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HRA of the Single Issue Review of Forest Heath Core Strategy Policy CS7 Overall Housing Provision and Distribution (Modification stage)

Prepared by LUC
April 2018

Project Title: HRA of the Single Issue Review of Forest Heath Core Strategy Policy CS7 Overall Housing Provision and Distribution (Modification stage)

Client: AECOM on behalf of Forest Heath District Council

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Planning & EIA
Design
Landscape Planning
Landscape Management
Ecology
Mapping & Visualisation

LUC LONDON
43 Chalton Street
London
NW1 1JD
T +44 (0)20 7383 5784
london@landuse.co.uk

Offices also in:
Bristol
Glasgow
Edinburgh



Land Use Consultants Ltd
Registered in England
Registered number: 2549296
Registered Office:
43 Chalton Street
London NW1 1JD
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 LUC has been contracted by AECOM on behalf of Forest Heath District Council to carry out the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Single Issue Review (SIR) of Core Strategy Policy CS7 Overall Housing Provision and Distribution. This report documents the results of the HRA of the modification version of the SIR.

Background to the Forest Heath SIR and SALP

- 1.2 The Core Strategy is the strategic document which provides an overall vision and framework for the growth of Forest Heath, underpinned by the principle of sustainability. It was adopted in May 2010 and is part of Forest Heath's Development Plan, a suite of planning documents that will (once fully adopted) replace the council's Local Plan (1995) saved policies, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF (2012)).
- 1.3 The SIR of Core Strategy Policy CS7 was prompted by a successful High Court challenge. This resulted in the majority of Policy CS7 and elements of CS1, CS13 and para 3.12.2 being revoked from the Adopted Core Strategy. The SIR will replace Core Strategy Policy CS7 in its entirety and as such no changes to Policies CS1, CS13 or paragraph 3.12.1 are required.
- 1.4 When considered against national policy, the remaining parts of the 2010 Core Strategy still provide an appropriate strategy for the district to the 2031 and are therefore not part of this review of the Local Plan.
- 1.5 Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils, working together as West Suffolk, produced a Joint Development Management Policies Document that was adopted in 2015. This document provides policies that guide and inform development proposals in both authorities' areas.
- 1.6 The SIR has been prepared in parallel with the Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP). Once the SIR and SALP are adopted, Forest Heath's Development Plan will therefore comprise the documents set out in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Forest Heath's Development Plan



The need for HRA

- 1.7 The requirement to undertake HRA of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in 2007 (1); the currently applicable version of the Habitats Regulations came into force in November 2017 (2). When preparing its Local Plan, FHDC is therefore required by law to carry out an HRA although consultants can undertake the HRA on its behalf. 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.
- 1.8 HRA refers to the assessment of the potential effects of a development plan on one or more European sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):
- SACs are designated under the European Habitats Directive (3) and target particular habitat types (Annex 1) and species (Annex II). The listed habitat types and species (excluding birds) are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level.
 - SPAs are classified in accordance with Article 4(1) of the European Union Birds Directive for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed in Annex I of the Directive), and under Article 4(2) for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I.
- 1.9 Potential SPAs (pSPAs)¹, candidate SACs (cSACs)², Sites of Community Importance (SCIs)³ and Ramsar sites should also be included in the assessment.

¹ Potential SPAs are sites that have been approved by the Minister for formal consultation but not yet proposed to the European Commission, as listed on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/special-protection-areas).

² Candidate SACs are sites that have been submitted to the European Commission, but not yet formally adopted, as listed on the JNCC's [SAC list](https://www.jncc.gov.uk/index/special-area-of-conservation).

³ SCIs are sites that have been adopted by the European Commission but not yet formally designated as SACs by the UK Government.

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

- 1.10 For ease of reference during HRA, these designations can be collectively referred to as European sites⁴ despite Ramsar designations being at the international level.

Stages of HRA

- 1.11 The HRA of development plans is undertaken in stages (as described below) and should conclude whether or not a proposal would adversely affect the integrity of the European site in question.
- 1.12 The HRA should be undertaken by the 'competent authority', in this case Forest Heath District Council, and LUC has been commissioned by AECOM to do this on the Council's behalf. The HRA also requires close working with Natural England as the statutory nature conservation body⁵ in order to obtain the necessary information, agree the process, outcomes and mitigation proposals. The Environment Agency, while not a statutory consultee for the HRA, is also in a strong position to provide advice and information throughout the process as it is required to undertake HRA for its existing licences and future licensing of activities.

Requirements of the Habitats Regulations

- 1.13 In assessing the effects of a Local Plan in accordance with Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, there are potentially two tests to be applied by the competent authority: a 'Significance Test', followed if necessary by an Appropriate Assessment which would inform the 'Integrity Test'. The relevant sequence of questions is as follows:
- 1.14 Step 1: Under Reg. 105(1)(b), consider whether the plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites. If not, as is the case for the Forest Heath SIR and SALP, proceed to Step 2.
- 1.15 Step 2: Under Reg. 105(1)(a) consider whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects (the 'Significance Test'). If yes, proceed to Step 3.

[Steps 1 and 2 are undertaken as part of Stage 1: HRA Screening in Table 1.1.]

- 1.16 Step 3: Under Reg. 105(1), make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the European site in view of its current conservation objectives (the 'Integrity Test'). In so doing, it is mandatory under Reg. 105(2) to consult Natural England, and optional under Reg. 105(3) to take the opinion of the general public.

[This step is undertaken during Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment shown in Table 1.1.]

- 1.17 Step 4: In accordance with Reg. 105(4), but subject to Reg. 107, give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that the plan would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
- 1.18 Step 5: Under Reg. 107, if Step 4 is unable to rule out adverse effects on the integrity of a European site and no alternative solutions exist then the competent authority may nevertheless agree to the plan or project if it must be carried out for 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI).

Typical stages

- 1.19 Table 1.1 summarises the stages and associated tasks and outcomes typically involved in carrying out a full HRA, based on various guidance documents (4) (5) (6).

⁴ The term 'Natura 2000 sites' can also be used interchangeably with 'European sites' in the context of HRA, although the latter term is used throughout this report.

⁵ Regulation 5 of the Habitats Regulations 2017.

Table 1.1 Stages of HRA

| Stage | Task | Outcome |
|---|--|---|
| Stage 1: HRA Screening | Description of the development plan. Identification of potentially affected European sites and factors contributing to their integrity. Review of other plans and projects. Assessment of likely significant effects of the development plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects. | Where effects are unlikely, prepare a 'finding of no significant effect report'. Where effects judged likely, or lack of information to prove otherwise, proceed to Stage 2. |
| Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment (where Stage 1 does not rule out likely significant effects) | Information gathering (development plan and European Sites). Impact prediction. Evaluation of development plan impacts in view of conservation objectives. Where impacts are considered to affect qualifying features, identify how these effects will be avoided through avoidance or mitigation. | Appropriate assessment report describing the plan, European site baseline conditions, the adverse effects of the plan on the European site, how these effects will be avoided through avoidance or mitigation, including the mechanisms and timescale for these mitigation measures. If effects remain after all alternatives and mitigation measures have been considered proceed to Stage 3. |
| Stage 3: Assessment where no alternatives exist and adverse impacts remain taking into account mitigation | Identify 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI). Demonstrate no alternatives exist. Identify potential compensatory measures. | This stage should be avoided if at all possible. The test of IROPI and the requirements for compensation are extremely onerous. |

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

HRA work carried out previously

- 1.21 The issues surrounding the potential effects of development in Forest Heath District and neighbouring districts on European sites have been heavily studied and these studies have informed an extensive body of previous HRA work including the HRA of the Forest Heath Core Strategy (7). That HRA was subject to extensive consultation with Natural England and other stakeholders (notably the RSPB) in order to reach agreement on a suitable approach. We have taken this previous body of work as the starting point in formulating the assumptions to be made in carrying out the HRA of the SIR. We have also reviewed further relevant information that has been published since that HRA was carried out and considered, in consultation with Natural England, whether this suggests a need to amend the previously adopted approach.
- 1.22 HRA reports were produced to accompany the August-October 2015 consultation on the 'Issues and Options' version of the SIR, the April-July 2016 consultation on the 'Preferred Options' version, and the January-March 2017 consultation on the 'Proposed Submission' version. A number of consultation comments were received on the HRA during each of these stages of consultation and these are documented in Appendix 3, along with LUC's responses to them.

- 1.23 The main changes to the HRA since the Proposed Submission version are summarised in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Main changes to HRA of SIR vs. Proposed Submission version dated 6/1/2017

| Summary of change | Reason for change |
|---|--|
| Added 'in-combination effects section to each screening assessment in Chapters 5 & 6 and each appropriate assessment in Chapter 7 (these include consideration of effects from Forest Heath Core Strategy that was described in the Examination paper on this subject) and added review of Forest Heath Core Strategy to Appendix 1 | To make explicit how potential in-combination effects have been taken into account in assessing each type of potential effect of the SIR. |
| In addition to the 7.5 km zone of influence around non-farmland areas of Breckland SPA for recreation pressure, added a 1.5 km zone of influence around farmland areas of Breckland SPA and stone curlew nesting attempts area | To respond to Natural England's consultation comments and recognise that most recreational visits to farmland areas of the SPA are likely to be on foot. |
| Reviewed and amended assessment of 'disturbance from roads' effects | To reflect amendments to Transport Study for main modifications |
| Reviewed and amended assessment of 'water quantity' and 'water quality' effects | To reflect amendments to Water Cycle Study for main modifications |
| Added table of responses to representations on Reg. 19 stage HRA | To provide audit trail of responses to consultation comments |
| Updated review of other plans and projects | To ensure in combination assessment is as up to date as possible |

Structure of the HRA report

- 1.24 This chapter has introduced the background to the production of the Forest Heath SIR and the requirement to undertake HRA. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 2: The Single Issue Review (SIR) of Core Strategy Policy CS7** summarises the content of the SIR document which is the subject of this HRA report.
 - **Chapter 3: HRA Screening methodology** outlines the approach to identifying 'likely significant effects', identifies the European sites potentially affected by the SIR (detailed information is provided in Appendix 2) and considers the other plans and projects with which the SIR could act in combination to have a significant effect on a European site.
 - **Chapter 4: Information used and assumptions made in the HRA** identifies the potential effects which the SIR could have on European sites, summarises information relevant to assessing each of them and states the assumptions made in carrying out the HRA.
 - **Chapter 5: HRA Screening of overall housing provision** assesses the potential for the total amount of housing provided by SIR Policy CS7 to have likely significant effects on European sites.
 - **Chapter 6: HRA Screening of broad distribution of housing** assesses the potential for the broad distribution of housing provided by SIR Policy CS7 to have likely significant effects on European sites.
 - **Chapter 7: Appropriate Assessment** considers whether any of the potential likely significant effects identified in the HRA Screening could have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
 - **Chapter 8: Conclusion** sets out the overall conclusion of the HRA of the SIR.

2 The Single Issue Review (SIR) of Core Strategy Policy CS7

- 2.1 The SIR document that is the subject of this HRA Report contains a single policy, CS7 Overall housing provision and distribution, which will replace the corresponding policy in the adopted Core Strategy. The policy is reproduced in full below for ease of reference.

Policy CS7 Overall housing provision and distribution

Provision

To meet Forest Heath's full and objectively assessed need for housing, provision is made for at least 6800 new dwellings (net) and associated infrastructure to be delivered in the period 2011 to 2031.

Broad Distribution

Development will be brought forward in line with the broad distribution of housing as set out below:

| Settlement | Existing completions and commitments (2011-2017) | Additional provision | Totals |
|------------------|--|----------------------|--------|
| Brandon | 103 | 33 | 136 |
| Mildenhall | 193 | 1406 | 1599 |
| Newmarket | 386 | 704 | 1090 |
| Lakenheath | 105 | 663 | 768 |
| Red Lodge | 1081 | 705 | 1786 |
| Primary Villages | 1129 | 357 | 1486 |
| Other* | 181 | - | 181 |
| Windfall | - | 225 | 225 |
| TOTALS | 3178 | 4093 | 7271 |

*Other includes completions and commitments within rural areas, secondary villages and small settlements.

To deliver the broad distribution outlined above, sites will be identified through the Site Allocations Local Plan and/or neighbourhood plans.

3 HRA Screening methodology

- 3.1 The Habitats Regulations do not prescribe a particular methodology for carrying out the appraisal of a plan, or how to report the outcome. In the continuing absence of finalised Government guidance, the former DCLG's 2006 consultation paper on Appropriate Assessment of Plans (5) remains the principal official guidance. We have also had regard to other guidance of relevance to the HRA of land use plans (4) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12).
- 3.2 HRA Screening of the SIR document has been undertaken in line with this and seeks to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

Assessment of 'likely significant effects' of the SIR

- 3.3 As required under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 an assessment has been undertaken of the 'likely significant effects' of the SIR document.
- 3.4 The assumptions made and information used during the HRA Screening in reaching conclusions about likely significant effects on European sites are set out in Chapter 4.
- 3.5 The tasks carried out as part of the HRA Screening are summarised in Table 1.1 (Stage 1). They are described more fully along with their results in Chapter 5 (for the SIR overall housing provision) and Chapter 6 (for the SIR broad distribution of housing). The following colour scheme was used to record the potential for likely significant effects, prior to mitigation:

| | |
|-------|--|
| Amber | The potential for likely significant effects from the policy provision cannot be ruled out – consider existing mitigation and proceed to Appropriate Assessment if likely significant effects remain |
| Green | Likely significant effects from the policy provision can be ruled out – consideration of existing mitigation and Appropriate Assessment not required |

- 3.6 When carrying out the HRA Screening, particular consideration was given to the possible pathways through which effects may be transmitted to features contributing to the integrity of the European sites.

Interpretation of 'likely significant effect'

- 3.7 Relevant case law helps to interpret when effects should be considered as a 'likely significant effect', when carrying out HRA of a land use plan.
- 3.8 In the Waddenzee case⁶, the European Court of Justice ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (transposed by Reg. 102 in the Habitats Regulations), including that:
- an effect should be considered 'likely', "*if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on the site*" (para 44);
 - an effect should be considered 'significant', "*if it undermines the conservation objectives*" (para 48); and
 - where a plan or project has an effect on a site "*but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned*" (para 47).
- 3.9 Another opinion delivered to the Court of Justice of the European Union⁷ commented that:

⁶ ECJ Case C-127/02 "Waddenzee" Jan 2004.

"The requirement that an 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."

- 3.10 This opinion (the 'Sweetman' case) therefore allows for the authorisation of plans and projects whose possible effects, alone or in combination, can be considered 'trivial' or *de minimis*; referring to such cases as those "that have no appreciable effect on the site". In practice such effects could be screened out as having no likely significant effect; they would be 'insignificant'.
- 3.11 Based on the above, a risk-based approach involving the application of the precautionary principle was adopted in the assessment, such that a conclusion of 'no likely significant effect' was only reached where it was considered unlikely, based on current knowledge and the information available, that a SIR policy provision would have a significant effect on a European site.

