50 residential units
Site AL37: Land north of Lower Mount Farm, Long Lane, Cookham.	1.6km	200 residential units
Site AL38: Land east of Strande Park, Cookham.	2.3km	20 residential units
Site AL25: Land known as Spencer's Farm, North of Lutman Lane, Maidenhead.	2.9km	330 residential units
Site AL23: St. Marks Hospital, Maidenhead.	3.0km	54 residential units
Site AL7: Maidenhead Railway Station.	4.6km	Mixed use scheme for 7,000sqm of employment space and 150 residential units
Site AL12: Land to east of Braywick Gate, Braywick Road, Maidenhead.	4.2km	50 residential units
Site AL10: Stafferton Way Retail Park, Maidenhead.	4.8km	Mixed use with 350 residential units
Site AL1: Nicholsons Centre, Maidenhead.	4.3km	22,000sqm of employment space and 500 residential units
Site AL2: Land between High Street and West Street, Maidenhead.	4.2km	Mixed use scheme with 300 residential units
Site AL3: St Mary's Walk, Maidenhead.	4.4km	Mixed use scheme with 120 residential units
Site AL4: York Road.	4.5km	Mixed use scheme with 450 residential units
Site AL5: West Street.	4.2km	Mixed use scheme with 240 residential units
Site AL9: Saint-Cloud Way.	4.2km	Mixed use scheme with 550 residential units
Site AL13 Desborough, Harvest Hill Road, South West Maidenhead. (the northern section of this site only).	4.7km	2600 residential units

4.15.4 Bisham Woods SSSI comprises an extensive area of predominantly broad-leaved woodland situated on a steep north-west facing slope overlooking the River Thames at Marlow[53]. The SSSI consists of two units, one of which is classed as 'Favourable' and the second classified as 'Unfavourable – Recovering'. The 'Unfavourable – Recovering' status is due to historical storm damage (in 1987 – 1990) and does not relate to human disturbance or removal of dead wood[54].

4.15.5 The supplementary advice for the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC states that illumination from artificial lighting can have an LSE on natural phenological cycles and processes to the detriment of the H9130 (Beech forests on neutral to rich soils) and its typical species. However, given the distance of the Local Plan allocations from Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (the closest being 1.6km to its south east, close to Cookham Rise), it is considered unlikely that LSEs associated with urbanisation (lighting, noise, fly tipping etc) will occur.

4.15.6 Due to the location of Local Plan allocations in relation to the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (i.e. within 5km) it is concluded that the Local Plan has the potential to increase visitor numbers to the SAC both alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. **An LSE as a result of development set out within the Local Plan has therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of public access and disturbance.**

4.16 South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar - public access and disturbance screening

4.16.1 The South West London Waterbodies SPA comprises a series of embanked water supply reservoirs and former gravel pits which support a range of man-made and semi-natural still, open-water habitats. The complex is situated on the broad floodplain of the River Thames[55].

[53] Natural England. SSSI Citation. https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1002835.pdf [Date Accessed: 09.10.19].

[54] Natural England. Condition of SSSI Unit for Bisham Woods SSSI. https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportUnitCondition.aspx?SiteCode=S1002835&ReportTitle=Bisham%20Woods%20SSSI [Date Accessed: 09.10.19].

[55] Natural England. 2018. European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features. South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) Site code: UK9012171. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4901473695563776. [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

4.16.2 All qualifying features of South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar, namely the habitats and non-breeding populations of Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), are recognised as being under threat from public access associated disturbances.

4.16.3 A key environmental condition of South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar is a lack of disturbance during the winter months of October to March. Disturbances of sufficient extent, intensity or duration can cause the Gadwall and Shoveler populations to abandon the site.

4.16.4 Impacts associated with recreational disturbances vary between locations, seasons, species and individuals. Impacts may be direct, such as birds being forced to flee oncoming boats, or indirect, such as the destruction of habitats. Disturbances may lead to behavioural changes, such as the avoidance of particular areas or changes to feeding habits, and physiological changes, such as quicker heartbeat rates. Whilst recreational activities are reduced during winter, food is scarce at this time of year and so interruptions to foraging birds can be particularly damaging.

4.16.5 The adverse effects of unnecessary expenditure of energy by birds flying away from oncoming threats, coupled with the reduction in their intake of energy as a result of less time spent foraging, can be significant for the balance between birth/immigration and death/emigration.

4.16.6 Different waterbodies of the site offer different levels of access to the public, with some more restricted than others. Whilst the minority of sites that have unrestricted access to the public will be most affected by development proposed as part of the Plan, recreational use of the site is managed through the Potentially Damaging Operations Scheme. Any operations that may undermine the integrity of the SSSIs therefore require consent from Natural England.

4.16.7 South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar are underpinned by a number of SSSIs. Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI and Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI are located within the Plan area. Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI and Staines Moor SSSI are located immediately adjacent but outside the Plan area. Thorpe Park Number 1 Gravel Pit SSSI, Kempton Park Reservoirs SSSI and Knight and Bessborough Reservoirs SSSI are located approximately 3.1km, 8.9km and 9.8km respectively to the south and south east of the Local Plan area.

4.16.8 Wraysbury Gravel Pit No.1 is a lowland lake that was excavated in the 1950s and is now almost fully mature, with most of the lake margins dominated by trees and scrub[56]. Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI comprise a mosaic of open water, islands, grassland, scrub and woodland within an area of former gravel extraction[57].

4.16.9 Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI is an artificially embanked reservoir constructed around 1970[58]. Consultation with Natural England and a review of aerial photography indicates that this reservoir is managed by Thames Water and fenced (with a secure palisade fence). There is no access for recreational purposes due to health and safety considerations.

4.16.10 Staines Moor is part of the Colne Valley Regional Park, a 27,000 acre park managed by the Community Interest Company (CIC). The objectives of the CIC include safeguarding, conserving and enhancing the local landscape, countryside and biodiversity of the Park.

4.16.11 Thorpe Park No.1 Gravel Pit SSSI is in the immediate vicinity of Thorpe Park Resort. Public access is limited and therefore recreational pressure is thought unlikely to increase as a result of the Local Plan alone or in combination.

4.16.12 Kempton Park Reservoirs are not open to the public and locked fencing surrounds the site.

4.16.13 Knight and Bessborough Reservoirs and Wraysbury Reservoir are operational sites belonging to Thames Water and public access is limited. At Knight and Bessborough Reservoirs, a total of ten permits are available to bird watchers from recognised clubs.

[56] Natural England. Wraysbury Gravel Pit SSSI Citation. Available at: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/2000381.pdf [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

[57] Natural England. Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pit SSSI Citation. Available at: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1004168.pdf [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

[58] Natural England. Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI Citation. Available at: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/2000374.pdf [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

4.16.14 There are a range of recreational activities available across the waterbodies. The effect of multiple and varied disturbances from different sources may have a cumulative effect on birds. Unlike many waterbodies, zonation of the reservoirs of South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar has generally not occurred[59].

4.16.15 Birds are more able to habituate to frequent and benign events, such as being interrupted by visitors, than major events such as disturbances by aeroplanes[60]. The qualifying features of the SPA are therefore more resilient to likely disturbances caused by the Local Plan.

4.16.16 As shown in **Table 4.3**, Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI, Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI, Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI and Staines Moor SSSI are located within 5km of allocations set out in Local Plan. All other areas of the South West Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar are located more than 5km from the closest allocation and therefore are not considered further in this assessment.

Table 4.3: *Site allocations within 5km of the South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar*

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Proposed development
Site AL40: Land east of Queen Mother Reservoir, Horton.	Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI 2.2km to the south Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI 2.9km to the south Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI 1.5km to the south Staines Moor SSSI 3.4km to the south	Residential development for 100 units.
Site AL39: Land at Riding Court Road and London Road Datchet	Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI 2km to the south Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI 3.4km to the south	Residential development for 80 units.

[59] Briggs, B. (2007) The use of waterbodies in South-West London by Gadwall and Shoveler; implications for nature conservation. Degree of Doctor in Philosophy in Biological Sciences Thesis submitted to University of Oxford Department of Zoology

[60] Hill, D., Hockin, D., Price, D., Tucker, G., Morris, R., & Treweek, J. (1997). Bird disturbance: improving the quality and utility of disturbance research. Journal of Applied Ecology, 275-28

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Proposed development
	Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI 3.3km to the south	
Site AL30: Windsor and Eton Riverside Station Car Park.	Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI 3.8km to the north west Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI 4.9km to the north west	Residential development for 30 units.
Site AL29: Minton Place, Victoria Street, Windsor.	Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI 3.7km to the north west Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI 4.7km to the north west	Residential development for 100 units.
Site AL31: King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor.	Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI 3.7km to the north west Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI 4.5km to the north west	Residential development for 47 units.

4.16.17 Given there is no public access at Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI, due to health and safety considerations, it is concluded that development at Sites AL40, AL39, AL30, AL29, Al31 will have no LSE at this component of the SPA and Ramsar as a result of increased recreation and disturbance.

4.16.18 Given the distance of the proposed allocations from Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI, Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI and Staines Moor SSSI it is considered that LSEs as a result of increased recreational pressure at these components of the SPA and Ramsar site may result from both the Local Plan alone and in-combination with other plans and projects.

4.16.19 In addition to recreational disturbance, other sources of disturbance associated with urban development can include noise, visual and vibration. This has the potential to disturb species for which the South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar is designated. Given the distance of the potential site allocations in the Local Plan from the SAC, the closest site (AL40) being 2.2km to the north, it is considered unlikely that disturbance associated with noise, visual and vibration pollution will have an adverse impact on the integrity of this designation.

4.16.20 Due to the location of a number of Local Plan allocations within 5km of the South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar an LSE as a result of development set out within the Local Plan, alone and in-combination, **has therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of public access and disturbance.**

4.17 Thames Basin Heaths SPA - public access and disturbance screening

4.17.1 The qualifying features of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, which are recognised as being under threat from public access and disturbance, are the European Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*).

4.17.2 As noted above (**Paragraph 4.13.4** to **4.13.5**) the Thames Basin Delivery Framework makes recommendations for accommodating development while also protecting the SPA's features interest. This includes the recommendation of implementing a series of zones within which varying constraints would be placed upon development. The zone extending 400m from the SPA is an area where no new housing is to be located due to the potential impacts associated with urbanisation.

4.17.3 In terms of recreational impacts, the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework states that within a 400m to 5km zone from the perimeter of a European Site avoidance measures are considered necessary to avoid recreational impacts. It also notes that applications for large scale development (i.e. those comprising more than 50 houses which are located between 5-7km from the edge of the European site) would be considered on a case-by- case basis.

4.17.4 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is located immediately adjacent to the Plan boundary and approximately 430m from the nearest allocation within the Local Plan (Site AL33). In line with the buffer zones set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework, **Table 4.4** summarises the distance of each allocation that is situated within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and Ramsar and each allocation comprising more than 50 homes between 5-7km of the SPA.

Table 4.4: *Site allocations within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA*

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Proposed development
AL33 Broomhall Car Park, Sunningdale	430m	A mixed-use scheme including approximately 30 residential units, retail, employment and public car parking.
AL34 White House, London Road, Sunningdale	560m	10 residential units.
AL35 Sunningdale Park, Sunningdale	1.6km	Approximately 230 residential units which may include specialist accommodation for older people.
Al17 Shorts Waste Transfer Station and Recycling Facility, St Georges Lane, Ascot	3.5km	131 residential units.
AL18 Ascot Station Car Park	3.7km	A mixed-use scheme providing approximately 50 residential units, public car parking and ancillary retail/cycle hub (up to 280 sqm).
AL16 Ascot Centre, Ascot	3.75km	A mixed-use development providing approximately 300 residential units, 900 sqm of offices, public open space, community uses (including cultural/leisure) and retail/cafes/restaurants.
AL20 Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot	4.7km	A mixed-use development including approximately 250 residential units, retained health uses and ancillary offices.
AL19 Englemere Lodge, Ascot	5.0km	10 residential units.

4.17.5 The Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework sets out a zone extending 400m from the SPA boundary within which LSEs associated with urbanisation (particularly predation of the chicks of ground-nesting birds by domestic cats) are likely to occur. No allocation is located within this 400m zone and it can therefore be concluded that no LSEs from urbanisation are likely to occur as a result of the Local Plan.

4.17.6 Given the location of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA from the Local Plan allocations, it is considered that there may be LSEs associated with public access and disturbance (in terms of recreational impact) from the Local Plan both alone and in-combination. **This site has therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of public access and disturbances.**

4.18 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC – public access and disturbance

4.18.1 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is designated for its ancient lowland oak woodland on acidic, sandy or gravelly substrates and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) forests with Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). It also supports a diverse community of internationally rare invertebrates, in particular the Violet Click Beetle (*Limoniscus violaceus*).