European sites

- 3.12 This section identifies and describes the European sites that could be affected by the SIR.
- 3.13 It is common practice in HRA screening to define a buffer around the plan area as a starting point to identifying European sites to be examined and this approach has been accepted by Natural England elsewhere. This reflects the fact that development-related activities such as water abstraction, waste water discharge, air pollution from traffic, and increased recreation can have effects well beyond the Plan area. Some of these European sites may then be scoped out or more distant ones added, depending on the pathways that exist for potentially significant effects to occur.
- 3.14 A precautionary buffer distance of 20 km was used to reflect evidence from studies in other parts of the country that coastal sites or large tracts of semi-natural habitat can attract a relatively high proportion of residents from up to 20 km away from the site. This encompasses seven SACs, two SPAs, and four Ramsar sites that lie entirely or partly within 20 km of the Forest Heath District boundary, as follows:
- SACs: Breckland, Devil's Dyke, Rex Graham Reserve, Fenland, Norfolk Valley Fens, Ouse Washes, Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens;
 - SPAs: Breckland, Ouse Washes; and
 - Ramsar sites: Chippenham Fen, Ouse Washes, Redgrave and South Lopham Fens, Wicken Fen.
- 3.15 The locations of these European sites in relation to the Forest Heath District boundary are shown in Figure 3.1.
- 3.16 The HRA also considers the potential for effects on the three additional, more distant European sites in the area of The Wash since the District's main rivers drain into them and their qualifying features include ones which are sensitive to deterioration in water quality.
- 3.17 The list of sites within the 20 km buffer has been further adjusted by screening out Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. The three sites which make up this SAC are located right on the eastern edge of the 20 km buffer. Overall the sites are unlikely to attract significantly increased numbers of visitors due to their location. They are upstream of any development which will occur in Forest Heath and it is understood that water abstraction and wastewater discharges for developments in Forest Heath will not affect this European site.
- 3.18 Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site was also screened out at earlier stages of HRA. This site is overlies part of the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC and lies on the eastern edge of the 20 km buffer. Although the site has a visitor centre and is relatively well known, it is unlikely that development in Forest Heath will result in significantly increased visitor numbers due to the site's distance from the District, and the existence of alternative

⁷ Advocate General's Opinion to CJEU in Case C-258/11 *Sweetman and others v An Bord Pleanála* 22nd Nov 2012.

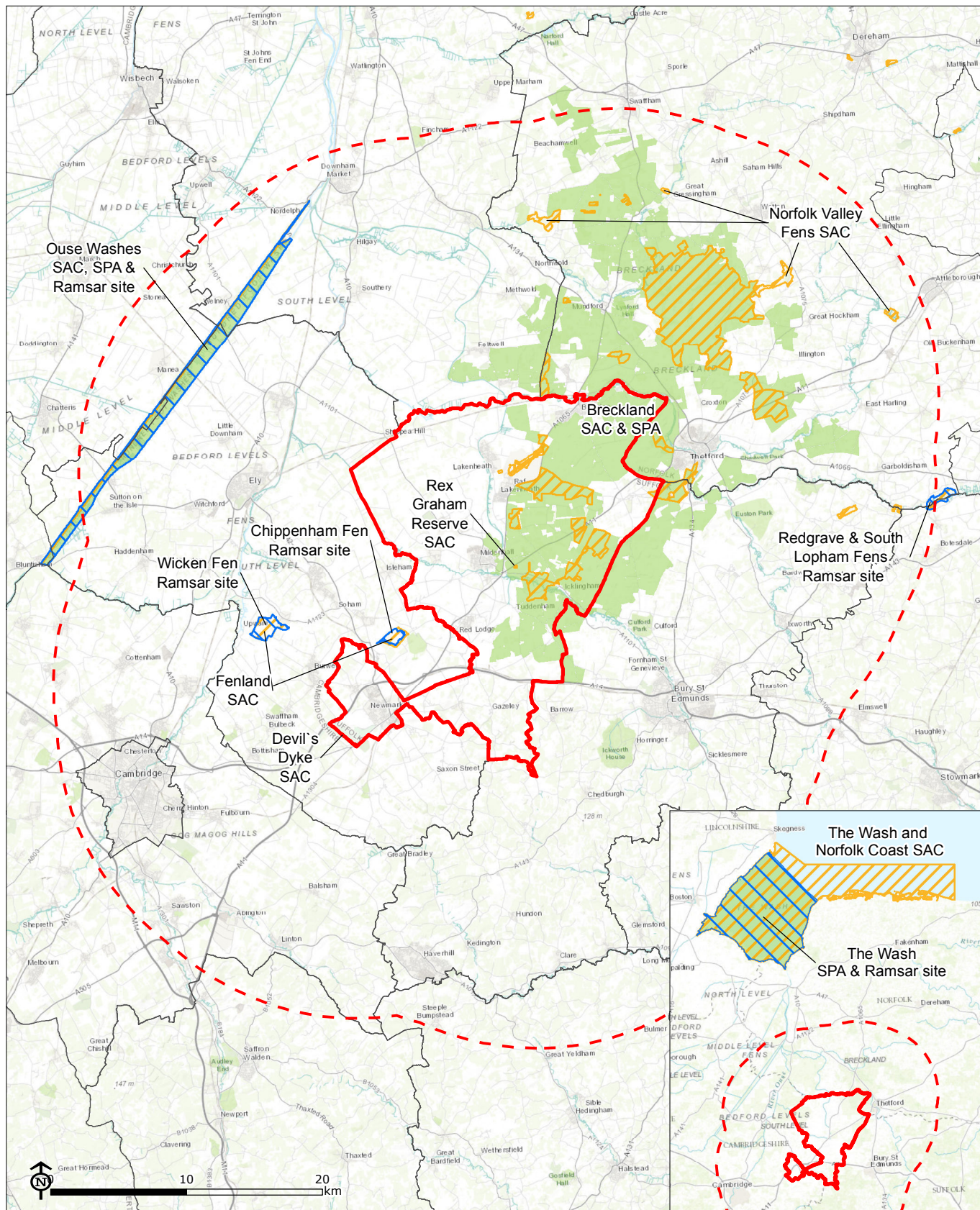
recreational areas closer to or within Forest Heath District, such as large parts of the extensive Thetford Forest. Whilst the SAC is upstream of Forest Heath it was screened in for the HRA of the SIR because it was identified by the latest Forest Heath Water Cycle Strategy as being potentially impacted by water quantity or water quality (including sewer flooding) issues.

- 3.19 The HRA of the SIR therefore considered the European sites set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 European sites scoped into the HRA

| SAC | SPA | Ramsar site |
|--|-------------|---|
| Sites lying wholly or partly within Forest Heath District | | |
| Breckland Devil's Dyke Rex Graham Reserve | Breckland | - |
| Sites lying outside Forest Heath District but wholly or partly within 20 km of its boundary | | |
| Fenland Norfolk Valley Fens Ouse Washes | Ouse Washes | Chippenham Fen Ouse Washes Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Wicken Fen |
| Sites lying entirely beyond 20 km of the Forest Heath District boundary but scoped into HRA due to hydrological connection | | |
| The Wash and North Norfolk Coast | The Wash | The Wash |

- 3.20 Appropriate information to inform HRA Screening of the scoped-in European sites is set out in Appendix 2. This covers a narrative description of the site, a summary of the reasons for its designation as a European site, notes on its current condition, threats and reasons for adverse conditions, and conservation objectives.



- Forest Heath District Boundary
- 20km Buffer
- District Boundary
- Ramsar Site
- SAC
- SPA

Forest Heath Local Plan
HRA

Figure 3.1
European Sites Scoped
into the HRA

Source: JNCC, Natural England



Map Scale @ A4: 1:400,000

Review of other plans and projects for 'in combination' effects

Regulatory requirements and guidance

- 3.21 Regulation 105 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (2) requires an Appropriate Assessment of "any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects".
- 3.22 Natural England provided the Council with the following guidance on this requirement:
- "The alone or in combination requirement has been included in the Directive and Regulations in order to make sure that the effects of numerous small activities, which alone would not result in a significant effect, are assessed to determine whether their combined effect would be significant, and therefore require more detailed assessment. It is only the effects of those plans and projects that are not themselves significant alone which are added into an in combination assessment. The assessment should only include those that genuinely result in a combined effect, which impairs the ability of an interest feature to meet its conservation objectives.*
- In combination assessment should include all plans or projects that have consent or authorisation but are not yet complete, and those that are the subject of an application for consent or authorisation, but are not yet determined. The following list outlines the types of plans and projects that should be considered for an in combination assessment:*
- the incomplete or non-implemented parts of plans or projects that have already commenced;*
 - plans or projects given consent or given effect but not yet started;*
 - plans or projects currently subject to an application for consent or proposed to be given effect;*
 - projects that are the subject of an outstanding appeal;*
 - ongoing plans or projects that are the subject of regular review;*
 - any draft plans being prepared by any public body; and*
 - any proposed plans or projects published for consultation prior to application."*

Approach adopted in the HRA of the SIR

- 3.23 The principles described above have been applied by first identifying relevant other plans for the in combination assessment. A large number of plan and strategy documents could potentially be considered. We focussed our attention on the SALP being developed in parallel with the SIR plus county and district level strategic plans which provide for development in Forest Heath and adjacent districts (including the policies of the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy that are not being reviewed by the SIR), and reviewed the findings of any associated HRA work for these plans, where available.
- 3.24 To identify other projects which could result in a significant combined effect with the SIR, we reviewed the National Infrastructure Planning website. In addition, the Council was asked whether it was aware of any such projects. This revealed a number of projects which had not yet been developed but for which planning consent had been sought from FHDC or in relation to which the Council has published an EIA scoping request for consultation. These are not included as allocations in the SALP but were judged large enough to present a credible risk that they might have significant effects in combination with the SIR and SALP. The plans and projects reviewed are set out in Appendix 1 with the exception of the emerging SALP, the provisions of which are summarised in the separate HRA report being produced in parallel with this one and which have been referenced where relevant throughout the HRA of the SIR.
- 3.25 The review of other relevant projects proceeded as follows.
- 3.26 Where project level HRA Screening has been unable to rule out likely significant effects, then the project cannot proceed in its current form until Appropriate Assessment rules out adverse effects

on integrity. At that point, the Appropriate Assessment will need to consider the potential for the project to have effects in combination with other plans and projects, including the SIR and SALP.

- 3.27 Where project level HRA Screening has been carried out and likely significant effects have been ruled out or project level Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and adverse effects on integrity have been ruled out, a check was made to determine whether any effects were identified by the project level HRA which were judged to be minor but which could combine with minor effects of the SIR and SALP and other plans and projects considered in the in combination assessment to become significant.
- 3.28 Where a project has not yet advanced sufficiently through the planning process for project level HRA Screening to have been carried out, there is insufficient publicly available information to consider it in the in combination assessment. Once the project advances to a stage where project level HRA Screening is carried out, that HRA will need to consider the potential for project to have effects in combination with other plans and projects, including the SIR and SALP.
- 3.29 Where planning consent had been sought but the Council determined that project level HRA Screening was not required, it was assumed that the project would not contribute to in combination effects.

Findings of review of other plans and projects

- 3.30 The review of other relevant plans (see Appendix 1) revealed a number of potential effects on the European sites scoped into the HRA of the SIR, for example recreation pressure from the development provided for by Breckland Core Strategy on Breckland SAC/SPA. However, in each case the HRA of that plan was able to reach a conclusion of no likely significant effects after taking into account mitigation.

No residual effects of other plans which required consideration in combination with those of the SIR were identified since the iterative operation of the HRA process alongside the plan-making process ensured that each plan mitigated any additional pressure it could place on European sites.

- 3.31 The review of other relevant projects (see Appendix 1) revealed some potential residual minor effects on the stone curlew population of Breckland SPA from development proposals at Lakenheath. However, as discussed in Appendix 1, Natural England has already ruled out the possibility of significant in combination effects on Breckland SPA from the development proposed by the SIR and SALP and those listed within the in combination assessment.

Significant effects in combination with other projects were therefore ruled out.

4 Information used and assumptions made in the HRA

Potential effects

- 4.1 Based on an examination of the designated features of the European sites scoped into this HRA and the nature of activities provided for by the SIR, the following types of potential effect on European sites were considered:
- direct loss or physical damage due to construction;
 - disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings;
 - disturbance from construction or operation of roads;
 - recreational pressure;
 - water quantity;
 - water quality; and
 - air quality.
- 4.2 This chapter summarises information relevant to each of these potential effects, drawing on the HRA work previously undertaken in the District as well as more recent evidence. Based on this evidence, the approach taken and assumptions made in carrying out the HRA Screening of the SIR (prior to consideration of mitigation) are then described. The approach to the Appropriate Assessment stage of the HRA is described alongside the results of that assessment in Chapter 7.
- 4.3 As explained under each type of effect, the potential for some types of effect is most appropriately assessed by reference to the total amount of housing development being proposed, as set out in the 'Provision' section of the SIR. Other types of effect are more appropriately assessed by reference to the amount of development proposed at broad locations (as set out in the 'Broad Distribution' section of the SIR) or by reference to the specific development sites being allocated (as set out in the HRA of the SALP document being prepared and consulted on in parallel with the SIR). In some cases, although the potential effect was most appropriately assessed at a detailed scale, it was necessary to rule out the possibility that a likely significant effect could not be avoided under any conceivable spatial distribution of the housing provision, leading to assessment of the effect at more than one scale.
- 4.4 Table 4.1 summarises the scale/ level in the planning process at which each of the types of potential effect listed above has been assessed. If detailed examination of evidence during HRA of the SIR revealed any issues specific to individual sites rather than the broad distribution of sites, these were flagged for inclusion in the HRA of the SALP on an exception basis.

Table 4.1 Scale at which each type of potential effect was assessed

| Potential effect | HRA of SIR overall housing provision | HRA of SIR Broad distribution of housing | HRA of individual site allocations in the SALP |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Direct loss or physical damage due to construction | | | ✓ |
| Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Disturbance from construction or operation of roads | | ✓ | |
| Recreation pressure | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Water quantity | | ✓ | |
| Water quality | | ✓ | |
| Air quality | | ✓ | |

Direct loss or physical damage due to construction

- 4.5 Direct loss of or physical damage to designated habitats, or to habitats on which designated species rely, could result from the construction of new housing, employment space and so on. Construction could also cause direct mortality of designated species.

Approach to HRA Screening of Forest Heath SIR

- 4.6 Potential effects depend on the exact location of development proposals and were therefore most appropriately assessed via HRA of the site-specific allocations set out in the SALP.

Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings

- 4.7 The construction or occupation of new buildings provided for by the SIR could result in adverse effects on sensitive, designated species due to increases in noise and vibration or light pollution, the visual presence of buildings and people within the development boundary, or increased numbers of pets and other predators associated with urban areas.
- 4.8 Other types of potential effect on designated species and habitats associated with increased public access were separately considered within the 'recreation pressure' category below.

European sites potentially affected

- 4.9 The European sites potentially affected are:
- Breckland SPA.
- 4.10 Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings operate over relatively short distances. Based on a review of the designated features of the scoped-in European sites and the locations of these sites in relation to Forest Heath District, the potential for disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings within the District only exists in relation to the designated bird species of Breckland SPA.

Relevant information

- 4.11 Considering the particular sensitivity of Breckland SPA's designated bird species to these types of urban edge effects, correlative studies of stone curlews (13), nightjars (14) (15) (16) (17) and woodlarks (18) have found lower densities of these species in areas close to housing or surrounded by high densities of housing. This avoidance is likely to be due to a range of factors, with individual ones difficult to tease apart. For example, although higher levels of recreational access may lead to harm from disturbance or increased fire occurrence, the avoidance of housing by stone curlews has been clearly demonstrated on arable land where there is limited public access (13). In addition, the large distances over which housing has been shown to have an effect by this research are such that increased public access and fire occurrence seem implausible explanations in isolation; these species may simply show a behavioural response to avoiding the built environment.
- 4.12 Analysis of the pattern of avoidance of housing by stone curlew on arable land suggests that the impact of housing on nest densities is negligible at a distance of 2.5 km from housing and that housing at 1 km has half the impact of housing immediately adjacent to potential nesting habitat (13).
- 4.13 Although the effect of buildings on stone curlew identified by research is from residential properties as opposed to commercial or other building types, that research advises caution in relation to non-residential development types due to the small sample size of these types of buildings in the study and difficulties with reliably classifying them (19).
- 4.14 Research has failed to detect any evidence that screening (such as by shelter belts or landscaping) or reduced lighting levels around buildings might reduce avoidance of built development by stone curlew or allow the distance at which adverse effects occur to be reduced. Many fields do have existing shelterbelts, and the avoidance of housing is still clear across suitable arable land, suggesting that screening will not work as mitigation (13) (19).
- 4.15 In relation to predation effects, evidence shows that pet cats can roam up to 1.5 km at night (20) (21). As well as pets, research has shown that heathland close to urban areas can have higher densities of mammalian predators such as foxes (22) and that there is an increase in the numbers of crows and magpies on sites with greater human activity (23).
- 4.16 For nightjars there is also evidence of avoidance of housing but the sites where this has been studied tend to have lots of housing close by and lots of houses further away, making it virtually impossible to determine the distance to which housing has an effect (17). In relation to avoidance of development effects on woodlark or nightjar (particularly in relation to cat predation), a 400 m 'no build zone' has been used to mitigate the effects of housing on heathland birds of The Dorset Heaths and Thames Basin Heaths SPAs. The 400 m distance was chosen to minimise additional cat predation and visitor pressure on the heathlands adjacent to development.
- 4.17 The elements of this body of research available at the time of the HRA of the Core Strategy led, with the agreement of Natural England, to the designation in Core Strategy Policy CS2 of development 'constraint zones' designed to protect Breckland SPA, as shown in the following boxed extract from the Core Strategy.

Core Strategy Policy CS2 Natural Environment (extract)

New built development will be restricted within 1,500m of components of the Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew. Proposals for development in these areas will require a project level Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) (see Figure 3). Development which is likely to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA will not be allowed.

Where new development is proposed within 400m of components of the Breckland SPA designated for woodlark or nightjar a project level Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) will be required (see Figure 3). Development which is likely to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA will not be allowed.

New road infrastructure or road improvements will not be allowed within 200m of sites designated as SACs in order to protect the qualifying features of these sites (see Figure 3).

New development will also be restricted within 1,500m of any 1km grid squares which has supported 5 or more nesting attempts by stone curlew since 1995. Proposals for development within these areas will require a project level HRA (see Figure 3). Development which is likely to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA will not be allowed.

Approach to HRA Screening of Forest Heath SIR

- 4.18 Prior to consideration of mitigation, the HRA Screening assumed that it was not possible to rule out likely significant effects if it appeared unlikely that it would be possible to avoid development which:
- overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew; or
 - overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of a 1 km grid square with ≥ 5 stone curlew nesting attempts during 2011-2015 associated with Breckland SPA; or
 - overlaps, or is within 400 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for woodlark or nightjar.
- 4.19 These three screening distances for disturbance and other urban effects are shown in Figure 4.1⁸ and are consistent with the distances used to define the constraint zones in the adopted Core Strategy which have been agreed by Natural England. In relation to stone curlew nesting attempts areas, the HRA of the SIR relies on updated data covering the period 2011-2015 rather than the 1995-2006 data that is referred to in Core Strategy policy CS2 and which informed the HRA of the Core Strategy and of the SIR prior to the current stage of plan making. This data better reflects the areas of the SPA used by stone curlews and the areas outside the SPA that are also important. This is consistent with informal advice from Natural England and its comments on the earlier HRA of the Preferred Options SIR and SALP.
- 4.20 Potential effects are generally more appropriately assessed via HRA of the site-specific allocations set out in the SALP. It is possible, however, that some strategic housing distributions specified by the SIR would be unlikely to be able to avoid development within the Breckland SPA zones of influence above, regardless of the specific sites allocated at each identified settlement. The HRA screening of the SIR housing distribution options therefore examines this possibility.

Disturbance from construction or operation of roads

- 4.21 The development provided for by the SIR could result in the need for construction of new roads, improvements to existing roads or increased traffic and congestion on existing roads. This could, in turn, result in adverse effects on sensitive, designated species due to increases in noise and vibration, light pollution, or the visual presence of roads and traffic.
- 4.22 The potential effects of increased road traffic on air quality are dealt with in a separate section below.
- 4.23 The potential for direct damage from road construction was not considered in the HRA of the SIR as it was addressed via HRA of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan (for major schemes); via HRA of the SALP in relation to direct loss or physical damage due to construction (for road development within allocated development site boundaries), and via project level HRA as required (for any other road development).

European sites potentially affected

- 4.24 The European sites potentially affected are:
- Breckland SPA.

⁸ Figure 4.1 only shows those parts of the stone curlew nesting attempts buffer which lie outside and therefore extend the boundary of the 1,500 m buffer around components of Breckland SPA designated stone curlew in order to protect nest sites

- 4.25 Based on a review of the designated features of the scoped-in European sites, the documented pressures and threats facing them and the locations of these sites in relation to Forest Heath District, the potential for disturbance from construction or operation of roads only exists in relation to the designated bird species of Breckland SPA.

Relevant information

- 4.26 A clear avoidance by stone curlews of otherwise suitable habitat adjacent to major roads has been demonstrated in a number of studies (24) (25) (13). These effects exist up to a distance of at least 1,000 m from trunk roads and possibly up to 2,000 m.
- 4.27 More recent work (19) updated and expanded this evidence. The more recent analysis of stone curlew data in and around Breckland SPA shows that, regardless of the amount of nearby buildings, the nest density was always lowest in the subset of areas within 0.5 km of the nearest trunk road (A11, A14 or A47) and highest in the areas furthest from the nearest trunk road. No consistent pattern was found for non-trunk roads. The overarching conclusion of the study authors is that their analysis provides strong support for the continuation in planning policy of a 1,500 m development constraint zone around areas capable of supporting stone curlew, although this primarily appears to be targeted at constraining potential building rather than highway development.

Approach to HRA Screening of Forest Heath SIR

- 4.28 Potential disturbance effects from construction or operation of roads were judged to be most appropriately assessed via HRA of the housing distribution options set out in the SIR since the need for and locations of significant additions to road network capacity require consideration of the broad pattern of development across the District. It was judged inappropriate in an HRA of a Local Plan to attempt to separately assess the potential disturbance effects of new access roads serving individual developments from the wider assessment for 'disturbance and other urban edge effects' of the housing distribution options of the SIR and of individual site allocations of the SALP (see separate HRA report). Any project-specific exceptions to this would be assessed via project level HRA, if required.
- 4.29 The SIR does not propose road infrastructure schemes; these would come forward under the Suffolk Local Transport Plan (LTP) which is subject to its own HRA. However, the scale and broad locations for housing provided by the SIR may increase the need for road infrastructure development. The HRA therefore assumed that it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects on Breckland SPA if development provided for by the SIR would result in the need for any new road infrastructure or road improvements to increase capacity which:
- overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew; or
 - overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of a 1 km grid square with ≥ 5 stone curlew nesting attempts during 2011-2015 associated with Breckland SPA.
- 4.30 FHDC's Transport Study (26) (27) (28) was used to identify locations where the planned growth in the District would be likely to create a need for new road infrastructure or road improvements to increase capacity.

Recreation pressure

- 4.31 Housing development could result in increased numbers of visitors to European sites within or close to the District. This could result in adverse effects on European sites with designated features that are sensitive to recreation pressure as follows:
- 4.32 *Designated species mortality or disturbance* - direct mortality of ground nesting birds' eggs or young by visitor trampling or dogs off leads; disturbance of ground nesting birds by recreational visitors and their dogs; mortality due to increased incidence of fires; mortality due to tipping/littering.

- 4.33 *Designated habitats loss or damage* - path erosion or soil compaction by walkers, cyclists, horse riders etc.; eutrophication of soils by dog faeces; increased incidence of fires; tipping/littering; illegal plant collection.

European sites potentially affected

- 4.34 Based on the relevant information reviewed below and correspondence with Natural England, the HRA assumed that no significant contribution to increased recreation pressure could occur more than 7.5 km from new housing development and that the vulnerability to recreation pressure of other European sites was as follows:
- 4.35 *Fenland SAC* – no significant vulnerability to recreation pressure, based on designated features plus pressures and threats described in Site Improvement Plan.
- 4.36 *Wicken Fen Ramsar site* – no significant vulnerability to recreation pressure, based on designated features plus pressures and threats described in Site Improvement Plan.
- 4.37 *Chippenham Fen Ramsar site* – no significant vulnerability to recreation pressure, based on designated features plus pressures and threats described in Site Improvement Plan.
- 4.38 *Devil's Dyke SAC* – no significant vulnerability to recreation pressure, based on designated features plus pressures and threats described in Site Improvement Plan.
- 4.39 *Rex Graham Reserve SAC* – Whilst the Site Improvement Plan notes that there is an ongoing threat to site features (military orchid) from illegal plant collection, Natural England reports⁹ that the site is generally closed to the public and the plant collection is organised theft rather than linked to recreation. In addition, the related SSSI is in 100% favourable condition. Natural England has confirmed¹⁰ that an assumption of cumulative recreation pressure from all housing allocations within 7.5 km is not necessary.
- 4.40 *Breckland SAC* – Whilst the Site Improvement Plan identifies a *potential* future threat of increased recreation through eutrophication (dog fouling, unauthorised fires) and disturbance of soils, it does not list any SAC designated features as currently being under pressure from public access / disturbance. Natural England has confirmed¹¹ that it does not consider recreation pressure is currently affecting any specific interest features on site and that an assumption of cumulative recreation pressure from all housing allocations within 7.5 km is not necessary.
- 4.41 *Breckland SPA* – the Site Improvement Plan states that designated populations of nightjar and woodlark could be threatened by future increases in recreational visitors. Whilst not highlighted in the Site Improvement Plan, the designated population of stone curlew is also likely to be vulnerable to public access / disturbance since it is a ground-nesting bird and Natural England has confirmed¹² that stone curlew are thought to be disturbed by people walking at a distance of 500 m from a nest.
- 4.42 The HRA therefore considered the potential for recreation pressure on Breckland SPA only.

Relevant information

- 4.43 There is an extensive evidence base on the effects of recreational disturbance on stone curlews, nightjars and woodlarks, the three Annex I bird species of Breckland SPA. Although national populations of all three species have generally increased in recent years, prospects for further recovery, for nightjar and woodlark at least, may be limited by factors including the effects of recreational disturbance (29).
- 4.44 A study of incubating stone curlews on Salisbury Plain (30) showed that they leave the nest in response to disturbance at considerable distances (>300 m) and that the closer a potential source of disturbance, the greater likelihood that the birds would respond by leaving the nest. Birds

⁹ Formal consultation comments on HRA at earlier stages of the SIR and SALP plus informal correspondence

¹⁰ Formal consultation comments on HRA at earlier stages of the SIR and SALP plus informal correspondence

¹¹ Formal consultation comments on HRA at earlier stages of the SIR and SALP plus informal correspondence

¹² Formal consultation comments on HRA at earlier stages of the SIR and SALP plus informal correspondence

were found to be more likely to respond by running or flying from a walker with a dog than from a walker without a dog, or from a motor vehicle.

- 4.45 Studies of nightjars have shown that breeding success is lower on sites with higher levels of access, and for nests close to footpaths. Recreational disturbance, particularly from dogs, causes adults to be flushed from the nest, potentially betraying the presence of the nest to predators such as crows (31) (32) (33) (34).
- 4.46 Woodlarks have been intensively studied in conifer plantations and heathland habitats in the Dorset Heaths (18). This work has shown that otherwise suitable habitat with high levels of recreational access holds lower densities of woodlarks. Whilst breeding success in such areas is actually better, due to reduced competition between woodlarks (35) (36), this is not sufficient to compensate for the effect of disturbance and the net effect on the woodlark population is negative (36).
- 4.47 Having established that the designated bird species of Breckland SPA are sensitive to recreation pressure, it is necessary to consider existing levels of recreation in the SPA and the extent to which these are likely to increase as a result of the development provided for by the SIR.
- 4.48 Detailed analysis of recreation pressure on Breckland SPA has been carried out to inform HRA work for the neighbouring Breckland Core Strategy (37). Parallels can be drawn with statistical modelling of increases in visitor use of paths in the Breckland SPA as a result of different housing growth scenarios for the town of Thetford (38). The three housing growth scenarios examined provided for different distributions of housing to Thetford's existing urban area, an urban extension to its northern boundary, and an urban extension to the south east by 2021, but all three featured total housing growth of 7,743 dwellings during 2007-2031. The fact that more housing growth was proposed for Thetford than is now being proposed for the whole of Forest Heath District (the SIR provides for 6,800 homes during 2011-2031), let alone any individual settlement in the District, means that applying the results from the HRA of the Breckland Core Strategy to understand the potential scale and likely effects of increased recreation pressure around settlements on Forest Heath represents a suitable approach, consistent with the precautionary principle that is required when applying the Habitats Regulations.
- 4.49 The modelling of visitor growth around Thetford allowed the RSPB¹³ to use their 'SCARE' model to explore the potential for increased flushing of stone curlews as a result of an increase in access levels resulting from new housing. The model predicted visitor numbers associated with baseline and future housing numbers to paths in Breckland SPA. The resulting calculation of the mean number of disturbance events per hour (averaged across all path sections within each 3 km grid square) increased from a baseline range of 0.04-1.10 with current housing levels to a range of 0.06-1.80, as an average for all future housing scenarios. Although this analysis was based on proposed levels of housing growth in and around Thetford, the results are also relevant to housing growth around settlements in Forest Heath District, given the close geographical relationship of the two areas to each other and to Breckland SPA.
- 4.50 As a means of determining the likely scale of recreation pressure on the other two Annex I species of Breckland SPA (woodlark and nightjar), the HRA of the Breckland Core Strategy (37) also analysed how visitor levels in Breckland SPA compare to two other SPAs which support woodlark and nightjar, namely Dorset Heaths SPA and Thames Basin Heaths SPA. This comparison is useful because the effects of recreation pressure and associated mitigation have been widely examined at these two SPAs. The comparison established that Breckland SPA represents a much larger parcel of land with public access and has far fewer houses nearby (within 500 m or within 5 km) compared to Dorset Heaths SPA or Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Directly comparable visitor data were unavailable for the three European sites but very broad brush estimates suggested that visitor pressure on Breckland SPA is low relative to the other two SPAs. This was presumably because the density of population within the vicinity of both the Dorset Heaths SPA and Thames Basin Heaths SPA is much greater than for Breckland SPA. The HRA of the Breckland Core Strategy concluded that the modelled increases in visitors as a result of planned new housing in Breckland District would still not result in the same general level of recreation pressure on Breckland SPA as is currently experienced on the Dorset Heaths SPA and Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