4.18.2 Whilst the SIP[61] does not identify public access and disturbance as a threat or pressure for Windsor Forest and Great Park, the supplementary advice from Natural England notes that "*unless carefully managed, activities such as construction, forestry management and trampling by grazing livestock and human feet during recreational activity may all contribute to excessive soil compaction around ancient trees*"[62]. It is noted that the Violet Click Beetle has highly specific habitat requirements, being strongly associated with large-diameter veteran trees with internal cavities containing large quantities of slowly- decaying wood in the form of moist humus-rich compost.

4.18.3 Taking into consideration the information contained in Natural England's supplementary advice, public access and disturbance impacts on the qualifying features of this SAC are likely to be associated with recreational activity. Other impacts associated with urbanisation are not considered further in this assessment.

[61] Natural England. 2014. Site Improvement Plan: Windsor Forest and Great Park. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6221375450644480. [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

[62] Natural England. 2019. European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features. Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Site code: UK0012586. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5175000009015296. [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

4.18.4 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is managed by The Crown Estate in partnership with Natural England and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). Natural England's supplementary advice notes that *"the main land uses in the area are mixed farming, timber production and grassland management for horse grazing. Parts of Windsor Forest and Great Park are open to the public and it is a very popular facility for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. Together with Windsor Castle to the north, and Runnymede to the east the site is a very popular tourist destination. The high amenity and landscape value of Windsor Great Park makes it a significant boost to the local economy, reflected in high property values"*.

4.18.5 This SAC is comprised of 22 SSSI units and in 2019 Natural England classified all of these as being a favourable condition.

4.18.6 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is located within the Plan area. **Table 4.5** list each allocation that is situated within 5km of this designation.

Table 4.5: *Site allocations within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC*

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	Proposed development
AL33 Broomhall Car Park, Sunningdale	1.7km	A mixed-use scheme including approximately 30 residential units, retail, employment and public car parking.
AL34 White House, London Road, Sunningdale	2.3km	10 residential units.
AL35 Sunningdale Park, Sunningdale	1.3km	Approximately 230 residential units which may include specialist accommodation for older people.
Al17 Shorts Waste Transfer Station and Recycling Facility, St Georges Lane, Ascot	2.6km	131 residential units.
AL18 Ascot Station Car Park	2.9km	A mixed-use scheme providing approximately 50 residential units, public car parking and ancillary retail/cycle hub (up to 280 sqm).
AL16 Ascot Centre, Ascot	2.6km	A mixed-use development providing approximately 300 residential units, 900 sqm of

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	Proposed development
		offices, public open space, community uses (including cultural/leisure) and retail/cafes/restaurants.
AL20 Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot	3.7km	A mixed-use development including approximately 250 residential units, retained health uses and ancillary offices.
AL19 Englemere Lodge, Ascot	4.0km	10 residential units.
AL32 Sandridge House, London Road, Ascot	4.0km	25 residential units.
AL39 Land at Riding Court Road and London Road Datchet	3.3km	80 residential units.
AL30 Windsor and Eton Riverside Station Car Park	2.2km	30 residential units.
AL29 Minton Place, Victoria Street, Windsor	1.4km	100 residential units.
AL31 King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor	550m	47 residential units.
AL21 Land west of Windsor, north and south of the A308, Windsor	1.9km	Approximately 450 residential units on Green Belt land, strategic public open space, formal pitch provision for football and rugby, multi-functional community hub and educational facilities.
AL22 Squires Garden Centre Maidenhead Road Windsor	2.3km	29 residential units.
AL26 Land between Windsor Road and Bray Lake, south of Maidenhead	3.1km	100 residential units.
AL13 Desborough, Harvest Hill Road, South West Maidenhead	4.3km	Approximately 2,600 residential units on Green Belt land. Educational facilities including primary and secondary schools Strategic public open space, formal play and playing pitch provision Multi-functional community hub as part of a Local Centre

4.18.7 Due to the location of a number of allocations within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC it is concluded that the Local Plan has the potential to increase visitor numbers to the SAC both alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. An LSE as a result of development set out within the Local Plan, alone and in-combination, **has therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of public access and disturbance.**

4.19 Hydrology

4.19.1 Potential hydrological effects of urbanisation within European sites can be associated with an alteration in water balance and a reduction in water quality.

4.19.2 Urban development can reduce catchment permeability and the presence of drainage networks may be expected to remove runoff from urbanised catchments. This may result in changes in run-off rates from urbanised areas to European sites or watercourses which run through them. Water mains leakage and sewer infiltration may also affect the water balance. In addition, the impact of climate change has the potential to exacerbate these impacts, with drier summers and wetter winters.

4.19.3 Urbanisation also has the potential to reduce the quality of water entering a catchment during the construction of a development through processes such as sedimentation, accidental spillage of chemicals and materials and operational sources of diffuse pollution such as drainage from housing estates and run off from roads. Water quality may also be reduced through increased wastewater flow into collection systems which can overload the waste water treatment network, increasing the risk of sewer flooding and discharges from overflows. An overall increase in the volume of wastewater sent to waste water treatment works (WwTW), even with treatment, could also increase the pollution load to receiving watercourses.

4.19.4 As noted in **Table 4.1** hydrology, has been identified as a threat or pressure for qualifying features of the following European sites within the relevant SIPs:

- Thames Basin Heaths SPA; and
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC.

4.19.5 A review of supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features prepared by Natural England indicates that features within the following European sites are also sensitive to changes in hydrology, in particular, water quality and quantity:

- Burnham Beeches;
- Chilterns Beechwoods;
- South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar; and
- Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC.

4.19.6 In order to determine the potential LSEs of the Local Plan (alone and in combination) an assessment has been made of the hydrological connectivity of European sites to development proposed as part of the Local Plan.

4.19.7 **Figure 4.3** and **Figure 4.4** illustrate the surface water operational catchment zones and groundwater catchment zones for the Local Plan and the surrounding area.

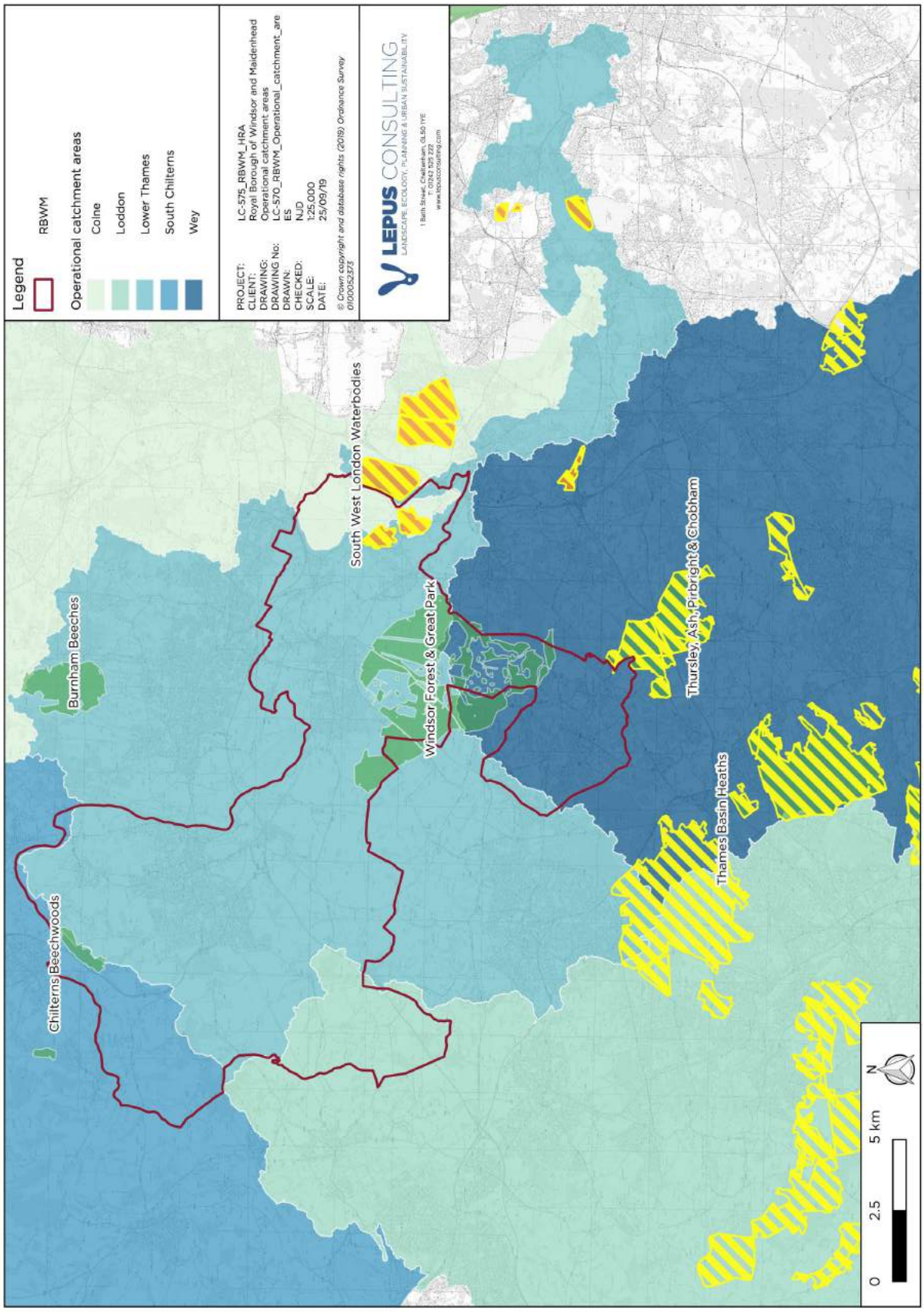


Figure 4.3: *Surface Water Operational Catchment Zones within RBWM and the surrounding area.*

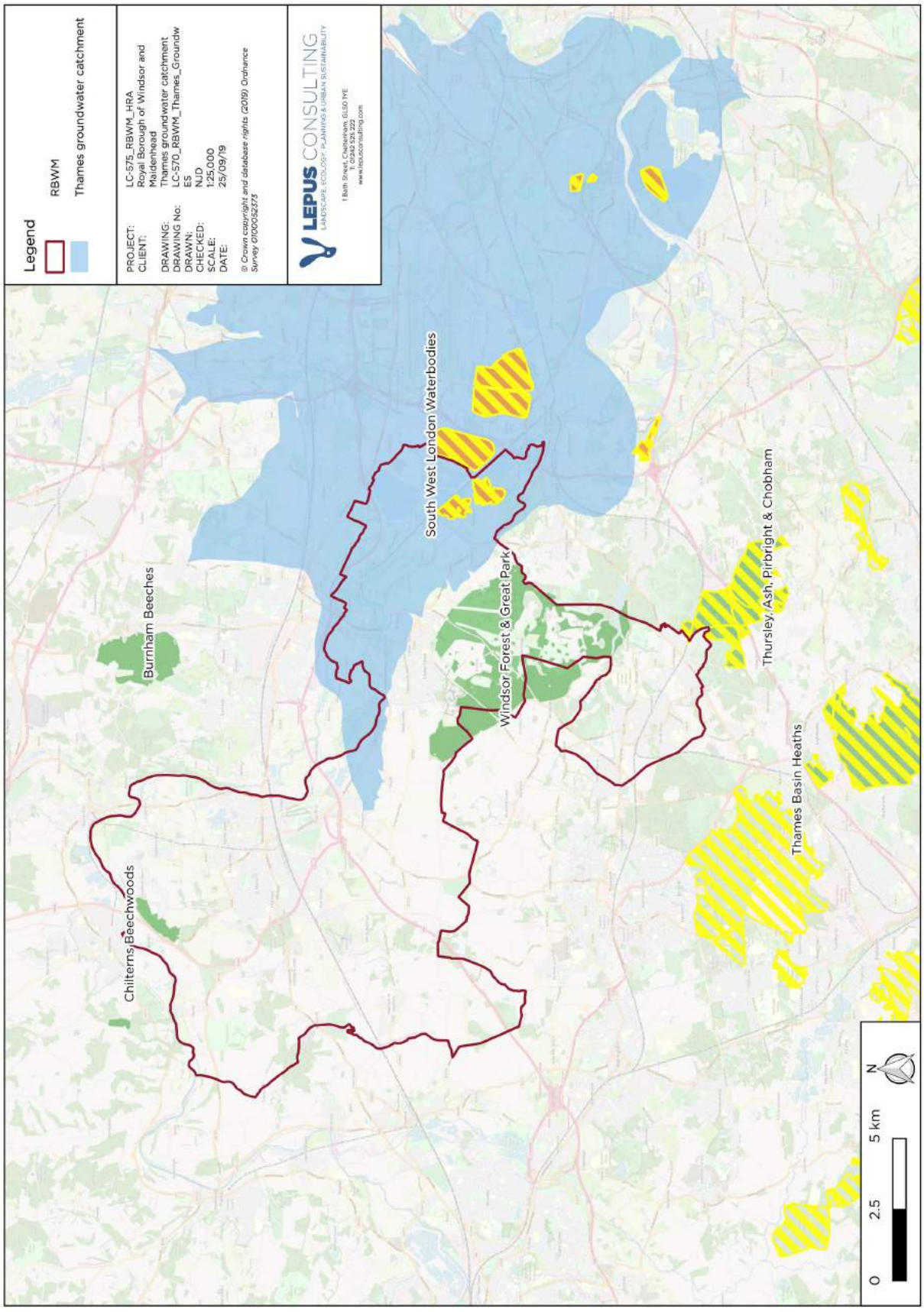


Figure 4.4: *Groundwater Catchment Zones RBWM and surrounding area.*

4.19.8 RBWM is located within the River Thames catchment, which contains the River Thames and the River Cut, a tributary of the River Thames.