¹³ Early draft report provided to Liley et al by R. Langston, RSPB, on 21/9/08

- 4.51 The HRA also needs to consider the distance over which increases in recreation pressure associated with new housing may be significant. Work in other parts of the country (37), (39) has shown that coastal sites or large tracts of semi-natural habitat will attract a relatively high proportion of residents from up to 20 km away from the site. Patterns of recreational use of the Thetford Forest and surrounding areas (mostly within Breckland SPA) established through visitor surveys (38) indicate that whilst many visitors are relatively local (43% had travelled less than 5 km from their home postcode to the interview location within the Forest), 37% had travelled more than 10 km from home. Almost all of Forest Heath District lies within 10 km of the Breckland SPA, as do all of its major settlements.
- 4.52 A more recent visitor study for Breckland SPA (40) concentrated on heathland and forest ('Thetford Forest') areas of the SPA rather than farmland on the basis that these areas attract more visitors, and from further afield, since access to arable farmland is available close to home for many of the District's residents. It noted the precautionary approach taken by the HRA of the Breckland Core Strategy to potential recreational disturbance due to a lack of firm evidence to determine whether the Annex I birds of Breckland SPA are being adversely affected by recreational disturbance. Based on the new visitor survey work carried out, the study went on to advise a continued need for a precautionary approach when considering the future growth proposals for both St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District.
- 4.53 A key finding of the research was that the majority of visitors are local residents (87%), living within a 10 km radius and using Thetford Forest as their local green space which they visit at least weekly. The research recommended that:
- "Any new housing within this radius should be identified as development that would be likely to have a significant effect as a result of recreational disturbance upon the SPA, in the absence of any counteracting measures and taking a precautionary approach. It is also likely that, the closer new housing is to the Forest, the greater the additional recreational pressure will be."*
- 4.54 The research noted that its findings on the relationship between visitor rates and distance from home were similar to those presented in the HRA of the Breckland Site Specific Policies and Proposals Document (41) from a different data set. By further analysing visitor surveys (38) using just the data for visitors interviewed within Thetford Forest (Annex I bird species of Breckland SPA are particularly concentrated in these), the HRA showed that visitor rates flatten out at about 7.5 km from home postcodes to the Thetford Forest boundary; this contrasts with the approach used by (40), which measured distances from home postcodes to actual survey locations within the Thetford Forest). The HRA (41) went on to conclude that:
- "...7.5km is a suitable precautionary distance, beyond which development is not likely to result in a notable increase in visitor use. The majority of visitor pressure arises from within 7.5km."*
- 4.55 On this basis, Natural England has confirmed that it agrees that new development is unlikely to contribute significantly to recreation pressure on Breckland SPA where development is located more than 7.5 km from the SPA boundary (42).
- 4.56 In formal representations on the HRA of the Preferred Options SIR (see Appendix 3) Natural England confirmed that the 7.5 km recreation zone of influence does not apply to farmland areas of Breckland SPA because farmland is widely available across the District and residents can therefore be assumed to use farmland near to home (for example for walking dogs) rather than travelling up to 7.5 km, as they might to access woodland or heathland areas. All studies on visitor behaviour at Breckland SPA of which LUC is aware are based on visitors to the forest and heathland areas of the SPA rather than farmland areas so there is no definitive data which can be used to define a recreation buffer for the farmland areas of Breckland SPA. In the absence of data specific to visits to farmland areas of the SPA, reference was made to information on walking distances to the SPA more generally (40).

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- 4.57 The Forest Heath Core Strategy provides for 6,400 dwellings during 2001-2021 plus a further 3,700 during 2021-2031. The HRA of the Core Strategy concluded that the scale and broad

location of housing growth proposed would increase visitor numbers to Breckland SPA, in combination with housing growth in neighbouring Breckland District. Based on the results of the modelling described above and the fact that the scale of housing growth at each of Forest Heath's settlements would be less than was planned for Thetford (7,743 dwellings during 2007-2031), the Forest Heath Core Strategy HRA concluded that the increase in recreation pressure would be small and unlikely to reach the same levels experienced by broadly comparable SPAs (Thames Basin Heaths and Dorset Heaths). This analysis remains valid for the broadly similar scale of growth now proposed by the SIR (6,800 dwellings during 2011-2031). Further comfort can be taken from the fact that whilst many of the Breckland grass heaths have 'open access land' designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), restrictions are put in place each year due to the presence of stone curlews which will minimise disturbance effects on those sites.

- 4.58 Nevertheless, the visitor modelling described above provides evidence that some areas of habitat would be less likely to be used by stone curlews as a result of recreational disturbance linked to new housing development. Thus, whilst the increase in recreation associated with the SIR and SALP is likely to be low, likely significant effects on Breckland SPA in relation to its Annex I birds cannot be ruled out on a precautionary basis. The need for a precautionary approach is also indicated by the additional uncertainty created by the fact that Breckland SPA bird distributions change over time, particularly those of nightjar and woodlark in relation to forestry management.
- 4.59 Given the general agreement of the two Breckland SPA visitor studies discussed above, the HRA Screening of the SIR and SALP assumed that the potential for likely significant effects could not be ruled out from housing development within 7.5 km of non-farmland (see discussion above) areas of Breckland SPA. The farmland parts of Breckland SPA were identified as those overlain by SSSI units which the Natural England website (43) identifies as having an 'Arable and horticulture' habitat type. Development more than 7.5 km from Breckland SPA was assumed to have no effect.
- 4.60 Because of the relatively large size of the zone of influence for recreation pressure (7.5 km from non-farmland components of Breckland SPA), recreation pressure from housing development acts at a strategic scale such that while recreation pressure from a single new dwelling would not be significant, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that the total recreation pressure from multiple housing developments within the 7.5 km zone of influence would be significant in combination.
- 4.61 In relation to potential recreational disturbance of the designated stone curlew population of Breckland SPA, the zone within which the potential for likely significant effects is identified has not been extended to areas which are more than 7.5 km from the Breckland SPA boundary but are within this distance of identified stone curlew nesting attempts areas. This approach has been agreed with Natural England (42), based on the distances at which stone curlew suffer an effect and the fact that any potential recreational effects caused by development proposals within the stone curlew nesting attempts areas would be picked up at the planning application stage due to the requirements of Core Strategy Policy CS2.
- 4.62 Footprint Ecology's 2010 report (40) indicates that 75% of visitors on foot travelled up to 1.3 km from home to the survey point and none travelled more than 1.6 km¹⁴. Bearing in mind that the HRA Screening of site allocations is concerned with the distance from home to the habitat boundary rather than a point within it, a farmland recreation zone of influence of 1.5 km should capture practically all visits on foot. This zone of influence was also drawn around stone curlew nesting attempts areas. Although mapping was not available to show whether all stone curlew nesting attempts areas are on farmland it is precautionary and consistent with known habitat preferences of stone curlew to assume that they are.

In summary, prior to consideration of mitigation, the HRA Screening assumed that it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects for any housing development (potential for species mortality or disturbance):

- within 7.5 km of the boundary of non-farmland parts of Breckland SPA, or

¹⁴ More recent studies such as Footprint Ecology's 2016 report 'Visitor surveys at European protected sites across Norfolk during 2015 and 2016' do not appear to provide a more accurate distance to use

- within 1.5 km of the boundary of farmland parts of Breckland SPA or of stone curlew nesting attempts areas.

The resulting recreation zones of influence are shown in Figure 4.2. Development with no housing component was assumed to not give rise to recreation pressure.

- 4.63 Given the spatial nature of the HRA screening criteria, potential effects were primarily assessed via HRA of the housing distribution options, as set out in Chapter 6, and screening of site allocation options, as set out in a separate HRA report accompanying the SALP. However, given the large proportion of the District covered by these screening zones of influence, it was also necessary to assess whether the total housing provision provided by the SIR could feasibly be delivered without a likely significant effect.

Water quantity

- 4.64 Water abstraction to supply new development provided for by the SIR could result in changes to water levels or flows at hydrologically connected European sites with the potential for adverse effects on designated features sensitive to such changes.
- 4.65 Unless otherwise cited, the information in this section is sourced from the Water Cycle Strategy supporting the SIR and SALP (44) and subsequent addenda (45) (46).

European sites potentially affected

- 4.66 The potentially affected European sites depend on the hydrological connections between those sites and the water resources that are abstracted to supply the needs of Forest Heath District. In consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency, the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) carried out a screening assessment for all of the scoped in European sites for potential water quantity effects.

Relevant information

Anglian Water Strategy

- 4.67 Forest Heath District's potable water is supplied by Anglian Water. Water companies have a statutory duty to establish how planned development in their area can be serviced. These plans are set out in their Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP). Investments to deliver the plans are based on five year planning cycles known as Asset Management Periods (AMP) so the water company programme for water infrastructure upgrades may constrain the rate at which residential growth can be supported.
- 4.68 In 2015, AWS published its latest WRMP for the period 2015-2040 which shows that three resource zones (RZs) fall within Forest Heath District – Newmarket RZ, West Suffolk RZ, and Ely RZ. Table 4.2 summarises for each of these (RZs) the scale of residential growth assumed by the WRMP, the year by which it was forecast that demand would exceed supply in the absence of future supply and demand management measures, and the preferred supply and demand management measures proposed to bring supply and demand back into balance. It is notable that the WRMP deliberately makes its own assumptions on housing growth rather than using local authority policy figures. The forecasting also assumed that demand management (various leakage reduction, enhanced metering and water efficiency measures) would be implemented in each Resource Zone.

Table 4.2 Forecast supply-demand status for Water Resource Zones covering Forest Heath District (47) (44) (45) (46)

| Resource Zone | Supply source | Assumed dwellings growth per annum in RZ 2015-2040 | Year by which RZ enters deficit | Preferred schemes to maintain supply-demand balance |
|---------------|---------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Newmarket | Groundwater | 250 | N/A – remains in surplus | None |
| West Suffolk | Groundwater | 500 (2015-2020) 600 (2020-2025) 700 (2025-2040) | 2024/25 | A river restoration and recirculation project and a transfer from East Suffolk RZ |
| Ely | Groundwater | 500 | 2024/25 | Sustainability reductions at two Water Treatment Works and a transfer from Fenland/Newmarket RZ |

- 4.69 Following review of the 2015 WRMP and consultation with Anglian Water, the Water Cycle Strategy concluded that the development proposed by the Forest Heath SIR and SALP can be supplied with water without increased abstraction and where possible utilising transfer from surrounding RZs in water surplus and that there would therefore be no negative impact from the development proposed in terms of water supply. The WRMP is subject to its own HRA (48) - this confirmed that likely significant effects could be ruled out for all preferred schemes to maintain supply-demand balance.

Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy (CAMS)

- 4.70 The Environment Agency is responsible for managing water resources in England. The Environment Agency controls how much water is abstracted with a permitting system, regulating existing licences and granting new ones. It uses the CAMS process and abstraction licensing strategies to do this. The CAMS process aims to aid the meeting of the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive by:
- providing a water resource assessment of rivers, lakes, reservoirs, estuaries and groundwater referred to as water bodies under the Water Framework Directive (WFD);
 - identifying water bodies that fail flow conditions expected to support good ecological status;
 - preventing deterioration of water body status due to new abstractions;
 - providing results which inform River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).
- 4.71 The entirety of Forest Heath District is located within the Cam and Ely Ouse abstraction area for which the most recent CAMS was published in 2013 with minor updates in 2017 (49). This area is broken down into five detailed areas which are covered individually within the strategy; Forest Heath District is located within four of these areas: Cam, Rhee and Granta; Ely Ouse; Snail, Lark and Kennett; and Wissey. The CAMS identifies that the main water resources pressures are extensive water supply abstraction along with river support schemes and water transfers.
- 4.72 The CAMS process has developed a classification system in order to inform the abstraction process. This classification provides an indication of:
- the relative balance between the environmental requirements for water and how much is licensed for abstraction;
 - whether water is available for further abstraction;
 - areas where abstraction may need to be reduced.
- 4.73 In terms of surface water across Forest Heath District, water is generally available for abstraction licensing during high flows ('Q30') but not available for licensing at low flows ('Q95'/'Q70'). In terms of groundwater, the entirety of Forest Heath lies on a chalk aquifer classified as:

"Water not available for licensing; groundwater unit balance shows more water has been abstracted based on recent amounts than the amount available; no further consumptive licences will be granted."

- 4.74 Where water abstractions cause or potentially cause environmental damage, existing licences may need to be revoked or changed in order to achieve a sustainable outcome. The CAMS identifies a number of designated sites (SAC/SPA/SSSI) where flows have fallen below the Environmental Flow Indicator (EFI). The relevant abstraction licences are therefore being assessed under the Environment Agency's Restoring Sustainable Abstraction (RSA) programme to assess impact and mitigation options. The CAMS identifies that all existing and new abstraction licences have been or are currently being assessed in order to make sure they are not impacting nationally or internationally designated sites. Table 4.3 shows the nationally designated sites located within or in proximity to Forest Heath District and confirms that no changes to existing licences are currently required. The CAMS also states for Breckland SAC that *"The investigations for these sites are awaiting the implementation of changes to the GOGS [Great Ouse Groundwater Scheme] licences. No further licence changes proposed."*

Table 4.3 Nationally designated sites currently under investigation as part of the RSA programme (44) (47) (45)

| Site No. | Site Name | CAMS RSA Comments |
|----------|---|---|
| 8 | Cavenham-Icklingham Heaths SSSI | Component of Fenland SAC, Ramsar site. No immediate licence changes proposed. |
| 11 | Chippenham Fen and Snailwell Poors Fen SSSI | Component of Fenland SAC. ROC implementation in progress – no licence changes proposed. |
| 20 | Lakenheath Poors Fen SSSI | No immediate licence changes proposed. |

Approach to HRA Screening of Forest Heath SIR

- 4.75 The potential effects of development proposed by the SIR and SALP on water levels and flows will primarily be a function of the cumulative impact of all the proposed growth in each of the relevant catchments/RZs on water resources. The potential effects of the amount and distribution of growth proposed by the SIR and SALP were assessed by the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46), making reference to its findings (summarised above) on whether the growth can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences and whether changes to existing licences are being proposed by the Environment Agency to avoid harm to European sites or component SSSIs. The results of that assessment are presented in the HRA of the SIR rather than the HRA of the SALP since the assessment of the SIR broad distribution of housing did not highlight any water quantity effects that required more detailed assessment in relation to any individual site allocation.

Water quality

- 4.76 New development could result in increased volumes of treated wastewater discharges, resulting in nutrient enrichment of water and potential lowering of dissolved oxygen as well as increased water velocities and levels downstream of Water Recycling Centres (WRC) outfalls.
- 4.77 New development could also result in overloading of the combined sewer network during storm events with the potential for flooding and contamination of hydrologically connected European sites.
- 4.78 An increase in the area of urban surfaces and roads could increase the potential for contaminated surface runoff and the contamination of hydrologically connected European sites.

European sites potentially affected

- 4.79 The potentially affected European sites depend on the hydrological connections between those sites and the WRC discharge points and the combined sewer networks serving Forest Heath District. Site Improvement Plans for Breckland SAC/ SPA; for Fenland SAC/ Chippenham Fen Ramsar site; and for Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site identify current pressure from poor water quality caused by nutrient enrichment but other scoped in European sites may be vulnerable to future water quality effects associated with planned growth. In consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency, the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) carried out a screening assessment for all of the scoped in European sites for potential water quality effects.