4.19.9 Water supply services are provided by Affinity Water in the south and east of the Plan area (Ascot and Old Windsor), South East Water in the west (Maidenhead and Hurley) and Thames water who supply the area around Windsor and Eton. Wastewater treatment services are provided by Thames Water.

4.19.10 Thames Water has prepared a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP)[63] which considers population growth, climate change and the environment in its operating area over the next 25 years. It uses census data and works with local authorities to understand planned development in the South East and promote water efficiency in new homes. The Thames Water Draft WRMP[64] seeks to maintain levels of services for customers through enhanced resilience to severe drought from 2030 and water efficiency.

4.19.11 Thames Water undertook an HRA of the Draft WRMP in 2019[65]. The HRA Stage 1 Screening assessment concluded that with the inclusion of mitigation measures, Thames Water's revised draft WRMP19 would have no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. It noted that the requirement for HRA would continue to apply to project levels assessment.

[63] Our current plan (2014) Thames Water Available at: https://corporate.thameswater.co.uk/About-us/our-strategies-and-plans/water-resources/our-current-plan-wrmp14 [Date Accessed: 15/07/19]

[64] Thames Water Draft Water Resources Management Plan (2019) Available at: https://corporate.thameswater.co.uk/-/media/Site-Content/Your-water-future-2018/Statement-of-response/Statement-of-Response---Main-document.pdf?la=en [Date Accessed: 15/07/19]

[65] Thames Water Revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2019 Habitat Regulations Assessment (2018) Ricardo, Available at: https://corporate.thameswater.co.uk/-/media/Site-Content/Your-water-future-2018/Appendices/dWRMP19-Appendix-C---HRA---Stage-1-screening-151217.pdf [Date Accessed: 18/07/19]

4.19.12 South East Water has also prepared a WRMP which sets out how they will secure water supplies from 2020 to 2080[66]. During the period from 2025 to 2045 South East Water will continue to implement demand management initiatives to achieve further leakage and water efficiency savings. The South East WRWP was subject to an HRA in 2017[67]. Following the screening stage, five options to achieve water resource management over the period of the plan were considered to have pathways which could result in LSEs to a European site, or sufficient uncertainty existing whereby the potential for LSEs could not be ruled out; these options were considered in terms of an appropriate assessment. Due to the complexity of modelling or studies required to assess the significance of impacts associated with all the options, a 'down the line' assessment was proposed in the HRA. In the event that no adverse effects on integrity cannot be concluded, South East Water commits to replacing these with suitable alternative options, with all options to be subject to an HRA. In addition, South East Water commits to undertake a final cumulative environmental assessment and an in-combination assessment which can feed into a final HRA for the adopted plan.

4.19.13 Affinity Water has prepared a revised draft WRMP (rdWRMP)[68] which sets out how they plan to provide water over the period 2020 to 2080, whilst protecting the environment. This was subject to an HRA in 2019[69]. Following screening and appropriate assessment, no pathways that would lead to the South East Strategic Reservoir having adverse effects on the South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar site, alone or in-combination, subject to the application of mitigation, were identified.

[66] South East Water (2017). Draft Water Resource Management Plan 2020-2080. Available at: https://corporate.southeastwater.co.uk/media/2219/draft-water-resources-management-plan-2019-main-document.pdf [Date accessed: 17/06/19]

[67] South East Water (2017) Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2020-2080 Strategic Environmental Assessment: Environmental Report Appendices. Available at:https://corporate.southeastwater.co.uk/media/2199/dwrmp19-sea-report-appendices.pdf

[68] Affinity Water (2019) Revised Draft Water Resources Water Management Plan, Available at: https://stakeholder.affinitywater.co.uk/docs/Affinity_Water_rdWRMP19_FOR_PUBLICATION_01.03.19.pdf [Date Accessed: 25/09/19]

[69] AECOM (2019) Technical Report: 4.12 Habitats Regulations Assessment, Draft Final WRMP 2020-2080, Available at:https://stakeholder.affinitywater.co.uk/docs/4.12%20Habitat%20Regulations%20Assessment_draft%20final%20WRMP19_June%202019.pdf [Date Accessed: 26/09/19]

4.19.14 Thames Water, South East Water and Affinity Water are able to demonstrate sufficient supply options to ensure no adverse effect at a European site as a result of water quantity or a commitment to adopt suitable alternative options. Water quantity and resource issues have therefore been screened out of this assessment.

4.19.15 A Water Quality Impact Assessment was undertaken to support the development of the Local Plan in March 2019. This was updated to reflect amended growth forecasts for the Plan area in September 2019. These impact assessments are presented in the following documents and form part of the Local Plan evidence base:

- RBWM Water Quality Impact Assessment. Draft Report. March 2019[70].
- RBWM Water Quality Impact Assessment. Addendum to v4.0. September 2019[71].

4.19.16 These reports were informed through consultation with Thames Water, Affinity Water, South East Water and the Environment Agency. They considered growth within RBWM over the Plan period and also that within neighbouring Local Planning Authority areas within the Thames Water wastewater catchment boundary dataset. This ensured consideration of in-combination impacts (see **Appendix G**).

4.19.17 Thames Water undertook a high-level assessment of their wastewater treatment network. This indicated that the sewer network is most constrained in the Maidenhead wastewater catchment with Windsor wastewater catchment having more capacity. Thames water noted:

4.19.18 *"The capacity of the network would not prevent the delivery of growth provided that any necessary network reinforcement works are delivered ahead of the occupation of development in order to prevent any adverse impact on the environment as a result of issues such as pollution and / or sewer flooding".*

[70] JBA Consulting. March 2019. RBWM Water Quality Impact Assessment. Draft Report.

[71] JBA Consulting. September 2019. RBWM Water Quality Impact Assessment. Addendum to v4.0. Final Report.

4.19.19 There are four WwTW in RBWM (Hurley, Maidenhead, White Waltham and Windsor) and a further three outside the Plan area (Ascot, Mogden and Slough) which are expected to serve growth over the Local Plan period. The Water Quality Impact Assessment provided an analysis of WwTW capacity over the Local Plan period. This indicated that there is capacity for growth over the Local Plan period at Windsor, Hurley, Mogden and White Waltham. Thames Water are investigating upgrades at Maidenhead, Ascot and Slough.

4.19.20 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was published in 2000 and transposed into English and Welsh law in 2013. It provides an indication of the health of the water environment and whether a waterbody is at good status or potential. This is determined through an assessment of a range of elements relating to the biological and chemical quality of surface waters and quantitative and chemical quality of groundwater. To achieve good ecological status or potential, good chemical status or good groundwater status every element assessed must be at good status or better. If one element is below its threshold for good status, then the whole water body's status is classed below good. Surface water bodies can be classed as high, good, moderate, poor or bad status.

4.19.21 River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) are required under the WFD. These document the baseline classification of each waterbody in a RBMP area, the objectives and programme of measures to achieve those objectives. RBWM is located in the Thames River Basin District. Development in the Plan area must be planned to contribute towards achieving the WFD and objectives of the RBMP[72]. An HRA of the RBMP for Thames River Basin District was carried out by the Environment Agency, in consultation with Natural England[73]. It concluded that, at the strategic plan level, taking into consideration a range of potential mitigation options the RBMP would have no LSE on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It noted that HRA requirements will continue to apply for lower tier plan and project level assessments.

[72] Environment Agency. 2015. Thames River Basin Management Plan. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718342/Thames_RBD_Part_1_river_basin_management_plan.pdf [Date Accessed: 15/07/19]

[73] Environment Agency. 2015. River basin management plan for the Thames River Basin District Habitats Regulations Assessment Updated December 2015.

4.19.22 The WFD sets out areas which require special protection. These include areas designated for "*the protection of habitats or species where the maintenance or improvement of the status of water is an important factor in their protection including relevant Natura 2000 sites designated under Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC (the Birds Directive)*"[74].

4.19.23 The seven WwTW serving RBWM discharge into a number of watercourses. The WFD classification at each of these watercourses was analysed in the Water Quality Impact Assessment and an assessment made as to whether development over the Local Plan period could prevent these watercourses from achieving Good (or High) class. The results of this assessment are summarised in **Table 4.2** below.

Table 4.6: *Summary of Water Quality Assessment for RBWM*

Waterbody name	Classification in Cycle 2 of the WFD and reasons for not achieving good status	Discharging WwTW	Findings of Water Quality Assessment
Bull Brook (tributary to the River Cut).	Moderate Sewage discharge (phosphate)	Ascot	Proposed growth over the Local Plan period would not prevent good class being achieved.
The Cut	Moderate Sewage discharge and transport drainage (phosphate)	Bracknell and White Waltham	Deterioration could be prevented by tightening effluent discharges and potential infrastructure improvements. Proposed growth over the Local Plan period would not prevent good class being achieved.
Maidenhead Ditch	Moderate Sewage discharge and transport drainage (phosphate)	Maidenhead	There is currently a scheme aimed at improving the hydrological regime to meet the WFD. Proposed growth over the Local Plan period would not prevent good class being achieved.

[74] Official Journal of the European Communities. Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5c835afb-2ec6-4577-bdf8-756d3d694eeb.0004.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

Waterbody name	Classification in Cycle 2 of the WFD and reasons for not achieving good status	Discharging WwTW	Findings of Water Quality Assessment
Roundmoor Ditch and Boveney Ditch	Moderate Sewage discharge (ammonia and phosphate)	Slough	There are several schemes aimed at improving the hydrological regime to meet the WFD. Proposed growth over the Local Plan period would not prevent good class being achieved.
River Thames	Moderate Sewage discharge, transport and poor nutrient management from agriculture (phosphate)	Hurley and Windsor, as well as inputs from Roundmoor Ditch and the River Cut.	Good status could be achieved if upstream water quality were improved. Proposed growth over the Local Plan period would not prevent good class being achieved.

4.19.24 The Water Quality Impact Assessment concluded that "*the planned growth over the Local Plan period, and that within neighbouring authorities, can be accommodated without causing a deterioration in water quality … so long as timely interventions to prevent deterioration are implemented by Thames Water and the Environment Agency. The planned growth within RBWM and its neighbouring authorities would not prevent Good class from being achieved*".

4.19.25 The Water Quality Impact Assessment however concluded that increasing wastewater effluent volumes discharged as a result of growth could constitute a potential point-source of pollution. In addition, it noted that development sites may be sources of diffuse pollution from surface water runoff. These sources could cause a deterioration in surface and ground water quality. This screening assessment therefore provides further assessment in terms of surface and groundwater impacts at European sites.

4.20 Burnham Beeches SAC – hydrology screening

4.20.1 Natural England supplementary advice indicates that hydrological processes are important to the maintenance of the 'beech forests on acid soils' at Burnham Beeches SAC[75].

4.20.2 South Buckinghamshire District Council, the local authority area within which Burnham Beeches SAC lies, has provided planning guidance notes for the consideration of hydrology impacts at this European site. This guidance note advocates the use of sensitive construction practices within 10m of a watercourse within the catchments of Burnham Beeches SAC and the adoption of the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)[76]. The catchments that feed into Burnham Beeches SAC are illustrated in Appendix 1 of the planning guidance note and include the Portman Estate Stream, Unnamed Stream, Nile Stream and Withy Stream catchments. The planning guidance note draws on the findings of the Burnham Beeches Hydrology Study[77]. This study assessed the impact of development on the catchment of Burnham Beeches generally and proposed mitigation. The Plan area is not located within 10m of one of the catchments which connect with Burnham Beeches SAC (see Appendix 1 of the Guidance Note).

4.20.3 Burnham Beeches SAC is located within the Lower Thames (Maidenhead and Sunbury) operational catchment (**Figure 4.3**). A stream (unnamed) flows in a southerly direction from Burnham Beeches towards the Plan area. This stream feeds into the Jubilee River flowing north, before it converges with the River Thames, north west of Datchet. As Burnham Beeches is located upstream from the Plan area, and no allocation is located in one of its catchments, there will be no LSE on water quality as a result of the Local Plan.