Relevant information

Treated wastewater discharges

- 4.80 Anglian Water is responsible for wastewater treatment within Forest Heath District.
- 4.81 In consultation with Anglian Water, the Environment Agency and FHDC, the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) examined the evidence in relation to the capacity of the District's WRCs to accept the higher volumes of sewage associated with the scale and distribution of growth proposed by the SIR and SALP and to treat it without deterioration in the water quality of receiving water courses. The results of the assessment of wastewater treatment capacity are summarised in Table 4.4 and show that an increased discharge beyond currently consented capacity is forecast for one WRC, Tuddenham, which serves the settlements of Tuddenham, Red Lodge and Herringswell.

Table 4.4 WRC treatment capacity

| WRC (area served) | Currently consented discharge volume (m ³ /day) | Forecast actual volume in 2031 after provision of development in SIR/SALP (m ³ /day) | Water Cycle Strategy conclusion |
|---|--|---|---|
| Brandon (Brandon) | 2,006 | 1,214 | No constraints associated with Brandon WRC either in terms of treatment capacity or discharge capacity |
| Lakenheath (Lakenheath) | 860 | 769 | No constraints associated with Lakenheath WRC either in terms of treatment capacity or discharge capacity |
| Mildenhall (Mildenhall, Beck Row and West Row) | 3,900 | 2,846 | No constraints associated with Mildenhall WRC either in terms of treatment capacity or discharge capacity |
| Newmarket (Newmarket, Kentford and Exning) | 6,100 | 5,447 | No constraints associated with Newmarket WRC either in terms of treatment capacity or discharge capacity |
| Tuddenham (Tuddenham, Red Lodge and Herringswell) | 1,100 | 1,170 | Existing discharge consent exceeded |

Combined sewer overflows

- 4.82 The Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) reports that while detailed sewerage network models are not available for the majority of Forest Heath District, consultation with Anglian Water did not highlight significant sewerage capacity “show stoppers” or an increased risk of combined sewer overflows, although many of the site allocations in the SALP would be likely to require some local sewer network upgrades to accommodate the increased flow.

Approach to HRA Screening of Forest Heath SIR

- 4.83 The potential effects of the amount and distribution of growth proposed by the SIR and SALP were assessed by the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46), making reference to its findings (summarised above) on whether the growth can be accommodated within existing WRC discharge consents and sewer network capacity. The results of that assessment are presented in the HRA of the SIR since the assessment did not highlight any water quality effects that required more detailed assessment in relation to any individual site allocation.
- 4.84 The Water Cycle Strategy did not examine the potential for contaminated surface runoff from new built development to adversely affect European sites. It should, however, be possible to avoid such effects through the development management process via appropriate design features (for example provision of appropriately designed SUDS) and site layout (for instance separation of development from any adjacent water course by a buffer strip). As such, the HRA assumed that provided sufficient policy safeguards existed to secure any such measures that are necessary to protect water quality and European sites then likely significant effects from contaminated surface runoff could be ruled out.

Air quality

- 4.85 Air pollution arising from new or more congested roads as a result of new development could result in toxic contamination or nutrient enrichment of sensitive habitats.

European sites potentially affected

- 4.86 Based on a review of the designated features of the scoped-in European sites and the documented pressures and threats facing them, the potentially affected European sites were identified as:
- Breckland SAC and SPA.
 - Devil’s Dyke SAC.
 - Fenland SAC, Chippenham Fen Ramsar site, and Wicken Fen Ramsar site.
 - Norfolk Valley Fens SAC.
 - Rex Graham Reserve SAC.

Relevant information

- 4.87 The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) (50) provides scoping criteria for the assessment of local air quality effects from development projects that are likely to affect road traffic and states that only designated sites within 200 m of roads affected by the project need be considered. The DMRB scoping criteria indicate that more detailed environmental assessment of local air quality effects on sensitive designated sites within 200 m is appropriate if any of the following criteria are met:
- daily traffic flows will change by 1,000 AADT or more; or
 - Heavy Duty Vehicle (HDV) flows will change by 200 AADT or more; or
 - daily average speed will change by 10 km/hr or more; or
 - peak hour speed will change by 20 km/hr or more.

- 4.88 In addition, areas within the 200 m zone of influence around designated sites likely to experience higher-than-average pollution concentrations, such as tunnel portals, roundabouts and junctions, should be identified.
- 4.89 More detailed information on the sensitivity of the SACs listed at para. 4.87 above was obtained from the 'Atmospheric nitrogen theme plan' for improvement of England's Natura 2000 sites (51). The theme plan reports the sensitivity of the sites' designated features to atmospheric nitrogen, the level of critical load exceedance of the most sensitive designated features, the likelihood of atmospheric nitrogen impacts, and whether emissions from local agriculture as opposed to traffic and other sources are likely to be a significant factor, as summarised in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Sensitivity of SACs to atmospheric nitrogen (N)

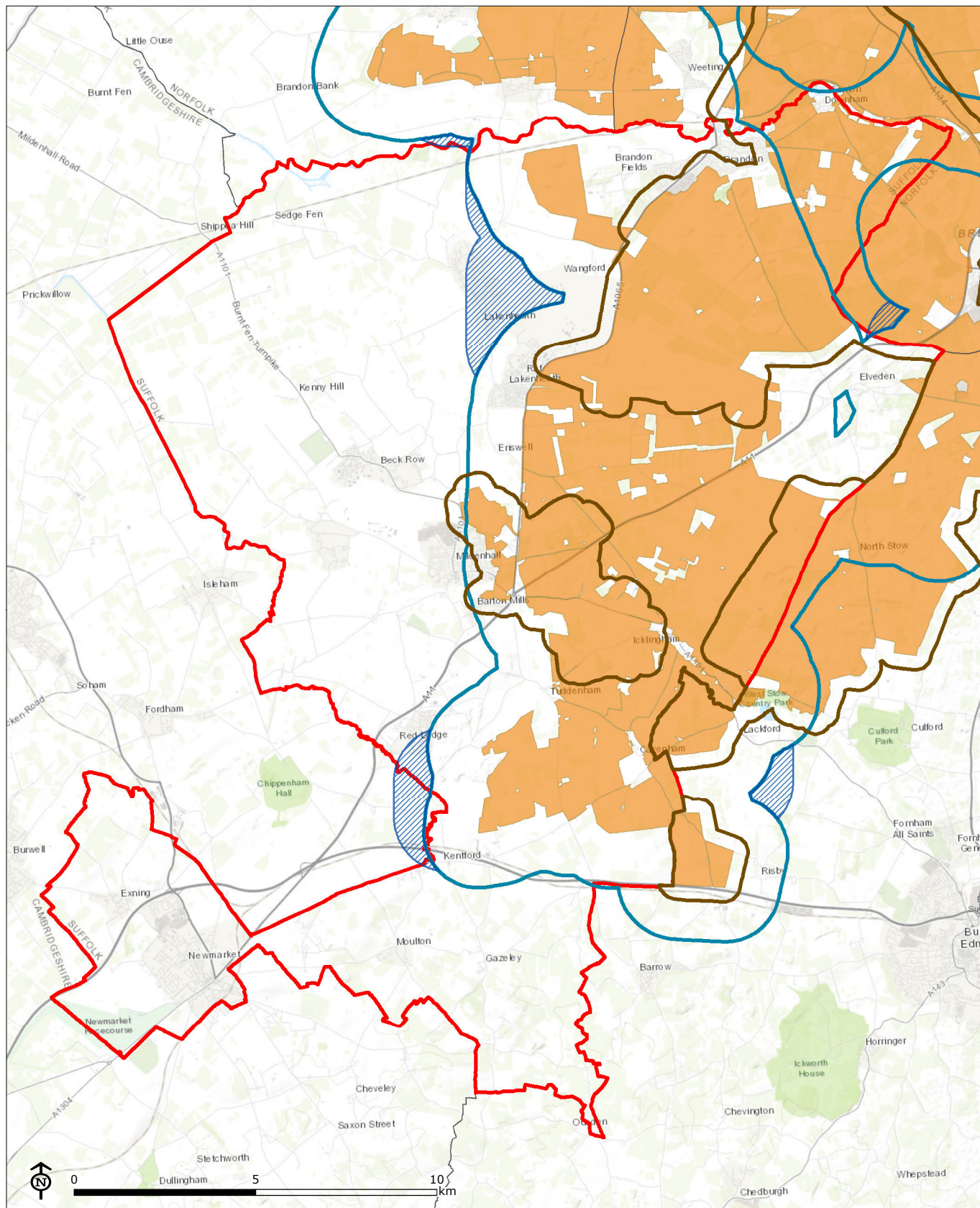
| SAC name | Sensitivity to atmospheric N | Level of critical load exceedance | Likelihood of N impact | Relevance of local agricultural ammonia sources | Potential significance of measures to reduce local agricultural ammonia |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| Breckland | Very sensitive | Very high | Very likely | High | High |
| Devil's Dyke | Sensitive | Moderate | Likely | Low | Low |
| Fenland | Less sensitive, potentially sensitive | Moderate | Uncertain | Medium | Low |
| Norfolk Valley Fens | Very sensitive | Very high | Very likely | High | High |
| Rex Graham Reserve | Sensitive | Moderate | Likely | Medium | Medium |

- 4.90 SPAs and Ramsar sites are not covered by the theme plan but the HRA screening considers them for the following reasons:
- Breckland SPA – Standard Data Form includes threat and pressure code H04 (Air pollution, air-borne pollutants); Site Improvement Plan for Breckland SAC and SPA identifies atmospheric nitrogen deposition as a potential future threat to stone curlew and woodlark designated features and the need for further investigation.
 - Chippenham Fen and Wicken Fen Ramsar sites - Site Improvement Plan for Fenland SAC, Chippenham Fen Ramsar site, and Wicken Fen Ramsar site identifies atmospheric nitrogen deposition as a pressure or threat to the purple moor-grass meadows and calcium rich fen interest features of the SAC, purple moor-grass also being identified by both Ramsar Information sheets.
- 4.91 The above information indicates that all of the European sites identified at para. 4.86 are vulnerable to increased nitrogen inputs. Fenland SAC is only rated as 'potentially sensitive', with the potential impact of atmospheric nitrogen 'uncertain' but was scoped into the HRA on a precautionary basis. Whilst agricultural emissions are clearly judged to be a significant source of nitrogen inputs to some of the SACs, additional nitrogen inputs from road traffic emissions would be likely to result in further exceedance of critical loads.

Approach to HRA of Forest Heath SIR

- 4.92 Potential air quality effects are set out in the HRA of the SIR housing distribution options rather than in the HRA of the SALP since changes in traffic flows will depend on the combined effects of all development proposed by the SIR and SALP in combination with that associated with other relevant plans and projects rather than individual allocations. No site-specific issues were revealed in the course of the assessment that should be included in the HRA Report for the SALP.

- 4.93 The HRA first considered the location of the sensitive European sites identified above relative to major roads (A11, A14 or A47 trunk roads or a non-trunk A-road) that could potentially see a significant increase in traffic as result of the development proposed by the SIR and SALP.
- 4.94 For those European sites within 200 m of such roads, further HRA in relation to air quality effects was carried out by AECOM, the approach to which is presented in a separate report (52) which forms part of the HRA of the SIR and SALP.



- 1,500 m zone of influence around SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for Stone Curlew
- 1,500 m zone of influence around 1km grid squares with ≥ 5 Stone Curlew nesting attempts 2011-2015
- 400 m zone of influence around SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for Woodlark or Nightjar
- Breckland SPA
- Forest Heath District Boundary

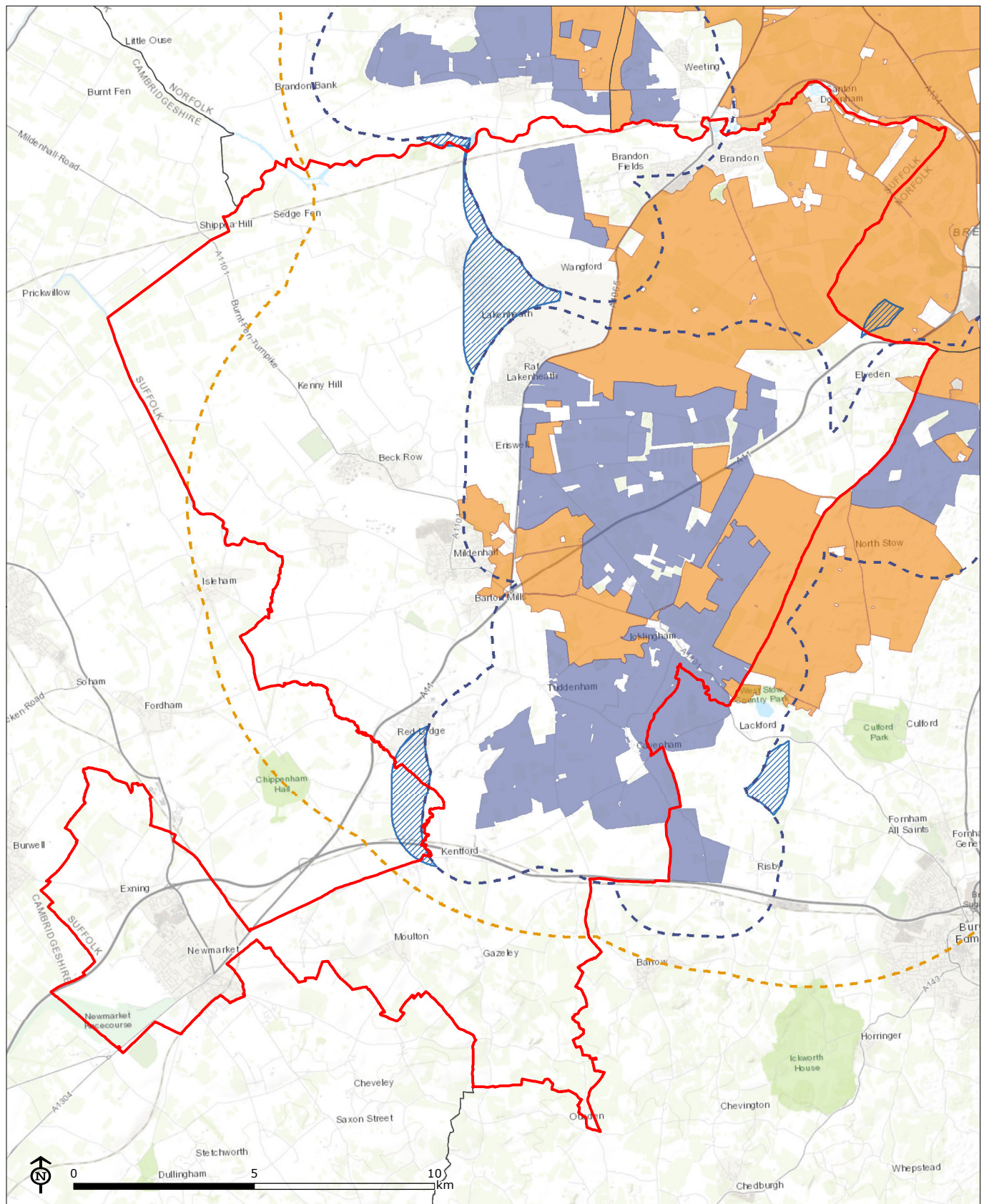
Map Scale @ A4: 1:150,000

Forest Heath Local Plan
HRA

Figure 4.1
Disturbance & other
urban edge effects
zones of influence

Source: JNCC, Natural England





- Forest Heath District Boundary
- Farmland areas of Breckland SPA
- 1.5km zone of influence around farmland areas of Breckland SPA
- 1.5km zone of influence around 1km grid squares with ≥ 5 Stone Curlew nesting attempts 2011-2015
- Non-farmland areas of Breckland SPA
- 7.5 km zone of influence around non-farmland areas of Breckland SPA

Map Scale @ A4: 1:150,000

Forest Heath Local Plan HRA

Figure 4.2: Recreation pressure zone of influence around Breckland SPA

Source: JNCC, Natural England



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

CB:VG EB:Goosen_V LUCGLA 6446-01_001_ADOPT_Fig4-2_Recreation_Buffers 16/03/2018

5 HRA Screening of overall housing provision

The overall housing provision

- 5.1 Provision will be made for at least 6,800 dwellings in the district over the plan period 2011 to 2031; this equates to 340 dwellings per annum (dpa).

HRA Screening assessment: recreation pressure

- 5.2 An assessment was carried out to identify the potential for the SIR overall housing provision to have likely significant effects on any of the European sites scoped into the HRA.
- 5.3 As explained in Chapter 4, certain types of potential effects from development on European sites were more appropriately assessed via the HRA Screening of housing distribution options (see Chapter 6) or via the HRA Screening of the SALP (contained in a separate report). The HRA Screening of the total housing provision was therefore only concerned with potential recreation pressure.
- 5.4 The SIR overall housing provision in Policy CS7 makes no reference to the locations for development. Since the provision will be implemented through the separate 'Broad Distribution' section within Policy CS7 and through the SALP (prepared and consulted on concurrently with the SIR), the policy's effects on European sites are, in general, more appropriately assessed via HRA of the related, more spatially specific policy provisions. Assessment of the broad distribution for housing is provided in Chapter 6; assessment of the site allocations is provided in a separate HRA Report for the SALP. In taking this approach, however, the HRA sought to verify that the total amount of development proposed was not so great that, no matter where it is located, it could not be delivered without a likely significant recreation pressure effect on a European site.
- 5.5 The overall dwelling provision in the SIR was compared to the total provision under Policy CS7 of the adopted Core Strategy. Policy CS7 of the adopted Core Strategy provided for 6,400 dwellings during 2001-2021 of which 1,935 were already built during 2001-2009, leaving 4,465 to be built during the 12 years from 2009 to 2021 (equating to 372 dpa) and 3,700 dwellings during the ten years from 2021 to 2031 (370 dpa). Following the addition of various measures for avoidance and mitigation in the Core Strategy, the Appropriate Assessment stage of the HRA was able to conclude that the Core Strategy would not have any adverse effects on the integrity of any European site.
- 5.6 Since the protective policies within the Core Strategy remain in force and the SIR provides for less housing during 2011-2031 than the Core Strategy, it is probable that adverse effects on the integrity of European sites will not arise. However, in light of the time that has elapsed since the Core Strategy was subject to HRA and following the precautionary principle, an assessment was made of whether likely significant effects from the SIR overall housing provision could be ruled out no matter where the development is located. The approach was based on the information and assumptions set out in Chapter 4.

Initial screening assessment prior to mitigation

- 5.7 The potential for recreational disturbance exists from any housing development that is within 7.5 km of the non-farmland parts of Breckland SPA, or within 1.5 km of the farmland parts of Breckland SPA, or within 1.5 km of stone curlew nesting attempts areas providing supporting habitat to Breckland SPA. As shown in Figure 4.2, this zone of influence covers most of Forest Heath District and it was judged unlikely that any reasonable alternative distribution of 6,800 homes would be able to avoid this zone of influence entirely. A potential for likely significant effects on Breckland SPA due to recreation pressure from the overall housing distribution was therefore identified, prior to consideration of mitigation.

In-combination effects

- 5.8 Because of the relatively large size of the zone of influence for recreation pressure (7.5 km from non-farmland components of Breckland SPA), recreation pressure from housing development acts at a strategic scale. This means that while recreation pressure from a single new dwelling would be unlikely to be significant, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that the total recreation pressure from multiple housing developments within the 7.5 km zone of influence would be significant in-combination.
- 5.9 Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4 shows that Breckland SPA is a large European site which spans a number of neighbouring districts and the 7.5 km zone of influence around its non-farmland components takes in a number of local population centres including Thetford in Breckland District and Bury St Edmunds in St Edmundsbury Borough. A review of the Core Strategies and corresponding HRAs for these two districts (Appendix 1) confirmed that the development proposed in them has the potential to contribute to increased recreation pressure on Breckland SPA. As reported in the HRAs for these development plans, mitigation has been put in place to avoid likely significant recreation pressure effects on European sites from the development plans for those districts, either alone or in-combination. It is therefore assumed that the residual (post-mitigation) recreation pressure from development in neighbouring districts is negligible and need not be considered further in the HRA of Forest Heath's Local Plan documents. The review of other relevant plans and projects (Appendix 1) also highlights the potential for economic and tourism development provided by Policy CS 6 of the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy to contribute to recreation pressure on Breckland SPA. The HRA Screening of the SIR therefore considers the potential effects of the housing provided by the SIR in-combination with the development provided by the Core Strategy.

Existing mitigation which could rule out likely significant effects

- 5.10 Adopted Local Plan policies in the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document provide a general commitment to provide new or enhanced open space alongside new development and to manage and monitor recreation pressure as follows:

Core Strategy policies (53)

- 5.11 Policy CS2: Natural Environment - The policy promotes green infrastructure enhancement and/or provision on all new developments.
- 5.12 Policy CS13: Infrastructure and Developer Contributions - This requires sufficient capacity in existing local infrastructure, including for open space, sport and recreation, before land is released for development. It also provides for developer contributions to improve infrastructure to the required standard before development is occupied and to arrange for its subsequent maintenance. Guidance on how the Council will implement the open space requirements within this policy is provided in an SPD (54) which includes the approach to determining when developer contributions can be used to provide off site open space.

Development management policies (55)

- 5.13 Policy DM12: Mitigation, Enhancement, Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity states that:
- "All new development (excluding minor household applications) shown to contribute to recreational disturbance and visitor pressure within the Breckland SPA and SAC will be required to make appropriate contributions through S106 agreements towards management projects and/or monitoring of visitor pressure and urban effects on key biodiversity sites."*
- 5.14 Policy DM42: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities protects against the loss of existing open space as a result of development and further states that:
- "where necessary to the acceptability of the development, the local planning authority will require developers of new housing, office, retail and other commercial and mixed development to provide open space...or to provide land and a financial contribution towards the cost and maintenance of existing or new facilities, as appropriate."*
- 5.15 Policy DM44: Rights of Way protects against the loss of existing or proposed rights of way and enables improvements to rights of way to be sought:

"in association with new development to enable new or improved links to be created within the settlement, between settlements and/or providing access to the countryside or green infrastructure sites as appropriate".

Accessible Natural Greenspace Study

- 5.16 In addition to these general policy commitments to provision and enhancement of open space and rights of way, the Council has carried out an Accessible Natural Greenspace Study (56) to provide evidence on appropriate accessible natural greenspace that will support the planned growth in the District. The study reviews accessible natural greenspace provision at the District's main settlements, explores the opportunities for new greenspace and access routes that could be delivered to support the planned growth, and outlines a recreation pressure mitigation strategy for each main settlement.
- 5.17 FHDC's study updates an assessment, first presented in the Core Strategy, of the availability of natural greenspace at each main settlement in the District and its capacity for additional visitors. Drawing on the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities (54), the Accessible Natural Greenspace Study then sets a minimum provision standard of 2.3 ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 population. Population growth in the District is currently estimated to be 17,000 over the Local Plan period (57), so this provision standard equates to a total accessible natural greenspace requirement of at least 39 ha. The Accessible Natural Greenspace Study goes on to determine the minimum amount of accessible natural greenspace that should be provided at each of the District's settlements by applying the 2.3 ha per 1,000 population standard and an assumption of 2.34 persons per household to the number of homes to be provided at each settlement by the SIR and SALP.
- 5.18 In discussing the design of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) to most effectively mitigate recreation pressure on Breckland SPA, the Accessible Natural Greenspace Study makes reference to Natural England guidance. It adapts this guidance in light of the Forest Heath District context, in particular the fact that because a large proportion of the District is designated for biodiversity, in some areas there is very little space to provide SANGs at settlements. It therefore proposes some flexibility in applying the guidance, for example by providing greenspace which may be smaller than 2 ha where space does not allow larger SANGs but ensuring it is connected to other greenspace by attractive walking and cycling routes.
- 5.19 Discussion between the Council and Natural England has highlighted two SSSIs, Maidscomb Hill SSSI at Lakenheath and Red Lodge SSSI at Red Lodge, which are in close proximity to and act as the main areas of natural greenspace for these settlements. These SSSIs are already subject to significant recreation pressure and the Accessible Natural Greenspace Study documents that the Council has agreed with Natural England the need for a wardening service at these two sites. This element of mitigation is not directly relevant to the HRA as the SSSIs in question are not part of European sites but demonstrates the potential role for measures other than SANG provision, such as visitor management, to mitigate recreation pressure.
- 5.20 The Accessible Natural Greenspace Study also notes that to avoid potential adverse effects on populations of Breckland SPA's designated species before they occur, monitoring of visitor levels and activities and monitoring of the effectiveness of mitigation measures such as Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) provision is likely to be required.

- 5.21 Drawing all of this information together, the Accessible Natural Greenspace Study proposes a recreation mitigation strategy, the key principles of which are reproduced in Box 1. The document then further develops these via specific proposals for each settlement.

Box 1: FHDC Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy - Key Features

- Provide at least the level of open space set out in the SPD for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities on all development sites.
- Where there is already a sports pitch and formal provision available within the community that is easily accessible, take a flexible approach to increase the natural open space through the SPD provision.
- In those settlements shown through the ANGSt study to be deficient in a 2-20 ha local green space, aim to create new open space of this size in association with new development. This should be located within 300 m of the new dwellings to ensure easy access for the new residents, and the design should, as much as is practicable, follow the (adapted) Natural England guidelines.
- Secure the provision of a large SANG area, at least 10 ha, such as a country park with adequate car parking facilities and natural areas which fulfil many of the requirements of the Natural England SANG design.
- New green space should be connected to the existing GI network through the retention of existing and creation of new features such as tree belts, hedges, grasslands, and river corridors.
- For development sites in settlements that are within 7.5 km of the heathland and forest components of Breckland SPA, improve and connect the wider green infrastructure network to provide access and walking routes of approximately 2.5 km in length.
- A warden service should be established where development could lead to recreational pressure that could damage the interest features of the existing sensitive open spaces that are designated nationally and/or locally. These sites include Maids Cross Hill SSSI and LNR, Red Lodge Heath SSSI and Aspal Close LNR.
- Where appropriate and proportionate to the scale and location of development, monitoring should be secured. Consultation with Natural England will be necessary to agree the level of monitoring.

- 5.22 In commenting on a draft of the Accessible Natural Greenspace Study during Preferred Options consultation on the SIR and SALP, Natural England stated that the study *"...has correctly identified the areas which are lacking natural greenspace"* and accepted the need to *"increase greenspace and green networks in a flexible way as suggested"*, given the limited, undesignated space available at the District's settlements. Where Natural England made suggestions to strengthen the mitigation offered by the study, such as inclusion of a large SANG area (at least 10 ha) and to focus on improvements to the wider green infrastructure network on development at settlements within 7.5 km distance of the heathland and forest areas of Breckland SPA, FHDC has given consideration to these and reflected them in the latest (January 2017) version of the study.

HRA Screening conclusion

- 5.23 It was judged that the mitigation offered by adopted policies alone was insufficient to rule out likely significant effects from the SIR overall housing provision in-combination with the development provided for by the Forest Heath Core Strategy in relation to recreation pressure on Breckland SPA. This was primarily because these policies do not implement the Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy set out in FHDC's Accessible Natural Greenspace Study.
- 5.24 However, it was noted that this strategy is in the process of being implemented via provisions in policies of the emerging SALP, for example requiring provision of alternative natural greenspace, dog-friendly access routes and connections to the wider green infrastructure network. Consideration was therefore given to whether the policies set out in the emerging SALP, if adopted, could provide sufficient mitigation in this regard.

- 5.25 In relation to likely significant effects from recreation pressure, the HRA of the SALP concluded as follows:

"It is judged that the mitigation offered by policies to provide and enhance open space and rights of ways networks and the linkage of these to a coherent Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy set out in the Accessible Natural Greenspace study is sufficient to avoid likely significant effects due to recreation pressure on any European site, including Breckland SPA."

- 5.26 This conclusion demonstrates that it is feasible to implement the overall housing provision within the SIR without likely significant effects in relation to recreation pressure either alone or in-combination with the Core Strategy. Likely significant effects from the overall housing provision in-combination with the Core Strategy can therefore be ruled out and reliance placed on assessment at a lower tier of plan making (HRA of the SALP) to ensure that site-specific allocations incorporate appropriate elements of FHDC's Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy to avoid likely significant effects.

HRA Screening conclusion

Likely significant recreation pressure effects from the SIR overall housing distribution on European sites can be ruled out, either from the SIR alone or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects. This conclusion relies on appropriate elements of FHDC's Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy being implemented via the SALP (a lower tier plan) and the fact that the SALP has itself been subject to HRA with a finding of no likely significant effect in relation to recreation pressure.

6 HRA Screening of broad distribution of housing

The broad distribution of housing

- 6.1 Table 6.1 shows how the overall housing provision for 2011-2031 will be distributed across the District's settlements. To deliver this broad distribution, sites will be identified through the SALP and/or neighbourhood plans.

Table 6.1 Broad distribution of housing in SIR Policy CS7

| Settlement | Existing completions and commitments and (2011-2015) | Additional provision | Total |
|------------------|--|----------------------|-------|
| Brandon | 103 | 33 | 136 |
| Mildenhall | 193 | 1,406 | 1,599 |
| Newmarket | 386 | 704 | 1,090 |
| Lakenheath | 105 | 663 | 768 |
| Red Lodge | 1,081 | 705 | 1,786 |
| Primary Villages | 1,129 | 357 | 1,486 |
| Other* | 181 | - | 181 |
| Windfall | - | 225 | 225 |
| TOTALS | 3,178 | 4,093 | 7,271 |

* Other includes completions and commitments within rural areas, secondary villages and small settlements

HRA Screening assessment

- 6.2 An assessment was carried out to identify the potential for the SIR broad distribution of housing to have likely significant effects on any of the European sites scoped into the HRA.
- 6.3 As explained in Chapter 4, certain types of potential effects from development on European sites were more appropriately assessed via the HRA Screening of options for total housing provision (see Chapter 5) or via the HRA Screening of the SALP (contained in a separate report). The HRA Screening of broad housing distribution options was therefore concerned with the following types of potential effect:
- disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings;
 - disturbance from construction or operation of roads;
 - recreation pressure;
 - water quantity;
 - water quality;
 - air quality.
- 6.4 The HRA Screening was based on the evidence and assumptions set out in Chapter 4. When applying relevant screening assessment zones of influence it was assumed that all development

set out in the housing distribution options would occur within 2.0 km of the existing boundary of a named Market Town or Key Service Centre (Brandon, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Lakenheath, Red Lodge) or within 1.0 km of a Primary Village; this was judged sufficient to allow for the largest likely settlement extensions.