[75] Natural England. 2017. European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features. Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Site code: UK0030034. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6014456282742784 [Date Accessed: 08.10.19].

[76] South Buckinghamshire (2014). Development Management Guidance Note. Hydrology in Burnham Beeches. http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/policyguidance [Date Accessed: 08.10.19].

[77] Wallingford HdroSolutons Limited (2013). Burnham Beeches Hydrology Study. Available at: https://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/policyguidance. [Date Accessed: 08.10.19].

4.20.4 The Water Quality Assessment indicates that, whilst point sources of pollution from WwTW are unlikely to compromise the ability of watercourses to meet a good classification under the WFD, development at allocations within the RBWM could potentially contribute to sources of pollution from surface water run-off. Burnham Beeches SAC is located approximately 5.4km from the closest allocations at Cookham Rise and is therefore not considered to be hydrologically linked to the Plan area via surface or groundwater receptors. **This site has therefore been screened out for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of hydrology.**

4.21 Chilterns Beechwoods SAC – hydrology screening

4.21.1 Hydrological changes have been identified as a threat to the qualifying feature 'Beech forests on neutral to rich soils' at Chilterns Beechwoods SAC.

4.21.2 Chilterns Beechwoods SAC is located within the South Chilterns and Lower Thames operational catchment (**Figure 4.3**). This SAC is underlain by a number of SSSI designations. Bisham Woods SSSI is located within the Plan area, to the south east of the River Thames. A small watercourse flows along the western boundary of this SSSI in a north easterly direction towards the River Thames (known as Reading to Cookham section). All allocations within the Local Plan are located downstream of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC or are located outside a connecting operational catchment.

4.21.3 The Water Quality Assessment indicates that, whilst point sources of pollution from WwTW are unlikely to compromise the ability of watercourses to meet a good classification under the WFD, development sites within RBWM could potentially contribute to pollution from surface water runoff. Given the location of the SAC in relation to the closest allocation (approximately 1.6km to its south east in Cookham Rise) and the fact that this SAC is located upstream of development in the Local Plan. **This site has therefore been screened out of further assessment in the HRA process in terms of hydrology.**

4.22 South West London Waterbodies SPA – hydrology screening

4.22.1 Water quality and quantity have been identified as a threat to the Gadwall and Shoveler qualifying features of the South West London Waterbodies SPA. Of particular concern are chemical or physical pollutants which negatively impact the natural flora and fauna of the waterbodies and are likely to be damaging to the value of the sites as a habitat for Gadwall and Shoveler. Poor water quality may significantly reduce habitat quality and also reduce food availability for the qualifying features. The SIP for South West London Waterbodies SPA notes that water quality is determined by "*a range of factors including the quality of groundwater supply, water quality in feeder streams, the quantity of aquatic plants present, the amount of mixing taking place in the water column and the amount of disturbance of accumulated sediment taking place, as well as inputs from surrounding vegetation (particularly trees) and nutrients in rainfall*"[78]. Water supply and management of water levels are also important considerations.

4.22.2 A number of the reservoirs that constitute the South West London Waterbodies SPA are still used for operational water supply by Thames Water. As noted in **paragraph 4.19.10** Thames Water is one of the Statutory water companies for RBWM, alongside Affinity Water and South East Water. An increase in the population of the borough over the Local Plan period could have a potential effect on water supply and quality at the South West London Waterbodies and their ability to support qualifying features. However, a review of the Thames Water draft WRMP19 and accompanying HRA (reviewed in **paragraph 4.19.11**) concludes that no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects would occur as a result of water supply.

[78] Natural England. 2018. European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features. South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) Site code: UK9012171. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4901473695563776 [Date Accessed: 02/10/19].

4.22.3 South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar are located within the same operational catchments as the Plan area is located. These are Colne, Lower Thames and Wey operational catchments (as shown in **Figure 4.3**). The general direction of flows of the operational catchments are in an easterly direction feeding into the River Thames. South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar are located within and downstream of the Plan area. Water quality was raised as an issue within all three of the operational catchments within the Thames RBMP, in particular pollution from wastewater, phosphorous, sediment and pesticides.

4.22.4 South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar are underpinned by a number of SSSIs. Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pit SSSI and Wraysbury and Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI are located within the Plan area. Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI and Staines Moor SSSI are located immediately adjacent but outside the Plan area. These SSSIs are located within the Lower Thames and Colne operational catchment areas. The section of the River Thames that flows through this section of the Local Plan is known as Cookham to Egham, and in 2016 had an overall 'moderate' classification under the WFD[79]. The reasons for not achieving 'good' status included, sewage discharge and transport drainage. Development within the Local Plan therefore has the potential to have an LSE on the water quality of the South West London Waterbodies.

4.22.5 Thorpe Park Number 1 Gravel Pit SSSI, Kempton Park Reservoirs SSSI and Knight and Bessborough Reservoirs SSSI are located approximately 3.1km, 8.9km and 9.8km respectively to the south and south east of the Local Plan boundary. These SSSIs are also located within the Lower Thames, Wey and Colne operational catchment areas. This stretch of the Thames (Egham to Teddington) was classed as 'poor'[80] in 2016 due to sewage discharge, transport drainage and poor nutrient management.

4.22.6 The South West London Waterbodies and the Plan area coincide with the Thames groundwater management catchment (**Figure 4.4**).

[79] Environment Agency, Catchment Data Explorer Thames (Cookham to Egham) Available at: https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB106039023231 [Date Accessed: 25/09/19]

[80] Environment Agency, Catchment Data Explorer Thames (Egham to Toddington) Available at: https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB106039023232 [Date Accessed: 25/09/19]

4.22.7 The South West London Waterbodies are considered to potentially be hydrologically linked to the RBWM Plan area via surface and groundwater, as the European designated sites are located downstream of the Plan area and within the same operational water catchment zones. **Therefore, this site has been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of hydrology.**

4.23 Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC – hydrology screening

4.23.1 Hydrological changes have been identified as a threat to the 'wet heathland with cross-leaved heath' and 'depressions on peat substrates' qualifying features of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Areas of wet heath on low-lying shallow slopes and bogs within valleys support important breeding bird populations[81]. Changes to hydrology can have a direct impact on the wet heath habitat.

4.23.2 The SIP for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA provides further, more detailed, information on hydrological links at this designated site. It notes that "*part of Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC (Elstead Common) has evidence of damaging impacts due to drainage. Drains are also present on Thursley and Ockley Commons but it is not clear whether these are having adverse impacts*"[82].

4.23.3 This screening assessment therefore focuses on the section of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA that is also designated as the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC.

4.23.4 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC and Thames Basin Heaths SPA is located immediately adjacent to the south eastern boundary of the borough, extending into the Plan area along the Waterloo to Reading railway line. The closest allocations to these designations include Site AL34 and Site AL33 which are located approximately 564m to the west and 430m to the north west, respectively, from the SAC and SPA.

[81] JNCC Thames Basin Heaths SPA description. Available at: http://archive.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2050 [Date Accessed:05/08/19]

[82] Natural England. 2014. Site Improvement Plan Thames Basin. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6249258780983296 [Date Accessed: 02/10/19].

4.23.5 Both the Plan area and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC are located within the Wey operational catchment (**Figure 4.3**). The Environment Agency provides details of the habitats within the Wey operational catchment noting that "*the Wey Valley contains valuable floodplain grazing marsh, a priority UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat that provides feeding opportunities for wintering wading birds. The Wey catchment also contains large areas of lowland heathland, which is important internationally*"[83].

4.23.6 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC is not located within the Thames groundwater management catchment which links to the Plan area (**Figure 4.4**).

4.23.7 Based on the distance of the SAC and SPA in relation to Local Plan allocations and a review of hydrological baseline information it is considered that potential hydrological links via surface water may be present.

4.23.8 The Water Quality Impact Assessment indicates that, whilst point sources of pollution from WwTW are unlikely to compromise the ability of watercourses to meet a good classification under the WFD, development sites within RBWM could potentially contribute to pollution from surface water runoff. Given the location of the SAC in relation to the closest allocation (430m to the north west in Sunningdale) it is concluded that development proposed in the Local Plan could potentially have an adverse impact on water quality. **As such, these European sites have therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of hydrology.**

4.24 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC – hydrology screening

4.24.1 Hydrological changes have been identified as a threat to the 'Beech forests on acid soils' and 'dry Oak-dominated woodland' qualifying features of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC. It is necessary that the natural hydrological processes are maintained to sustain the qualifying features of this European site.

[83] Environment Agency. Catchment Data Explorer. Wey and Trib Summary Data. https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/ManagementCatchment/3114/Summary. [Date Accessed: 08.10.19].

4.24.2 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is located within the Plan area and shares the same operational catchment; namely the Lower Thames and Wey (**Figure 4.3**). The north of Windsor Forest and Great Park is located within the Lower Thames operational catchment. Battle Bourne and Bourne ditch flow in a northerly direction away from the SAC and feed into the River Thames. The south of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is located in the Wey operational catchment. Streams flow from the SAC in a southerly direction towards Virginia Water before joining the Thames.

4.24.3 This site is not located within the Thames groundwater management catchment (**Figure 4.4**).

4.24.4 A number of allocations are located within close proximity to Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC, with the closest (Site AL31) being 540m to its north east (see **Table 4.5**). This SAC has the potential to therefore be hydrologically linked via surface water impact pathways to these developments. **This site has therefore been screened in for further assessment in the HRA process in terms of hydrology.**

4.25 Habitat fragmentation and loss

4.25.1 Habitat fragmentation has been identified as a threat or pressure to the qualifying features of the following European sites within the relevant SIPs (see **Table 4.1**):

- Burnham Beeches SAC;
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA; and
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC.

4.25.2 The Local Plan will not result in the direct loss of land within an area designated as a European site. However, there is potential for the Local Plan to result in the loss of habitat outside a European site which may be supporting habitat. Supporting habitat, also referred to as functionally linked habitat[84], may be located some distance from the European site. The fragmentation of habitats through the loss of connecting corridors would hinder the movement of qualifying species.

[84] "*The term 'functional linkage' refers to the role or 'function' that land or sea beyond the boundary of a European site might fulfil in terms of ecologically supporting the populations for which the site was designated or classified. Such land is therefore 'linked' to the European site in question because it provides an important role in maintaining or restoring the population of qualifying species at favourable conservation status*". Source: Natural England. 2016.

4.25.3 Lepus Consulting undertook a detailed desk study as part of this screening exercise. This drew on Natural England SSSI IRZ data, IUCN data, Defra data, priority habitat inventory data and aerial photography.

4.25.4 Areas of potentially functionally linked habitat likely to be lost to development have been determined. These parcels of land were analysed in the context of their potential to provide suitable habitat to support the qualifying features of the relevant European site. Where suitable habitat has been identified, its likelihood to provide an important role in maintaining or restoring the qualifying features at a favourable conservation status was taken into consideration.

4.26 Burnham Beeches SAC – habitat loss and fragmentation screening

4.26.1 The SIP for Burnham Beeches notes that there is high pressure for new housing development within the vicinity of Burnham Beeches SAC which risks isolating the site from the surrounding countryside[85]. There will be no direct loss of habitat within Burnham Beeches SAC attributed to the Local Plan with the closest allocation being located 5.5km to the west of Burnham Beeches SAC.

4.26.2 Burnham Beeches SAC is designated for its Beech forests on acid soils. Land at the allocations set out in the Local Plan are not considered to provide an important role in maintaining or restoring the population of qualifying features at 'favourable' conservation status. **This site has therefore been screened out from further assessment in the HRA process in terms of habitat loss and fragmentation threats / pressures.**

Commissioned Report. NECR207. Functional linkage: How areas that are functionally linked to European sites have been considered when they may be affected by plans and projects - a review of authoritative decisions.

[85] Natural England. 2014. Burnham Beeches SAC Site Improvement Plan. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5689860228644864. [Date Accessed: 10.10.19].

4.27 Thames Basin Heaths SPA – habitat loss and fragmentation screening

4.27.1 There will be no direct loss of habitat within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA as a result of allocations in the Local Plan. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is designated for the populations of breeding birds that it supports namely, European Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler. **Table 4.7** outlines habitat requirements for these qualifying features.

Table 4.7: *Thames Basin Heaths SPA qualifying features and their suitable habitats*[86].

Species	Habitat	Population status
European nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)	This species nests on bare or sparsely vegetated ground. It uses mainly dry, open country including lowland heaths with scattered trees and bushes, commons and moorland, forests and woodland.	Declining due to ongoing habitat destruction.
Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)	This species inhabits a variety of open and semi-open habitats. It favours unmanaged and poorly managed habitats such as abandoned farmland, heathland, young forestry plantations, recently felled woodland and scrub, orchards, woodland edges and clearings.	Increasing
Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*)	It favours dense, homogenous scrub, that is dominated by species such as Gorse (*Ulex*), Heath (*Erica*), Brooms (*Genista*) and Oak (*Quercus*).	Declining

4.27.2 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is located immediately adjacent to the Plan boundary and approximately 430m from the nearest allocation within the Local Plan (Site AL33). **Table 4.8** provides a summary of the habitats likely to be lost as a consequence of development proposed in the Local Plan at all allocations located within 5km.