6.5 For each type of potential effect, the following sections set out:

- an assessment of the potential for the broad distribution of housing in the SIR to have a likely significant effect on a European site, prior to consideration of mitigation;
- mitigation available where the potential for likely significant effects is identified - this may be, for example, from adopted Core Strategy policies other than CS7 (which is being reviewed by the SIR) or adopted policies in the Development Management Policies Local Plan; and
- a conclusion as to whether likely significant effects on European sites can be ruled out.

Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings

Initial screening assessment of potential for likely significant effects prior to mitigation

6.6 In line with the methodology in Chapter 4, prior to consideration of mitigation, the HRA Screening assumed that likely significant effects could not be ruled out if it appeared likely that the broad distribution of housing would be unlikely to be able to avoid development which:

- overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew; or
- overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of a 1 km grid square with ≥ 5 stone curlew nesting attempts during 2011-2015; or
- overlaps, or is within 400 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for woodlark or nightjar.

6.7 The results of the initial screening were as follows.

Brandon

6.8 All of Brandon and all but a very small area of the land on the boundary of the existing built up area are within 1,500 m of components of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew. More than half of Brandon and all of its southern and eastern boundaries (including the small area not within the stone curlew zone of influence) are within 400 m of components of Breckland SPA designated for woodlark and nightjar. It is therefore unlikely to be possible to avoid allocations within the zones of influence identified above and likely significant effects on Breckland SPA cannot be ruled out for the broad distribution.

Mildenhall

6.9 The eastern side of Mildenhall and adjoining greenfield land fall within 1,500 m of components of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew and within 400m of components of Breckland SPA designated for woodlark and nightjar. It would therefore be possible to avoid likely significant effects by allocating housing on infill sites and to the north west, west, and south west of the settlement.

Newmarket

6.10 The nearest Breckland SPA constraint zone is 4.9 km from the existing settlement boundary. It should therefore be possible to achieve an allocation which avoids likely significant effects.

Lakenheath

6.11 Small sections of the land immediately to the east of Lakenheath's settlement boundary are part of the Breckland SAC or within Breckland SPA's constraint zone for stone curlew. In addition, all of the land to the south and east of Lakenheath is within the stone curlew nesting attempts zone of influence. Nevertheless, it would be possible to avoid likely significant effects by allocating housing on infill sites and to the north and west of Lakenheath.

Red Lodge

- 6.12 The south eastern corner of Red Lodge and much of the land to its east and south are within Breckland SPA's constraint zones for stone curlew and/or stone curlew nesting attempts. It would be possible to avoid likely significant effects by allocating housing on infill sites and to the north and west of the settlement.

Primary villages

- 6.13 *Beck Row:* Areas of land approximately 0.8 km to the east of Beck Row's settlement boundary are within Breckland SPA's constraint zones for stone curlew or woodlark and nightjar.
- 6.14 *West Row:* The nearest Breckland SPA constraint zone is 2.8 km to the east of the settlement boundary.
- 6.15 *Exning:* The nearest Breckland SPA constraint zone is 6.8 km to the east of the settlement boundary.
- 6.16 *Kentford:* The eastern half of Kentford and its environs fall within the Breckland SPA stone curlew and/or stone curlew nesting attempts constraint zones.
- 6.17 It would be possible to achieve an allocation which avoids likely significant effects by focussing growth at the Primary Villages of Beck Row, West Row and Exning and ensuring that any allocations to Kentford are outside of the Breckland SPA stone curlew and/or stone curlew nesting attempts constraint zones.

Other

- 6.18 The 'other' provision of 181 dwellings represents dwellings which have already been permitted or completed and where these are within the Breckland SPA constraints zones, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites should already have been ruled out by project level HRA in line with the requirements of Core Strategy Policy CS2.

Windfall

- 6.19 The locations of windfall sites, which represent about 5% of the additional provision in the SIR, will not be known until they come forwards. The potential effects of these developments on European sites are therefore more appropriately assessed via project level HRA.

Summary

- 6.20 The initial assessment found that likely significant effects could be ruled out from all elements of the broad distribution of housing in SIR Policy CS7 except for the provision of 136 dwellings to Brandon.

In-combination effects

- 6.21 Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4 shows that Breckland SPA is a large European site which spans a number of neighbouring districts and the stone curlew and woodlark or nightjar zones of influence take in a number of neighbouring settlements, the main relevant focus for growth being Thetford in Breckland District. A review of the HRA for Breckland Core Strategy (Appendix 1) confirmed that the development proposed has the potential to contribute to increased disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings on Breckland SPA. As reported in the HRAs for neighbouring development plans, mitigation has been put in place to avoid likely significant recreation pressure effects on European sites from the development plans for those districts, either alone or in-combination. It is therefore assumed that the residual (post-mitigation) effect from development in neighbouring districts is negligible and need not be considered further in this HRA.
- 6.22 The review of other relevant plans and projects (Appendix 1) also highlights the potential for economic and tourism development provided by Policy CS 6 of the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy to contribute to disturbance and other urban edge effects on Breckland SPA. The HRA Screening of the SIR therefore considers the potential effects of the housing provided by the SIR in-combination with the development provided by the Core Strategy.

Existing mitigation which could rule out likely significant effects

- 6.23 Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy requires project level HRA for development proposals within the Breckland SPA constraint zones that correspond to the distances used by this HRA to assess the potential for disturbance and other urban edge effects. It further states that development likely to lead to an adverse effect on integrity will not be allowed. However, it was deemed inappropriate to rely on this policy in coming to an HRA Screening conclusion as this would pre-empt the findings of any project level HRA, and the required mitigation may not be deliverable.

HRA Screening conclusion

- 6.24 It was judged that the mitigation offered by adopted policies alone was insufficient to rule out likely significant effects from the SIR broad distribution of housing provision in-combination with the development provided for by the Forest Heath Core Strategy in relation to disturbance and other urban edge effects on Breckland SPA.
- 6.25 However, it was noted that this strategic policy is implemented via allocation policies in the SALP. The HRA of the SALP considered the potential disturbance and other urban effects of these allocations in detail, making reference to project level HRAs where these had been carried out and considering factors such as the screening of the site allocations by existing built development and the presence of features that could act as barriers to the movement of predators.
- 6.26 In relation to disturbance and other urban edge effects, the HRA of the SALP was able to rule out adverse effects on the integrity of Breckland SPA, both alone and in combination.
- 6.27 This conclusion from parallel HRA work demonstrates that it is feasible to implement the broad distribution of housing within the SIR without likely significant effects in relation to disturbance and other urban edge effects either alone or in-combination. Likely significant effects from the SIR broad distribution of housing in-combination can therefore be ruled out and reliance placed on assessment at a lower tier of plan making (HRA of the SALP) to ensure that the particular site-specific allocations avoid adverse effects on the integrity of Breckland SPA.

HRA Screening conclusion

Likely significant disturbance and other urban edge effects on European sites from the SIR broad distribution of housing alone or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects can be ruled out. This conclusion relies on the fact that the broad distribution is being implemented via the SALP (a lower tier plan) and the fact that the SALP has itself been subject to HRA with a finding of no likely significant effect.

Disturbance from construction or operation of roads

Initial screening assessment of potential for likely significant effects prior to mitigation

- 6.28 In line with the methodology in Chapter 4, prior to consideration of mitigation, the HRA Screening assumed that it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects on Breckland SPA if development provided for by the SIR would result in the need for any new road infrastructure or road improvements to increase capacity which:
- overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew; or
 - overlaps, or is within 1,500 m of a 1 km grid square with ≥ 5 stone curlew nesting attempts during 2011-2015.
- 6.29 FHDC's Transport Study (26), as amended (27) (28), was used to identify locations where the planned growth in the District would be likely to create a need for new road infrastructure or road improvements to increase capacity. The Transport Study suggests a number of highway improvements to accommodate the level of development to 2031, which are summarised in Table 6.2 alongside an initial assessment of their potential to result in likely significant effects, prior to consideration of mitigation.

Table 6.2 Highway improvements and their relation to stone curlew zones of influence

| Highway improvement recommended by Transport Study | Potential disturbance of stone curlew? |
|--|---|
| Junction 18 - A14 / Fordham Road – The enhanced signalised option for the junction to be explored and progressed to an increased level of detail. | No |
| Junction 17 - A14 / A11 (junction 38) – A need for an upgrading of the existing road markings at the merge and diverge junctions has been identified. | No |
| Junction 6 - A11 / A1101 Mildenhall Road / A1065 Brandon Road / A1101 Bury Road (A11 Fiveways) – The impact on the junction to be explored when assessed as part of the forthcoming strategic model. Any further mitigation at this junction would require a step-change in provision which will require further investigation such as grade separation. | Yes - within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA to south east of Mildenhall that are designated for stone curlew |
| Junction 3 - A1101 Kingsway / A1101 North Terrace / B1102 High Street – No obvious physical improvement schemes have been identified to mitigate the impact at this junction. Further investigation of solutions is required. The potential to prioritise sustainable travel or the potential to direct some movements away from the town centre should be explored as part of a wider multimodal assessment of Mildenhall town centre. | No |
| Junction 4 - A1101 Kingsway / Brandon Road / A1101 Bury Road – No obvious physical improvement scheme has been identified to mitigate the impact at this junction. Further investigation of solutions is required. The potential to prioritise sustainable travel or the potential to direct some movements away from the town centre should be explored as part of a wider multimodal assessment of Mildenhall town centre. | Yes - within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA to east of Mildenhall that are designated for stone curlew |
| Junction 19 - A1304 High Street / Exeter Road / A142 / A1304 Bury Road / B1063 five-arm roundabout – No further improvements identified. Further options should be explored as part of a wider Newmarket town centre study to include the Fordham Road signals and Exeter Road junction. | No |
| Junction 11 - A1304 Fordham Road / Studlands Park Avenue / Oaks Drive – Performance to be monitored following the implementation of improvements at junction 18. | No |
| Junction 24 - B1112 / Lord's Walk / Earls Field roundabout – Progress with proposed mitigation scheme as junction operates within theoretical capacity in the future year scenarios. Future year traffic flows to be refined using the strategic model, when available, to understand likely capacity at the junction. | Yes - within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA to east of Little Eriswell that are designated for stone curlew and within 1,500 m of stone curlew nesting attempts grid square to north east |
| Junction 25 - B1112 / Eriswell Road priority 'T' junction – Use the strategic model which is currently being developed to refine future year traffic flows to further understand proposed mitigation at this junction. Resolution of a number of issues, including land ownership would be required before mitigation could be implemented. | Yes - within 1,500 m of, SSSI components of Breckland SPA to east of Eriswell that are designated for stone curlew |

- 6.30 In summary, potential likely significant disturbance effects on the stone curlew population of Breckland SPA could not be ruled out for highway improvements on the A1101 at Mildenhall and on the B1112 at Eriswell/Little Eriswell.

In-combination effects

- 6.31 The traffic modelling within FHDC's Transport Study takes growth in surrounding local authorities into account because of the way future vehicular flows are calculated. Changes in vehicle flows from other authorities are calculated using the National Trip End Model Presentation Program (TEMPO), which is an industry standard database tool. TEMPO draws upon data for each local authority district in the UK (broken down to Middle-Layer Super Output Area) regarding changes in population, households, workforce and employment (in addition to data such as car ownership),

to produce a growth factor that is applied to the measured flows to 'grow' them to the end of the plan period.

- 6.32 In addition to growth in neighbouring districts, the review of other relevant plans and projects in Appendix 1 highlights the potential for traffic growth from economic development provided for by Policy CS 6 of the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy. Employment growth in Forest Heath District that has already happened since the start of the Core Strategy period, i.e. during 2006-2016 was captured by the transport model within the measured baseline traffic flows. Employment growth associated with the employment and mixed-use site allocations in the SALP was captured by the transport model by estimating the employment growth associated with each allocation and then adjusting the standard TEMPRO growth factors for areas in Forest Heath District.
- 6.33 The 'AADT 2031 Do Something' scenario of the Transport Study combines the traffic growth from development in neighbouring districts and the Forest Heath Core Strategy with that from the SIR and SALP to quantify expected traffic growth from all relevant sources in-combination. These growth figures were used to identify where a need for new road infrastructure or road improvements to increase capacity may arise.

Existing mitigation which could rule out likely significant effects

- 6.34 Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy requires project level HRA for development proposals within the Breckland SPA stone curlew/stone curlew nesting attempts constraint zones that correspond to the distances used by this HRA to assess the potential for disturbance effects of roads on stone curlew. It further states that development likely to lead to an adverse effect on integrity will not be allowed. However, it was deemed inappropriate to rely on this policy in coming to an HRA Screening conclusion for the SIR as the outcome of the project level HRAs required by CS2 was not yet known.

HRA Screening conclusion

Likely significant effects on Breckland SPA in the form of disturbance from construction or operation of roads cannot be ruled out for highway improvements likely to be required by the broad distribution of housing growth in the SIR and an Appropriate Assessment is therefore required.

Recreation pressure

Initial screening assessment of potential for likely significant effects prior to mitigation

- 6.35 In line with the method described in Chapter 4, the HRA Screening assumed that, prior to consideration of mitigation, it was not possible to rule out likely significant effects for any housing development that is within 7.5 km of the non-farmland parts of Breckland SPA, or within 1.5 km of the farmland parts of Breckland SPA, or within 1.5 km of stone curlew nesting attempts areas providing supporting habitat to Breckland SPA. The results of the initial screening of the broad distribution of housing provided by Policy CS7 of the SIR are set out in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Initial screening of broad distribution of housing for recreation pressure

| Settlement | Able to rule out potential for LSE prior to mitigation? |
|------------|--|
| Brandon | All of Brandon and the undeveloped land around the existing settlement boundary are within the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure. Therefore not possible to rule out potential for likely significant recreation pressure (prior to mitigation) on Breckland SPA under any likely allocation of the housing distribution figure within or adjoining the settlement. |
| Mildenhall | All of Mildenhall and the undeveloped land around the existing settlement boundary are within the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure. Therefore not possible to rule out potential for likely significant recreation pressure (prior to mitigation) on Breckland SPA under any likely allocation of the housing distribution figure within or adjoining the settlement. |
| Newmarket | None of Newmarket and the undeveloped land around the existing settlement boundary is within the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure. Therefore possible to rule out potential for likely significant recreation pressure (prior to mitigation) on Breckland SPA |

| Settlement | Able to rule out potential for LSE prior to mitigation? |
|------------------|--|
| | under any likely allocation of the housing distribution figure within or adjoining the settlement. |
| Lakenheath | All of Lakenheath and the undeveloped land around the existing settlement boundary are within the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure. Therefore not possible to rule out potential for likely significant recreation pressure (prior to mitigation) on Breckland SPA, under any likely allocation of the housing distribution figure within or adjoining the settlement. |
| Red Lodge | All of Red Lodge and the undeveloped land around the existing settlement boundary are within the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure. Therefore not possible to rule out potential for likely significant recreation pressure (prior to mitigation) on Breckland SPA, under any likely allocation of the housing distribution figure within or adjoining the settlement. |
| Primary Villages | All of Beck Row and West Row and the undeveloped land around them boundary are within the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure. The area to the south west of Kentford and all of Exning and the surrounding area are outside of the Breckland SPA zone of influence for recreation pressure so it would be possible to achieve the SIR's broad distribution of housing to Primary Villages without likely significant recreation pressure on Breckland SPA by allocating all of the housing figure for Primary Villages to these areas. The actual distribution of housing to particular Primary Villages is set out in the SALP which is subject to a separate HRA. |
| Other | The 'other' provision of 181 dwellings represents dwellings which have already been permitted or completed and these developments should therefore have already been subject to HRA, if relevant, and mitigated any likely significant effects that were identified. |
| Windfall | The locations of windfall sites, which represent about 5% of the additional provision (excluding completions and commitments) in the SIR, will not be known until they come forwards. The potential effects of these developments on European sites are therefore more appropriately assessed via project level HRA. |

- 6.36 In summary, the initial assessment found that likely significant recreation pressure effects on Breckland SPA could not be ruled out for the SIR broad distributions of housing to Brandon, Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Red Lodge.