Table 4.8: *Allocation site habitat to be lost to development*

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Existing habitat type
AL33 Broomhall Car Park, Sunningdale	430m	Previously developed land (car park and house).
AL34 White House, London Road, Sunningdale	560m	Previously developed land (home with garden).

[86] The IUCN Red List, Available at: https://www.iucnredlist.org/ [Date Accessed: 26.07.19]

Site Allocation (code and name)	Approximate distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Existing habitat type
AL35 Sunningdale Park, Sunningdale	1.6km	Previously developed land, with a small area of deciduous woodland priority habitat.
AL17 Shorts Waste Transfer Station and Recycling Facility, St Georges Lane, Ascot	3.5km	Previously developed land (industrial and scrap yard). Small area of deciduous woodland priority habitat on site margins.
AL18 Ascot Station Car Park	3.7km	Previously developed land (car park).
AL16 Ascot Centre, Ascot	3.75km	Previously developed land (employment area). Small fragmented section of deciduous woodland priority habitat on the site boundary.
AL20 Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot	4.7km	Previously developed site (hospital).
AL19 Englemere Lodge, Ascot	5.0km	Previously developed site (apartment complex).
AL32 Sandridge House, London Road, Ascot	5.1km	Previously developed site (home with garden).

4.27.3 The desk-based review indicates that none of the allocations will result in the loss of suitable functionally linked habitat for the qualifying features of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. **This site has therefore been screened out from further assessment in the HRA process in terms of habitat loss and fragmentation threats / pressures.**

4.28 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC – habitat loss and fragmentation screening

4.28.1 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC form part of the Thames Basin Health complex, overlapping with the SPA designation. There will be no direct loss of habitat within the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC as a result of allocations in the Local Plan.

4.28.2 The qualifying features of the SAC comprise depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*, European dry heaths and Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*. As shown in **Table 4.8,** land at the allocations set out in the Local Plan does not provide an important role in maintaining or restoring the population of qualifying features at favourable conservation status at this SAC. **This site has therefore been screened out from further assessment in the HRA process in terms of habitat loss and fragmentation threats / pressures.**

4.29 Arson and Wildfire

4.29.1 Uncontrolled fires can have profound impacts on plant diversity and can result in significant habitat loss.

4.29.2 As noted in **Table 4.1** arson and wildfire, has been identified as a threat or pressure for qualifying features of the following European sites within the relevant SIPs:

- Thames Basin Heaths SPA; and
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC.

4.30 Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC – arson and wildfire screening

4.30.1 The SIP for the Thames Basin Heaths complex (which includes the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC) notes that "*uncontrolled fires are very damaging as they can have profound impacts on reptile populations, inverts and plant diversity and can result in significant habitat loss for annex 1 birds. They can affect forestry areas as well as open heath. Damaging impacts can last for many years for example by the wholesale removal of all gorse from a site. Strategies are in place in parts of the complex to reduce risk but more attention is needed to properly address this issue. Increasing threat of extensive fires is of great concern to the fire services and there is a desire for greater link up between efforts to protect property and roads from fire, and habitat management*". It goes on to note that fire strategies and management plans for all sites are to be agreed and implemented in order to reduce fire risk.

4.30.2 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC is located immediately adjacent to the Plan boundary and approximately 430m from the nearest allocation within the Local Plan (Site AL33).

4.30.3 The qualifying features likely to be affected by wildlife and arson include the European nightjar, Woodlark, Dartford Warbler, wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, European dry heaths and depressions on peat substrates

4.30.4 The Local Plan is not expected to affect the frequency or nature of wildfires, as this is dependent on the existing site management regime and climatic factors. Any increase in the risk of arson arising from the Local Plan is deemed to be negligible.

4.30.5 In addition, the SAC and SPA fall outside of the Thames Basin Heath Delivery Framework 400m buffer distance designed to eliminate impacts caused by urbanisation effects, of which wildfire and arson are included. Therefore, the polices or developments set out within the Plan are not considered to have an adverse impact in terms of wildfire / arson on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC either alone or in combination. **These sites have therefore been screened out from further assessment in the HRA process in terms of arson and wildfire.**

4.31 In-combination screening

4.31.1 As set out in **Section 3.6**, and in compliance with Regulation 105 of the Habitats Regulations, an in-combination assessment has been undertaken as part of the screening exercise (see **Appendix G**). It is noted that a number of the plans and projects analysed as part of the in-combination assessment are in their early stages of development and information is not currently available to allow a detailed assessment within this report.

4.31.2 The assessment of potential in-combination effects has not resulted in additional impact pathways being screened in however a number of links between other plans and projects and the Local Plan have been identified. To be confirmed upon completion of in-combination assessment and following receipt of air quality work.

4.32 Policy screening

4.32.1 Each Local Plan policy has been appraised against the screening criteria taking into consideration case law and best practice. **Appendix A** details the output of this screening exercise. **Table 4.9** provides a summary of policies that have been screened in.

4.32.2 It is concluded that LSEs, either from the Local Plan alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, could be screened out for most policies. This is because the policies fell into the following categories:

- Category D: Environmental protection / site safeguarding; and
- Category F: Policies or proposals that cannot lead to development or other change.

4.32.3 A number of policies were considered likely to have an LSE. On the basis of this assessment the following LSEs are explored in the appropriate assessment in more detail (see **Sections 5** to **7**).

- Air quality impacts – to be confirmed by air quality modelling work;
- Public access and disturbance; and
- Hydrological impacts.

Table 4.9: *Summary of screened in policies.*

Policy Number	Policy Name	Screening decision
SP1	Spatial Strategy for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	Screened in
HO1	Housing Development Sites	Screened in
ED1	Economic Development	Screened in
NR4	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area	Screened in
IF4	Open Space	Screened in

4.33 Sites screening

4.33.1 Potential site allocations have also been appraised against the screening criteria (**Appendix B**).

4.33.2 All potential site allocations within the Local Plan have also been screened in under Categories I and L: proposals which might be likely to have a significant effect alone or in-combination. To be updated following receipt of air quality modelling work. This conclusion has been reached as all site allocations, in-combination with other plans and projects identified in the in-combination assessment (**Appendix G**), have the potential to contribute to the following LSEs:

- Air quality;
- Public access and disturbance; and
- Hydrology.

4.33.3 These LSEs are explored in more detail in the appropriate assessments stage of the HRA in **Sections 5** to **7**.

5 Appropriate assessment – air quality

6 Appropriate assessment – public access and disturbance

7 Appropriate assessment – hydrology

8 Next Steps

8.1 Summary

8.1.1 TBC upon completion of HRA work.

8.2 Next steps

8.2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the HRA of the BLPSV-PC using best available information.

8.2.2 The Council, as the Competent Authority, have responsibility to make the Integrity Test, which can be undertaken in light of the conclusions set out in this report.

8.2.3 This report will be submitted to Natural England, the statutory nature conservation body, for formal consultation. The Council must 'have regard' to their representations under the provisions of Regulations 63(3) and 105(2) prior to making a final decision as to whether they will 'adopt' the conclusions set out within this report as their own.

Appendix A: Policy Screening Summary

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
Spatial Portrait			
SP1	Spatial Strategy for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	LSEs Whilst this policy will not lead to development in itself it sets out the intended spatial distribution of development over the Plan period. It will therefore trigger development in the Plan area through other policies and allocations set out within the Local Plan. Dependent on the location and types of development (assessed in detail in Appendix B) this policy is likely to result in the following impact pathways at European sites: - Air Quality - Public Access and Disturbance - Hydrology. The screening assessment has indicated that there are unlikely to be pathways associated with wildfire and arson or habitat loss / fragmentation (see Sections 4.26 and 4.30 of the Report to Inform the HRA). LSEs at European sites are therefore considered possible and this policy is therefore screened in under Category I and L.	Screened in
SP2	Climate Change	No LSEs. This policy relates to design. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to design to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. This policy itself does	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category B.	
Quality of Place			
QP1	Sustainability and Placemaking	No LSEs. This policy relates to design. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to sustainability and place making within development. This policy itself does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category B.	Screened out
QP1a	Maidenhead Town Centre Strategic Placemaking Area	No LSEs. This policy relates to design. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to place making for development within Maidenhead Town Centre. This policy itself does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category B.	Screened out
QP1b	South West Maidenhead Strategic Placemaking Area	No LSEs. This policy relates to design. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to place making for development within South West Maidenhead. This policy itself does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category B.	
QP1c	Ascot Centre Strategic Placemaking Area	No LSEs. This policy relates to design. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to place making for development within Ascot Centre. This policy itself does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category B.	Screened out
QP2	Green and Blue Infrastructure	No LSEs. This is a positive policy as it provides for the retention and extension of green infrastructure which has potential to divert recreational pressure away from European sites. It also provides for the restoration of water features including SuDS which have positive effects on water quality and quantity. This policy does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Categories B and F.	Screened out
QP3	Character and Design of new Development	No LSE. This policy relates to the character and design of new development. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to sustainable high-quality design. This policy does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Categories B and F.	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
QP3a	Building Height and Tall Buildings	No LSE. This policy relates to building height and tall buildings. This policy does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
QP4	River Thames Corridor	No LSE. This policy relates to the protection of the character and setting of the River Thames. It is a positive policy as it includes text relating to the conservation of the ecological value of the river in line with the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). This policy does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
QP5	Rural Development	No LSE. This policy relates to the protection of the Green Belt. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
Housing			
HO1	Housing Development Sites	This policy identifies a quantum of new homes (referencing allocation sites on the Policies Map) to be provided during the Plan period. Dependent on the location and types of development (assessed in detail in Appendix B) this policy is likely to result in the following impact pathways at European sites: - Air Quality - Public Access and Disturbance	Screened in

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		- Hydrology. The screening assessment has indicated that there are unlikely to be pathways associated with wildfire and arson or habitat loss / fragmentation (see Sections 4.26 and 4.30 of the Report to Inform the HRA). LSEs at European sites are therefore considered possible and this policy is therefore screened in under Category I and L.	
HO2	Housing Mix and Type	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for the mix and types of homes but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
HO3	Affordable Housing	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for affordable housing but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
HO4	Gypsies and Travellers	No LSE. This policy sets out design requirements for gypsies and travellers' sites but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area itself. The quantum and location of gypsy and traveller sites will be set out in the separate Traveller Local Plan which will be subject to HRA. This policy on its own would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
HO5	Loss and Subdivision of Dwellings	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for loss and subdivision of dwellings but does not	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	
Economy			
ED1	Economic Development	This policy identifies a quantum and location of employment development (referencing allocation sites on the Policies Map) to be provided during the Plan period. Dependent on the location and types of development (assessed in detail in Appendix B) this policy is likely to result in the following impact pathways at European sites: - Air Quality - Public Access and Disturbance - Hydrology. The screening assessment has indicated that there are unlikely to be pathways associated with wildfire and arson or habitat loss / fragmentation (see Sections 4.26 and 4.30 of the Report to Inform the HRA). LSEs at European sites are therefore considered possible and this policy is therefore screened in under Category I and L.	Screened in
ED2	Protected Employment Sites	No LSE. This policy sets out protections for employment sites but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
ED3	Other Sites and Loss of Employment Floorspace	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for other employment sites and loss of	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		employment floorspace but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	
ED4	Farm Diversification	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for farm diversification but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
Town Centres and Retail			
TR1	Hierarchy of Centres	No LSE. This policy sets out the hierarchy of town centres but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
TR2	Windsor Town Centre	No LSE. This policy sets out retail design requirements for Windsor Town Centre but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
TR3	Maidenhead Retail Centre	No LSE. This policy sets out retail design requirements for Maidenhead Retail Centre but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
TR4	District Centres	No LSE. This policy sets out retail requirements for the District Centres but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
TR5	Local Centres	No LSE. This policy sets out retail requirements for the Local Centres but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
TR6	Strengthening the Role of Centres	No LSE. This policy sets out retail requirements for the strengthening the role of centres but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
TR7	Shops and Parades Outside Defined Centres	No LSE. This policy sets out retail requirements for the shops and parades outside defined centres but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
TR8	Markets	No LSE. This policy sets out retail requirements for markets but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
Visitors and Tourism			
VT1	Visitor Development	No LSE. This policy sets out design requirements for visitor development but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
Historic Environment			
HE1	Historic Environment	No LSE. This is a policy relating to heritage assets. These spaces have the potential to act in a way that may divert recreational pressure away from European sites. The policy is positive in nature, does not trigger any development or change and can therefore be screened out under Category F.	Screened out
HE2	Windsor Castle and Great Park	No LSE. This is a policy relating to safeguarding the architectural and historical significance of Windsor Castle and Great Park. This asset has the potential to act in a way that may divert recreational pressure away from the qualifying features of the Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC. The policy is positive in nature, does not trigger any development or change and can therefore be screened out under Category F.	Screened out
Natural Resources			
NR1	Managing Flood Risk and Waterways	No LSE. This policy sets out the sequential approach to be adopted for developments in	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		terms of flood risk. It sets out the requirement for developments to consider the inclusion of SuDS in terms of flood risk. This would have secondary positive impacts in terms of improving water quality. The policy is positive in nature, does not trigger any development or change and can therefore be screened out under Category F.	
NR2	Nature Conservation & Biodiversity	No LSE. This policy relates to the protection of designated sites and protected species and improving biodiversity. It includes text that states, '*designated sites of international and national importance, will be maintained, protected and enhanced*.' This policy will have positive effects for the protection of European sites and their qualifying features and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	Screened out
NR3	Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows	No LSE. This policy relates to the protection trees, woodlands and hedgerows in the Plan area. It will have positive effects for ecological receptors and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	Screened out
NR4	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area	No LSE. This policy requires new residential development to provide adequate mitigation measures to avoid any potential adverse effects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This policy is a bespoke propose intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on a European site and has therefore been screened in under Category M.	Screened in
NR5	Renewable Energy	No LSE. This policy relates to the production of renewable energy in the Plan area. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	
Environmental Protection			
EP1	Environmental Protection	No LSE. This policy relates to environmental protection trees in terms of landscape, pollution, contamination and environmental enhancement. It will have positive effects for ecological receptors in the Plan area and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	Screened out
EP2	Air Pollution	No LSE. This policy relates to minimising air pollution, with a particular focus on human health. It will have knock-on positive impact at ecological receptors in the Plan area and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	Screened out
EP3	Artificial Light Pollution	No LSE. This policy relates to minimising artificial light pollution. It will have positive impacts at ecological receptors in the Plan area and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	Screened out
EP4	Noise	No LSE. This policy relates to minimising noise pollution. It will have positive impacts at ecological receptors in the Plan area and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	Screened out
EP5	Contaminated Land and Water	No LSE. This policy relates to contaminated land and water pollution. It will have positive	Screened out

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		impacts on water quality in the Plan area and has therefore been screened out under Category D.	
Infrastructure			
IF1	Infrastructure and Developer Contributions	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for infrastructure and development contributions but does not trigger change or development within the Plan area and would therefore not have an impact upon designated sites. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
IF2	Sustainable Transport	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for delivery of a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport, development of transport assessments and plans. This will have positive air quality impacts. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area. Whilst reference is not specifically made to water quality, this policy requires that SuDS are incorporated into transport infrastructure. This will have secondary benefits in terms of safeguarding water quality. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
IF3	Local Green Space	No LSE. This policy sets out protections for local green space. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
IF4	Open Space	No LSE. This policy sets out protections for existing open space and allocations of new and upgraded open space. In addition, it sets out requirements in terms of open spaces at new residential developments which will have positive impacts for European sites by providing alternative recreational provision. Given this policy	Screened in

Policy Number	Policy	Justification: Activities that may result in a LSE on a European site.	Screening conclusion
		proposes new areas of open space it has been screened in the assessment under Category M.	
IF5	Rights of Way and Access to the Countryside	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for the protection and improvement of the existing rights of way network. This will encourage walking and cycling with positive air quality impacts. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
IF6	Community Facilities	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for community facilities. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out
IF7	Utilities	No LSE. This policy sets out requirements for utilities. In particular it notes that development should demonstrate that adequate water supply and sewerage infrastructure exists to serve that development. It also notes that new water resource schemes which meet current and future water supply needs will be supported. This will have a positive impact on water resources at European sites. It does not trigger change or development within the Plan area. It is therefore screened out under Category F.	Screened out

Appendix B: Allocations Screening Summary

Table B.1: *Screening summary of allocations in the Local Plan*

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
AL1	Nicholsons Centre, Maidenhead	Mixed use	2.74	500 units 22,000 sqm	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL2	Land between High Street and West Street, Maidenhead	Mixed use	0.96	300 units (32 already in commitments)	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL3	St Mary's Walk, Maidenhead	Mixed use	0.32	120 units	To be informed	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
					by AQ work	SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)				
AL4	York Road	Mixed use	2.51	450 units (340 already in commitments)	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL5	West Street	Mixed use	0.96	240 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL6	Methodist Church, High	Mixed use	0.20	50 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
	Street, Maidenhead					SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)				
AL7	Maidenhead Railway Station	Mixed use	3.11	150 units 7,000 sqm	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL8	St Cloud Gate, Maidenhead	Employment	0.19	3,500 sqm	To be informed by AQ work	Employment – n/a	No	No	No	LSE Screened in (air quality only) Category L
AL9	Saint-Cloud Way	Mixed use	2.52	550 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
						Woods SSSI)				
AL10	Stafferton Way Retail Park, Maidenhead	Mixed use	1.89	350 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL11	Crossrail West Outer Depot, Maidenhead	Employment	1.17	4,500 sqm	To be informed by AQ work	Employment – n/a	No	No	No	LSE Screened in (air quality only) Category L
AL12	Land to east of Braywick Gate, Braywick Road, Maidenhead	Mixed use	0.47	50 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
AL13	Desborough, Harvest Hill Road, South West Maidenhead	Mixed use	89.93	2,600 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL14	The Triangle Site (land south of the A308(M) west of Ascot Road and north of the M4), Maidenhead	Employment	25.70	25.70ha	To be informed by AQ work	Employment – n/a	No	No	No	LSE Screened in (air quality only) Category L
AL15	Braywick Park, Maidenhead	Green infrastructure	54.1	Strategic green infrastructure site	No	No	No	No	No	Screened in Category M

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
AL16	Ascot Centre, Ascot	Mixed use	12.30	300 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL17	Shorts Waste Transfer Station and Recycling Facility, St	Residential	5.80	131 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
	Georges Lane, Ascot					Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC				
AL18	Ascot Station Car Park	Mixed use	1.14	50 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL19	Englemere Lodge, Ascot	Residential	0.65	10 units	To be informed	Located within 5km of Thames	No	No	No	LSE Screened in

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
					by AQ work	Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC				Category L
AL20	Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot	Mixed use	6.95	250 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
						Forest and Great Park SAC				
AL21	Land west of Windsor, north and south of the A308, Windsor	Mixed use	22.76	450 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL22	Squires Garden Centre Maidenhead Road Windsor	Residential	0.74	39 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL23	St. Marks Hospital, Maidenhead	Residential	1.55	54 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
						Woods SSSI)				
AL24	Land East of Woodlands Park Avenue and North of Woodlands Business Park, Maidenhead	Mixed use	16.69	300 units	To be informed by AQ work	No	No	No	No	LSE Screened in (air quality only) Category L
AL25	Land known as Spencer's Farm, North of Lutman Lane, Maidenhead	Mixed use	13.51	330 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL26	Land between Windsor	Residential	3.99	100 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Windsor Forest and	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
	Road and Bray Lake, south of Maidenhead					Great Park SAC				
AL27	Land south of Ray Mill Road East, Maidenhead	Green infrastructure	2.29	Green infrastructure site -	No	No	No	No	No	Screened in Category M
AL28	Land north of Lutman Lane, Spencer's Farm, Maidenhead	Green infrastructure	6.43	Green infrastructure site	No	No	No	No	No	Screened in Category M
AL29	Minton Place, Victoria Street, Windsor	Mixed use	0.53	100 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and South West	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
						London Waterbodies SPA				
AL30	Windsor and Eton Riverside Station Car Park	Residential	0.85	30 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and South West London Waterbodies SPA	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL31	King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor	Residential	0.72	47 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and South West London Waterbodies SPA	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
AL32	Sandridge House, London Road, Ascot	Residential	0.49	25 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL33	Broomhall Car Park, Sunningdale	Mixed use	1.45	30 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
						Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC				
AL34	White House, London Road, Sunningdale	Residential	0.82	10 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
AL35	Sunningdale Park, Sunningdale	Residential	4.83	230 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL36	Cookham Gas holder, Whyteladyes Lane, Cookham	Residential	1.25	50 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
AL37	Land north of Lower Mount Farm, Long Lane, Cookham	Residential	8.78	200 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL38	Land east of Strande Park, Cookham	Residential	0.90	20 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (Bisham Woods SSSI)	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L
AL39	Land at Riding Court Road and London Road Datchet	Residential	3.92	80 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of South West London Waterbodies SPA and Windsor Forest and	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

Site Reference Number	Site Address	Site use	Area (ha)	Housing number / employment sqm. (if applicable)	Air quality Impact	Recreation impact	Hydrological link to a European site	Habitat loss / fragmentation?	Wildfire / arson risk	Screening conclusion
						Great Park SAC				
AL40	Land east of Queen Mother Reservoir, Horton	Residential	4.44	100 units	To be informed by AQ work	Located within 5km of South West London Waterbodies SPA	No	No	No	LSE Screened in Category L

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM)

Borough Local Plan 2013 - 2033

Statement of Common Ground

Between

RBWM

and

Natural England

May 2018

1. Introduction

1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by RBWM and Natural England hereafter referred to as "the parties". This SoCG documents those matters agreed with regard to the RBWM Borough Local Plan 2033 and supporting documents to assist the Inspector during the Examination of the Local Plan.

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground is principally intended to address the representations made by Natural England through the Regulation 19 publicity period for Borough Local Plan 2033

1.2. This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that parties may wish to raise during the examination.

2. Background

2.1. The Council have made every effort throughout the preparation of the Borough Local Plan 2033 to ensure the Plan provides a robust, strategic framework for the effective delivering of sustainable development. Throughout this process the Council have continuously engaged with Natural England on policy development, additional allocations and specific evidence base studies, ensuring the Plan implements national policy appropriately.

3. Matters relating to Borough Local Plan 2033

Duty to Cooperate / Collaborative Working

3.1. RBWM has continuously engaged with the Natural England through the evolution of the Borough Local Plan 2033. More information and details of this engagement can be found in Updated Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement January 2018.

3.2. The parties agree that RBWM has discharged its duty to cooperate for the Borough Local Plan 2013 - 2033.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

3.3. Natural England has raised some concerns in relation to the outcomes of the HRA (draft dated 2017) as part of their response to the Regulation 19 publicity period for Borough Local Plan 2013 – 2033. This led to a challenge of Soundness upon the Local Plan.

Air Quality

3.4. Natural England were concerned with the Air Quality Assessment section within the draft Habitats Regulations Assessment, particularly in light of the recent Wealden Judgement, from Sussex. There was not enough evidence in this document for Natural England to be able to support the conclusion in the document of no likely significant effect upon the integrity of the range of Natura 2000 sites within and around the RBWM.

3.5. As a result of this representation RBWM carried out further work, by appointing Ricardo to undertake a Habitats Regulation and Air Quality Assessment Update at the end of 2017 and in January 18 on air pollution modelling over the plan period, working with Natural England. It was concluded that there is **no significant risk** of impacts due to the Local Plan alone at the following Natura 2000 sites: Burnham Beeches SAC, Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC (part of Thames Basin Heaths SPA).

3.6. At Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, it is concluded that further investigation of potential impacts is needed in a small area of this site close to the junction of the A404 and the A308 . At Windsor Great Park SAC, it is concluded that further investigation of potential impacts is needed in a small area of this site close to the junction of the A332 and B383. There is no evidence at present that there needs to be mitigation measures as a result of the Local Plan proposals singularly or in combination with other plans (where there is information).

3.7. The information available when the document was produced did not allow confirmation that there could or would be significant "in-combination" effects

on Natura 2000 sites at that time. Although the Ricardo report did suggest a possible range of mitigation measures if needed at some time in the future.

4. Conclusion

4.1. The representations made by the Natural England through the Regulation 19 publicity period of Borough Local Plan 2033 concerning Air Quality and the impact on European sites have been addressed through this Statement of Common Ground. RBWM and Natural England continue to work proactively on the issues raised (by Natural England) concerning the provision of sufficient SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace).

Signatures

Signed on behalf of RBWM

J. Jackson

Date: 14 May 2018.

Jenifer Jackson
Head of Planning

Signed on behalf of Natural England

Marc Turner
Senior Adviser

DATE 9th May 2018

RBWM BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN
EXAMINATION HEARINGS

MATTER 1: LEGAL COMPLIANCE, EXCLUDING DUTY TO CO-OPERATE

ISSUE 4: … OPTIONS FOR FUTURE PROVISION OF SANG AND WILL IT DELAY LARGER DEVELOPMENTS COMING FORWARD?

SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE

1. The Council has already set out in response to ID/01 that the borough has a remaining SANG capacity of 205 dwellings as at 4 April 2018. In the table provided it is estimated that in the five years 2018-2023 503 dwellings would be brought forward that would require mitigation. Of those 503 dwellings, 205 would be mitigated on site through SANG provision leaving 298 units to be mitigated through Allen's Field and its extension and any other SANG. Of those 298 dwellings only 205 could be mitigated at Allen's Field plus 84 from the extension to Allen's Field leaving a potential deficit in SANG of 9 dwellings.

2. The Council has done some further work to demonstrate that SANG will be brought forward in advance of dwellings on allocated sites and windfall sites being occupied. This is set out in table 1 below:

5 year period (financial year)	Likely dwellings to be occupied	SANG capacity available
2018-2023	397	1288
2023-2028	601	320
2028-2033	293	600
TOTAL	1291	2208

Table 1; SANG delivery to meet BLP housing trajectory

3. The table previously provided by the Council in is response to ID/01 assigned only 177 units to be completed at HA34 Sunningdale Park, this was based on the current planning application. The site HA34 is proposed for allocation for around 230 units and it is this figure which informs table 1.

4. Based on the likely delivery in the first five years it is noted that SANG would be required to be provided at HA32, HA33 and HA34. Boyer consulting obo of Sunningdale Park in their matter 1 hearing statement indicates that the proposed 13.79 hectare SANG at Sunningdale Park has a capacity of around 718 units. This figure has been used by the Council. The SANG approved at Heatherwood Hospital under application 16/03115/OUT has a capacity of 290 units. Allen's field and its extension has been included in the available capacity in this first five years. It can be seen that there would be a significant surplus of SANG to 2023.

5. The Council anticipated that the new Strategic SANG it is currently pursuing with landowners as set out in the report to RBWM Cabinet on 28 June (attached as Appendix 1 to this note) would come forward early in the plan period. This could be revised to bring forward the capacity for mitigation of an estimated 320 units in the second 5 year period with the further extension of that SANG in the third 5 year period, giving a further mitigation for around 600 units. It should be noted that no capacity testing work has been conducted for this new Strategic SANG.

6. In addition to the capacity set out in table 1 for SANG to mitigate some 2,208 dwellings there is additional potential to access private SANG in a neighbouring borough to mitigate up to 300 units. If this were to be pursued it would provide a SANG capacity for 2,508 units against the likely delivery in the plan period of 1,291 dwellings within the 5km zone of the SPA. There is a significant buffer should sites deliver above the estimated capacity. It is clear that there is no likelihood of sites stalling through lack of SANG capacity.

7. At the current time there is a risk that a large SANG does not come forward in the first 5 years, for example, at HA34 Sunningdale Park. Firstly the units on that site would not require mitigation and secondly there is demonstrably a number of other options available that the Council could chose to bring forward to meet the requirement.

Report Title:	**Infrastructure:** Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace capacity and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) delivery to support the BLP
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information?	NO – Part I
Member reporting:	Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet 28 June 2018
Responsible Officer(s):	Russell O'Keefe Executive Director & Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning
Wards affected:	Ascot & Cheapside, Sunninghill & South Ascot and Sunningdale

www.rbwm.gov.uk
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

REPORT SUMMARY

1. RBWM provides Strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) capacity for relevant housing developments to enable them to proceed. This fulfils statutory obligations to protect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area; and to provide new and enhanced open spaces (SANGs) for the residents of the borough to enjoy.
2. The BLP Submission Version (BLPSV) contains additional allocation for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace through an extension at Allen's Field. This would meet the requirements for mitigation in the first 5 years of the plan period.
3. Strategic SANG capacity is under particular pressure from unplanned developments outside of defined settlements and developments proposing to bring forward a greater amount of development than the BLP SV allocates placing a strain on existing and future Strategic SANG capacity.
4. The council is proactively progressing options to ensure that additional SANG comes forward through to 2033 to assist in mitigating the impact of new residential development. There are a number of opportunities currently available and the council is investigating them all in consultation with Natural England.

1 DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet notes the report and:

i) Gives authority to the Executive Director, Place to pursue negotiations on behalf of the council with landowners, to enter into lease agreements or other legal agreements with landowners and to make a planning application for the purposes of providing SANG to meet BLP requirements to 2033.

ii) Gives authority to the Head of Planning not to provide capacity in the council's Strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) for large prior approval schemes or other unplanned large applications located beyond the defined settlements Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale or on

allocated sites where the proposals are in excess of the BLPSV allocation by more than 9 additional units which are considered to undermine the Council's Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy.

iii) Gives authority to the Executive Director, Place to pursue negotiations on behalf of the council with any other council which may have surplus SANG capacity and to authorise the Executive Director to enter into any necessary legal or lease agreement with that council for the purposes of securing SANG capacity to support the BLPSV.

2 REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 The Thames Basin Heaths, which cover parts of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire, comprise a rare example of lowland heathland. It is home to three important bird species, (the Dartford Warbler, the Nightjar and the Woodlark) and protected by international law (the EU Birds Directive and the EU Habitats Directive), national legislation (the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010 (as amended)) and by planning policy as a 'Special Protection Area' (SPA). The heaths, and the birds that nest and breed there, are easily disturbed by people and their dogs.

2.2 To comply with legislation the council must ascertain that any development in the borough would not harm the integrity of the SPA either by itself or in combination with all other applications in the other 11 local authorities affected by the SPA. An Appropriate Assessment is undertaken on all relevant planning applications (and development plans). This involves:

- Predicting the likely effects of the development.
- Assessing whether the predicted effects are likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.
- Proposing avoidance and mitigation measures.
- Consulting conservation bodies, where required.

2.3 The council has identified an extension to the current Strategic SANG at Allen's Field within the BLPSV. This provides sufficient capacity to meet the first five years of development in the plan (allocated sites and windfalls). Additional capacity is required for the remainder of the plan period from 2023-2033 in order that residential development may be brought forward. Without that capacity planning permission should not be granted.

2.4 In order to allocate land for residential development and bring forward planned development, the council through the local plan process is required to demonstrate that sufficient SANG capacity is available to be able to mitigate the impacts of proposed residential development. This process is required to support the Borough Local Plan Submission Version (BLPSV) to provide SANG for planned development coming forward to 2033. Each SANG has its own capacity and, depending on its size, also its own catchment within which it can mitigate residential development. At the current time the south west extent of the parish of Sunningdale is not mitigated by the Allen's Field SANG for development which is for 10 or more units.

Types of SANGs

2.5 There are two types of SANGs:

- Strategic SANGs which are open space land owned or managed by the council to which developments pay financial contributions towards their enhancement to SANG status and long term management. These are mainly for smaller or urban developments which cannot realistically provide their own land for SANGs.
- Bespoke SANGs which are new open spaces provided mostly for large developments where the developer upgrades the land to SANG status and then usually transfers the land to council ownership with maintenance sums to guarantee its long term management.

Strategic SANGs

2.6 Development of nine or fewer dwellings can make a contribution to any SANG irrespective of catchment distances. Developments of 10 or more dwellings have to be located within the catchment of a SANG. The council currently operates and manages a Strategic SANG at Allen's Field in South Ascot. The council is intending to extend this SANG through allocation via the borough local plan process to give capacity for future developments and enable them to proceed.

Bespoke SANGs

2.7 There is currently no bespoke SANG operating within the Borough: bespoke in this case means to serve a particular development. A bespoke SANG arrangement has been agreed for land at Heatherwood Hospital and planning consent granted. Other sites allocated in the BLP have been identified as requiring a bespoke SANG arrangement, for example, Sunningdale Park.

Table 1: Options

Option	Comments
The council pursues the opportunities open to create additional Strategic and Bespoke SANG capacity with landowners and other council's with the sole purpose of securing SANG capacity to meet the requirements of the BLP SV at least to 2033. **The recommended option.**	Strategic and bespoke SANG arrangements are possible given the opportunities currently before the council; this would give a clear strategy for SANG delivery to support BLPSV development for the plan period.
The council pursues only one option to secure additional SANG capacity. **Not the recommended option.**	This option would come with the risk that this is not achieved and the requirement to mitigate the impact of residential development cannot be met which results in a moratorium on development in the part of the Borough within 5km of the TBH SPA until an alternative solution is found.
The council does not pursue any option to secure additional SANG capacity. **Not the recommended option.**	This option would introduce some uncertainty around the delivery of development within the 5km zone from 2023 onwards and could result in a moratorium on development in this part of the Borough until an alternative solution is found.

2.8 In addition to the SANG capacity to be provided at Allen's Field through the BLPSV the council is seeking further capacity for developments allocated in the plan from year five onwards. Discussions with landowners are taking place on this basis, in confidence. The larger the land area then the greater amount of development that could potentially be mitigated (assuming very limited existing public access), also the greater the extent of influence (catchment) from the SANG which would mitigate schemes over 10 dwellings wherever these are in RBWM. If the influence of the SANG extended beyond the Borough boundary it might also be possible to consider releasing capacity to adjoining Boroughs.

2.9 Natural England has set locational and design criteria, including essential and desirable requirements, for the provision of SANG given that the purpose is to attract dog walkers away from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. These are set out in sections 2.10 to 2.12 below.

Locational criteria

2.10 Essential:

- A wholly new site or an enhancement of existing public open space if the site is currently underused and has substantial capacity to accommodate additional recreational activity or could be expanded, taking into account the availability of land and its potential for improvement.
- Be in a location where it will divert visitors especially dog walkers away from sections of SPA coast which are sensitive to additional human disturbance and where a significant increase in visitors is predicted.
- Be large enough to include a variety of paths which enable at least one circular walk of at least 5 km (approx. a 60 min walk).
- Be in a location where a SANG would be acceptable in terms of planning policy and traffic generation, and would not have an unacceptable impact on biodiversity e.g. a nature conservation site protected under a local or national designation.
- Be sufficiently large to be perceived as a cohesive semi-natural space, offering tranquillity, with little intrusion of artificial structures (except in the immediate vicinity of car parks) and with no unpleasant intrusions of other kinds e.g. wastewater treatment odours.

Criteria for design and facilities

2.11 Essential

- Includes a variety of paths which enable at least one circular walk of at least 2k.
- Includes adequate car parking for visitors with that car parking being well located in relation to the road network.
- Be clearly signed at access points and at key junctions on the surrounding road network, with an information panel at each access point which explains the layout of the SANG and the routes available to visitors.
- Access points for visitors arriving on foot must be well located in relation to nearby residential areas.
- Designed so that the SANG is perceived by users as a cohesive semi-natural space which is safe and easily navigable.
- Paths must be clearly discernible, well signposted/waymarked, and have firm, level, well drained surfaces (albeit unsealed to avoid any 'urban feel') in order to be useable throughout the winter.

- Movement within the SANG must be largely unrestricted, with plenty of space away from road traffic.
- Dogs are welcome and the majority of the sites is suitable for safe off-lead dog exercise.

2.12 Desirable:

- Car parking would be free of charge in the winter and preferably all year round.
- Has multiple access points and with car parking at each rather than in a single location.
- Incorporates innovative and attractive dog walking facilities such as dog activity trails, agility courses, enclosed off-lead training/exercise areas, dog washing facilities.

Practical arrangements

Allen's Field

2.13 The current strategic SANG at Allen's Field is leased to the council by a charitable trust on a 99 year lease to meet the requirements from Natural England that the SANG is secured in perpetuity. The council is responsible for the maintenance and management of the SANG and also bore the capital cost of the initial works required to layout the land to meet Natural England's requirements for a SANG. The freeholder receives payments from the council on the basis of a fixed sum per dwelling allocated to the SANG paid quarterly. There is a finite capacity, this is monitored by the council. The remaining capacity is around 210 dwellings. This capacity takes account of hard and soft commitments including applications already before the council but not yet determined but excluding developments over 50 units. The alternative approach would be to enter into a lease based on an external valuation of the land.

2.14 The council would anticipate an initial capital outlay and ongoing management costs for any new strategic SANG provision. This would need to be calculated. The council would then be required to establish the carrying capacity of the SANG by conducting a survey of usage of the land currently and an assessment of its capacity for recreational activity; this would be funded through capital in 2018/19. This would give the capacity of the SANG for the purposes of mitigating the impact of dwellings. The council would then be able to work out the income generated through contributions from developers which are paid on commencement. Subtracting the outlay and maintenance costs from the income would give a residual sum which would be allocated to the landowner. As this is at very early stages this information has not yet been collected, further work will continue following the cabinet decision. Planning permission would be required for the change of use of land to SANG and this report seeks authority to make a planning application in advance of the council securing any lease agreement together with covering the costs of making such an application.

Adjoining authorities

2.15 SANGs have a catchment area which extends beyond administrative boundaries which mean that development in some areas of the borough could be mitigated through alternative provision outside the borough. Officers are in contact with adjoining authorities to discuss this option and delegated authority is sought to pursue this arrangement including any legal, financial or lease agreements which the council would be required to be entered into to secure the arrangement.

Bespoke SANG opportunities

2.16 In relation to bespoke arrangements; permission for a bespoke SANG has already been given as part of the Heatherwood Hospital development in order to mitigate the residential development granted in outline as part of that planning consent. There is additional capacity to that required by the outline consent, the council sought to secure this additional capacity as part of the negotiation on the planning application; notwithstanding that the council does not control the capacity it is still available for a separate and private arrangement to be reached with the landowner. There is a current planning application at Sunningdale Park where a bespoke SANG is proposed which has significantly more capacity than that site alone requires and the council would want to secure that the additional SANG capacity may be controlled by the council through an appropriate mechanism.

2.17 The council, as local planning authority, currently has planning applications and appeals for sites located in the south of the Borough which require SANG mitigation. Developments which can pay financial contribution to strategic SANGs are usually under 109 dwellings but there are some exceptions. Development of 9 or fewer dwellings can make a contribution to any SANG irrespective of catchment distances. Developments of 10 or more dwellings have to be located within the catchment of a SANG. In the case of sites allocated for residential development in the BLPSV the planning application proposals seek a significant uplift above the site capacity allocated in the BLP.

3 KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 If the council was to continue to allow the use of strategic SANG capacity to mitigate these developments above plan allocation and unplanned development of over 10 dwellings located outside the defined settlement boundary then the available strategic SANG capacity would be significantly further reduced. The impact could be that Strategic SANG capacity which has been safeguarded for allocated sites in the BLPSV could be used up. This could result in sustainably located plan–led developments being put at risk of not being implemented in a timely manner or not at all.

3.2 Equally if a large number of SANGs were to come forward within the borough at a capacity which exceeded the required level of mitigation to 2033 there is a risk that the SANGs could not be appropriately managed in perpetuity as the monies collected would not cover the ongoing costs. Clearly there is a balance to be struck and the council is being proactive in SANG delivery.

Table 2: Key implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Lease arrangement to secure further Strategic SANG in RBWM in addition to Allen's Field extension.	January 2019	Lease signed by 31 December 2018	30 November 2018	1 November 2018	December 2018

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Capital Works identified to lay out land as Strategic SANG and SANG management plan produced.	January 2019	31 December 2018	30 November	1 November 2018	December 2018
Consultant procured to advise on SANG capacity.	October 2018	1 September 2018	1 August 2018	1 July 2018	September 2018
Additional Bespoke SANG secured through planning process.	January 2019	December 2018	November 2018	October 2018	December 2018
Arrangements in place with adjoining council to access additional strategic or bespoke SANG capacity.	January 2019	December 2018	November 2018	October 2018	December 2018

4 FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1 The initial work can be met from existing budgets. The next stage is commissioning consultants to carry out work to identify SANG capacity, set out a SANG proposal, cost it and then prepare a SANG management plan. The work would be conducted in year using capital funds for infrastructure delivery. The cost of any valuations required would be met from the same capital fund.

4.2 The expected income from the provision of SANG would be either passed on to the landowner or retained by the council in order to fund the ongoing management and maintenance of the land as SANG in perpetuity. A planning application would need to be made for any land proposed as new Strategic SANG which would involve a cost in preparing a planning application and paying the required fee, it is anticipated that this would also be met from capital funds.

4.3 At this stage it is anticipated that forward funding of the laying out of the land as SANG would be required. This aspect of the project will require a capital bid in 2019/20 or

necessitate forward funding from an alternative source: it is estimated that a new strategic SANG could involve a capital outlay of up to £250,000.

Table 3: Financial impact of report's recommendations

REVENUE	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Addition	£0	£0	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0
Net impact	£0	£0	£0

CAPITAL			
Addition	£0	£250,000	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0
Net impact	£0	£250,000	£0

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The council is able to set up and manage strategic and bespoke SANG to mitigate the impact of residential development within 5km of the TBH SPA, this is achieved through the planning process using section 106 agreements. In addition the council is required to demonstrate how the BLP SV will be supported in its delivery through the provision of SANG to meet capacity needed from 2023 onwards.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 4: Impact of risk and mitigation

Risks	**Uncontrolled Risk**	**Controls**	**Controlled Risk**
The council is unable to secure additional SANG capacity.	HIGH	The council pursues more than one option to provide SANG capacity within the borough and alternative options outside the borough.	LOW
The council refuses planning applications which seek to rely on SANG capacity thus preventing allocated sites from coming forward.	MEDIUM	Officers are authorised to act in this way and to support the BLP SV.	LOW
The council has costs awarded against it at	MEDIUM	The council pursue the	LOW

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
appeal for failing to bring forward SANG capacity.		provision of additional SANG.	
Appeals for housing within the 5km zone are allowed which utilise more SANG capacity than planned for in the BLPSV thus reducing the ability to meet the needs of allocated and windfall sites which the Inspector identifies as a soundness issue.	MEDIUM	The council actively pursues all options for the provision of additional SANG.	LOW

7 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

7.1 Should the council secure land as SANG through a lease agreement there will be an addition to the assets that the souncil manages and maintains and there will be a requirement to manage the land in accordance with a SANG management plan. Monies secured through Section 111 agreement under the Local Government Act will have to be monitored to ensure that payments are made at the appropriate time in the planning process and that the necessary payments are passed to the landowner and SAMM payments to Hampshire County Council for wider monitoring of the SPA. This introduces additional work for the section 106 monitoring officer.

7.2 An EQIA scoping assessment has been completed, an EQIA is not required.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The report will be considered by Planning and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel in June 2018, comments will be reported to Cabinet.

9 TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 The council has more than one opportunity currently for ensuring delivery of SANG to mitigate the impact of residential development in the borough: as this report sets out all available opportunities are being explored, not all will be needed.

Table 5: Implementation timetable

Date	Details
By 30 June 2018	Initial meetings with all landowners to be held to establish basis of work, in principle before costs are incurred.
To be commissioned by 1 September 2018 to undertake work by 31 December 2018.	Consultant procured to advise on SANG capacity.
By 1 August 2018.	Meeting with adjoining authority.
By 31 March 2019	Planning application to be prepared, including plans and SANG management plan, and submission made for new SANG (if required)

9.2 Implementation date if not called in: Immediately.

10 APPENDICES

- None.

11 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 The Council has an adopted Supplementary Planning Document on this matter which can be found at https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201039/non-development_plan/494/supplementary_planning_documents/1

11.2 Further relevant documents are contained in the BLP Submission section on the website including the BLPSV, the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitat Regulations Assessment. https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200209/planning_policy

12 CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

Name of consultee	Post held	Date issued for comment	Date returned with comments
Cllr Coppinger	Lead Member for Planning	25.05.18	29.5.18
Alison Alexander	Managing Director	25.05.18	30.05.18
Russell O'Keefe	Executive Director	25.05.18	26.05.18
Andy Jeffs	Executive Director	25.05.18	30.05.18
Rob Stubbs	Section 151 Officer	18.05.18	24.05.18
Nikki Craig	Head of HR and Corporate Projects	25.05.18	29.05.18
Louisa Dean	Communications	25.05.18	29.05.18
Marc Turner	Natural England	18.05.18	29.05.18

REPORT HISTORY

Decision type: Key decision	**Urgency item?** No	**To Follow item?** No
Report Author: Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning		

Appendix D: European Site Conservation Objectives

Burnham Beeches SAC

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 qualifying natural habitats;
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.

Qualifying Features:

- H9120: Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrublayer (*Quericon robori-petraeae* or *Ilici-Fagenion*); Beech forests on acid soils.

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

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 qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying natural species;
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- The structure and the function of the habitats of the 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.

Qualifying Features:

- H6120: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*); Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone;
- H9130: *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests; Beech forests on neutral to rich soils; and
- S1083: *Lucanus cervus*; Stag beetle.

South West London Waterbodies SPA

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.

Qualifying features:

- A051: *Anas strepera*; Gadwall (Non-breeding); and
- A056: *Anas clypeata*; Northern shoveler (Non-breeding).

South West London Waterbodies Ramsar

Ramsar sites do not have the Conservation Objectives in the same way as SPAs and SACs. Information regarding the designation of Ramsar sites is contained in INCC Ramsar Information Sheets. Ramsar Criteria are the criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance. The relevant criteria and ways in which this site meets the criteria are presented in the table below.

<table>
<tr><th>Ramsar Criterion</th><th>Justification for the application of each criterion</th></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.
<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Qualifying species/populations (as identified at designation): Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Northern shoveler, Anus clypeata, Northwest and Central Europe</td><td>397 individuals, representing an average of 2.6% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Species with peak counts in winter:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gadwall, Anas strepera strepera, Northwest Europe</td><td>487 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Thames Basin Heaths SPA

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.

Qualifying features:

- A224: *Caprimulgus europaeus*; European nightjar (Breeding);
- A246: *Lullula arborea*; Woodlark (Breeding); and

- A302: *Sylvia undata*; Dartford warbler (Breeding).

Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC

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.

Qualifying Features:

- H4010: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath;
- H4030: European dry heaths; and
- H7150: Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*.

Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC

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 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.

Qualifying Features:

- H9120: Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrub layer (*Quercion robori-petraeae* or *Ilici-Fagenion*); Beech forests on acid soils;
- H9190: Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains; Dry oak-dominated woodland; and
- S1079: *Limoniscus violaceus*; Violet click beetle.

Appendix E: Site of Special Scientific Interest Condition Data

European Site	No. of SSSI Units	Conservation Status of SSSI Units[1]
Burnham Beeches SAC	4	3/4 Favourable 1/4 Unfavourable – recovering
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	31	23/31 Favourable 8/31 Unfavourable – recovering
South West London Waterbodies SPA	18	14/18 Favourable 3/18 Unfavourable – recovering 1/18 Unfavourable - declining
South West London Waterbodies Ramsar		
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	126	55/126 Favourable 59/126 Unfavourable – recovering 7/126 Unfavourable – no change 5/126 Unfavourable – declining
Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC	94	58/94 Favourable 32/94 Unfavourable – recovering 2/94 Unfavourable – no change 2/94 Unfavourable – declining
Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC	22	22/22 Favourable

[1] Natural England. IRX https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/. Site condition data is provided for the SSSIs which legally underpin the European designation [Date Accessed: 23.09.19].

Appendix F: Threats and Pressures

Table F.1: *Pressures and threats for European sites that may be affected by the Local Plan. Boxes with a cross indicate the site is vulnerable to that particular threat/pressure, but the individual qualifying features under threat/pressure have not been identified (applicable to data provided by Natura 2000 data forms).*

		European sites					
		Burnham Beeches (SAC)	Chilterns Beechwoods (SAC)	South West London Waterbodies (SPA & Ramsar)	Thames Basin Heaths (SPA)	Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham (SAC)	Windsor Forest & Great Park (SAC)
Data from SIPs and Natura 2000 (NK2) data forms	Air Pollution	All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)	All qualifying features (SIP)		All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)	All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)	H9120 Beech forests on acid soils, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland (SIP + N2K)
	Changes in species distributions		S1083 Stag beetle (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)			
	Deer	All qualifying features (SIP)	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils (SIP)				
	Disease		H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils (SIP)				H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland (SIP)

	Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown				All qualifying features (SIP)		
	Fisheries: Fish stocking			All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)			
	Forestry and woodland management		H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils (SIP + N2K)		All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)
	Habitat fragmentation	All qualifying features (SIP)			All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	
	Hydrological changes					H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H7150 Depressions on peat substrates (SIP)	
	Inappropriate scrub control				All qualifying features (SIP)	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath,	

						H4030 European dry heaths (SIP)	
	Inappropriate weed control			All qualifying features (SIP)			
	Invasive species	All qualifying features (SIP)	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils (SIP + N2K)	All qualifying features (SIP + N2K)		H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths (SIP)	H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, S1079 Violet click beetle (SIP + N2K)
	Military				All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	
	Natural changes to site conditions			All qualifying features (SIP)			
	Public access/ disturbance	All qualifying features (SIP)	S1083 Stag beetle (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)		
	Species decline	All qualifying features (SIP)					

	Undergrazing				All qualifying features (SIP)	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths (SIP)	
	Wildfire/ arson				All qualifying features (SIP)	All qualifying features (SIP)	
Data from Natura 2000 data forms only	Abiotic (slow) natural processes			x			
	Biocenoitic evolution succession				x	x	
	Changes in biotic conditions	x		x			
	Grazing					x	
	Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions					x	
	Interspecific floral relations		x				x

	Other ecosystem modifications	x					
	Other human intrusions and disturbances				x	x	
	Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities	x		x	x		
	Problematic native species	x	x				

Ecological Services

Green Infrastructure

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Sustainability Appraisal

LEPUS CONSULTING

LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

1 Bath Street Cheltenham GL50 1YE
T: 01242 525222
E: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com
W: www.lepusconsulting.com
CHELTENHAM