In-combination effects

- 6.37 The potential for the effects of other relevant plans and projects to combine with those of the SIR to become significant in-combination is described at paragraphs 5.8 to 5.9 above.

Existing mitigation which could rule out likely significant effects

- 6.38 Relevant existing mitigation has already been described at paragraphs 5.10 to 5.22 of the HRA screening of the overall housing provision.

HRA Screening conclusion

- 6.39 It was judged that the mitigation offered by adopted policies alone was insufficient to rule out likely significant effects from the SIR broad distributions of housing to Brandon, Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Red Lodge in relation to recreation pressure on Breckland SPA. This was primarily because these policies do not implement the Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy set out in FHDC's Accessible Natural Greenspace Study.
- 6.40 However, it was noted that this strategy is implemented via provisions in policies of the SALP, for example requiring provision of alternative natural greenspace, dog-friendly access routes and connections to the wider green infrastructure network. Consideration was therefore given to whether the policies set out in the SALP, if adopted, could provide sufficient mitigation in this regard.
- 6.41 In relation to likely significant effects from recreation pressure, the HRA of the SALP concluded as follows:

"It is judged that the mitigation offered by policies to provide and enhance open space and rights of ways networks and the linkage of these to a coherent Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy set out in the Accessible Natural Greenspace study is sufficient to avoid likely significant effects due to recreation pressure on any European site, including Breckland SPA."

- 6.42 This conclusion demonstrates that it is feasible to implement the broad distribution of housing within the SIR without likely significant effects in relation to recreation pressure. Likely significant effects from the broad distribution of housing could therefore be ruled out and reliance on placed on assessment at a lower tier of plan making (HRA of the SALP) to ensure that site-specific allocations incorporate appropriate elements of FHDC's Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy to avoid likely significant effects.

HRA Screening conclusion

Likely significant recreation pressure effects from the SIR broad distribution of housing on European sites can be ruled out alone or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects. This conclusion relies on appropriate elements of FHDC's Recreation Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy being implemented via the SALP (a lower tier plan) and the fact that the SALP has been subject to HRA with a finding of no likely significant effect from recreation pressure.

Water quantity

Initial screening assessment of potential for likely significant effects prior to mitigation

- 6.43 The Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) conducted a screening assessment for potential water quantity effects on European sites in consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency and drawing on the relevant information summarised in Chapter 4, the results of which are presented in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Initial screening assessment in relation to water quantity

| European sites | Proximity to closest development locations | Potential water quality effects |
|--|---|--|
| Breckland SAC, SPA | Mildenhall located within 500 m. Brandon is located within 1 km. | Taken forward for further assessment due to their proximity and relation to the impacted settlements – see Appropriate Assessment chapter. |
| Chippenham Fen Ramsar site | Newmarket located within 3 km. Exning located within 3 km. Red Lodge located within 5 km. | Taken forward for further assessment due to their proximity and relation to the impacted settlements – see Appropriate Assessment chapter. |
| Devil's Dyke SAC | Newmarket located within 3 km. Exning located within 3 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Fenland SAC | Newmarket located within 50 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Norfolk Valley Fens SAC | Brandon located within 12 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Ouse Washes SAC, SPA and Ramsar site | Lakenheath located within 20 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site | Mildenhall located within 33 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Rex Graham Reserve SAC | The Rex Graham Reserve is located within the Brecklands and was considered as part of the Breckland SAC/SPA assessment. | |
| The Wash & Norfolk Coast SAC/ The Wash SPA and Ramsar site | Lakenheath located within 40 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely |

| European sites | Proximity to closest development locations | Potential water quality effects |
|------------------------|--|--|
| | | significant effects ruled out. |
| Wicken Fen Ramsar site | Exning located within 6 km. | Water Cycle Strategy showed that the proposed development can be supplied without increasing existing abstraction licences – likely significant effects ruled out. |

- 6.44 The findings of the initial assessment therefore identified the potential for likely significant effects, prior to mitigation, on Breckland SAC/SPA and Chippenham Fen Ramsar site.

In-combination effects

- 6.45 The HRA of the SIR in relation to water quantity effects relies on the assessment within FHDC's Water Cycle Strategy of potential effects on European sites. This, in turn, draws on evidence from Anglian Water's Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2015-2040, the Environment Agency's Cam and Ely Ouse Abstraction Licensing Strategy, and consultation with the Environment Agency and Natural England. These evidence sources consider all relevant water demand growth, not just demand from housing growth provided for by the SIR and SALP. For example, the WRMP estimates future non-household demand from current metered supplies, as adjusted for projected gross domestic product (GDP) growth.
- 6.46 In consultation with Anglian Water Services (AWS), the Water Cycle Strategy assumed demand for potable water from business will remain constant across the District for the foreseeable future. This is because demand growth from employment development is predicted to be offset by replacement of water-intensive industry with service industry over time.
- 6.47 In light of the above, any potential in-combination effects from growth in neighbouring districts within the same catchments as Forest Heath District or from non-housing development provided by Policy CS 6 of the Forest Heath Core Strategy are accounted for.

Existing mitigation which could rule out likely significant effects

- 6.48 The additional water needs of new development may be achievable within the headroom of existing water abstraction licences or may require new licences. The permitting system operated by the Environment Agency regulates existing abstraction licences and granting of new ones. The Environment Agency is in the process of reviewing currently permitted levels of abstraction that may be damaging to the environment and identifying measures to avoid such damage through its Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme. It aims to complete this by March 2020. The Environment Agency also has a standard approach (Resource Assessment and Abstraction Licensing Strategies) to assessing the amount of water available for further abstraction, only granting a licence after the needs of the environment (and existing abstractors) are met.

HRA Screening conclusion

- 6.49 While the permitting system operated by the Environment Agency should prevent adverse effects on European sites, it is possible that such effects from the growth proposed by the SIR and SALP could arise due to additional abstraction within existing licences until the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme is completed. The more detailed assessment carried out by the Water Cycle Strategy in relation to potential water quantity effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and on Chippenham Fen Ramsar site is therefore presented in the Appropriate Assessment chapter.

HRA Screening conclusion

Likely significant water quantity effects on European sites from the housing growth proposed by the SIR in-combination with other relevant plans and projects cannot be ruled out in relation to Breckland SAC/SPA and Chippenham Fen Ramsar site and an Appropriate Assessment is required.

Water quality

Initial screening assessment of potential for likely significant effects prior to mitigation

Treated wastewater discharges

- 6.50 The Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) conducted a screening assessment for potential water quality effects on European sites in consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency and drawing on the relevant information summarised in Chapter 4, the results of which form the basis of Table 6.5. The table shows that the initial assessment ruled out the potential for likely significant effects on all European sites other than Breckland SAC and SPA.

Combined sewer overflows

- 6.51 The Water Cycle Strategy concluded that while there are no significant sewer network capacity issues associated with the proposed development that would represent “show stoppers”, many of the allocated sites would be likely to require some upgrades to accommodate the increased flows. The initial HRA Screening (prior to mitigation) presented in Table 6.5 assumed that if combined sewer overflows occurred, these would only be capable of significant effects on a European site if that site is within 5 km of the affected sewer network; this was judged to be a precautionary assumption.

Contaminated surface runoff

- 6.52 As described in the methodology (Chapter 4), no spatial analysis was carried out in relation to potential adverse effects on European sites from contaminated surface run-off as the potential risk was judged to be low and readily avoided by appropriate, site-specific mitigation. The HRA screening was therefore limited to checking that appropriate mitigation can be required via policy safeguards – see mitigation section below.

Table 6.5 Initial screening assessment for water quality effects from wastewater discharges and combined sewer overflows, prior to mitigation

| European sites | Potential water quality effects from treated wastewater discharges | Potential water quality effects from combined sewer overflows |
|--|---|--|
| Breckland SAC, SPA | Brandon WRC, Mildenhall WRC and Tuddenham WRC are all within 1 km of the European designations. Existing discharge consent will be exceeded at Tuddenham WRC due to scale of development proposed at Red Lodge – see Appropriate Assessment chapter for analysis of water quality effects. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Brandon WRC and Mildenhall WRC. | The sewers associated with Brandon, Mildenhall and Tuddenham are all in close proximity to the European designations. Mitigation for the potential adverse water quality effect due to combined sewer overflows is considered below. |
| Chippenham Fen Ramsar site | Newmarket WRC is located within 2 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Newmarket WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | Newmarket sewers are located within 2 km. Mitigation for the potential adverse water quality effect due to combined sewer overflows is considered below. |
| Devil's Dyke SAC | Newmarket WRC is located within 3 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Newmarket WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | Newmarket sewers are located within 3 km. Mitigation for the potential adverse water quality effect due to combined sewer overflows is considered below. |
| Fenland SAC | Newmarket WRC is located within 44 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Newmarket WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | No sewers within 5 km; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Norfolk Valley Fens SAC | Brandon WRC is located within 12 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Brandon WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | No sewers within 5 km; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Ouse Washes SAC, SPA and Ramsar site | Lakenheath WRC is located within 20 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Lakenheath WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | No sewers within 5 km; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site | Mildenhall WRC is located within 33 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Mildenhall WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | No sewers within 5 km; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Rex Graham Reserve SAC | The Rex Graham Reserve is located within the Brecklands and was considered as part of the Breckland SAC/SPA assessment. | |
| The Wash & Norfolk Coast SAC/ The Wash SPA and Ramsar site | Lakenheath WRC is located within 40 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Lakenheath WRC; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | No sewers within 5 km; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. |
| Wicken Fen Ramsar site | Newmarket WRC is located within 8 km. The WCS concluded that discharge consents will not be exceeded at Newmarket WRC, therefore there will be no impact on water quality; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. | No sewers within 5 km; potential for likely significant effects ruled out. |

In-combination effects

- 6.53 The HRA of the SIR in relation to water quality effects relies on the assessment within FHDC's Water Cycle Strategy of potential effects on European sites.

- 6.54 The authors of the Water Cycle Strategy consulted with AWS and the Environment Agency to determine the capacity of Water Recycling Centres (WRC) serving Forest Heath District to accept the higher volumes of sewage associated with the scale and distribution of growth proposed by the SIR and SALP and to treat it without deterioration in the water quality of receiving water courses. It also considered whether the proposed development would result in any insurmountable sewer network capacity issues. These capacity assessments considered all relevant growth within the catchments of the WRCs, not just housing growth provided for by the SIR and SALP.
- 6.55 In consultation with AWS, the authors of the Water Cycle Study determined that it was not necessary to consider the employment development provided for by the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy as the workers will mostly already have been included within population estimations in the development trajectory. As such, any potential in-combination effects from employment development provided by Core Strategy Policy CS 6 are already accounted for in the HRA of the SIR. Tourism development under CS 6 is judged unlikely to result in significant additional capacity pressure on WRCs and the sewer network and since CS 6 and the SALP do not specify where such development will occur, any potential in-combination effects are more appropriately assessed via project level HRA.

Existing mitigation which could rule out likely significant effects

Treated wastewater discharges

- 6.56 Mitigation is available as follows:
- Core Strategy Policy CS13: requirement for sufficient capacity in existing local infrastructure before land is released for development and to gather developer contributions to improve infrastructure to the required standard. One of the main areas to be addressed is:
 - *"Providing for additional strategic waste water treatment capacity in accordance with Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study. This waste water infrastructure will be upgraded as required and operational in time to meet the demands of the development;"*
 - Development Management Policy DM14: all development proposals should ensure no deterioration to water quality and development will not be permitted where, individually or cumulatively, there are likely to be unacceptable impacts on the natural environment or surface and groundwater quality.
 - The volume and quality of treated wastewater discharges from WRCs to receiving water courses is subject to regulation by the Environment Agency via the grant and review of environmental permits. This Environmental permitting regime operated by the Environment Agency should ensure that any development requiring variation in the discharge consent for a WRC does not result in deterioration in downstream water quality as a result of that variation.

Combined sewer overflows

- 6.57 Mitigation is available as follows:
- 6.58 Core Strategy Policy CS13: requirement for sufficient capacity in existing local infrastructure before land is released for development and to gather developer contributions to improve infrastructure to the required standard.
- 6.59 Development Management Policy DM6: requirement for all new development to manage on-site drainage, for example by use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).
- 6.60 Development Management Policy DM14: all development proposals should ensure no deterioration to water quality and development will not be permitted where, individually or cumulatively, there are likely to be unacceptable impacts on the natural environment or surface and groundwater quality.

Contaminated surface runoff

- 6.61 Mitigation is available from the following policies in the adopted Joint Development Management Policies Document:

- Development Management Policy DM6: requirement for all new development to manage on-site drainage, for example by use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).
- Development Management Policy DM14: all development proposals should ensure no deterioration to water quality and development will not be permitted where, individually or cumulatively, there are likely to be unacceptable impacts on the natural environment or surface and groundwater quality.

HRA Screening conclusion

Treated wastewater discharges

- 6.62 Notwithstanding the strong mitigation outlined above it was judged that more detailed assessment was appropriate in relation to potential water quality effects on Breckland SAC/SPA. This was in relation to the forecast need for wastewater discharges from Tuddenham WRC in excess of its current consents. Likely significant effects were not, therefore, ruled out and an Appropriate Assessment is presented in Chapter 7.

Combined sewer overflows

- 6.63 Following review of Anglian Water asset datasets and consultation with Anglian Water, the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) concluded that the sewerage network holds no constraint to the proposed development. This was based on the fact that Anglian Water regards connection to combined sewers as a last resort for surface water drainage and encourages developers to consult it as early as possible during the planning process to identify potential alternatives (e.g. infiltration via a SUDS system or connection to a watercourse or storm sewer) or, where these are not possible, to agree any combined sewer network upgrades are required. It was judged that the mitigation policies outlined above provide sufficient certainty that any sewer network upgrades required by new development will be provided and likely significant effects were therefore ruled out.

Contaminated surface runoff

- 6.64 It was judged that any potential adverse water quality effects of contaminated surface runoff on European sites could be ruled out by reliance on the relevant development management policies (see above) to secure any necessary site-specific avoidance measures.

HRA Screening conclusion

Likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA in the form of water quality effects from treated wastewater discharges by Tuddenham WRC cannot be ruled out from the housing growth proposed by the SIR and an Appropriate Assessment is therefore required.

Air quality

Initial screening assessment of potential for likely significant effects prior to mitigation

Proximity of sensitive European sites to major roads

- 6.65 Consideration was first given to whether the sensitive European sites (see Chapter 4) were within 200 m of a major road that could potentially see a significant increase in traffic as result of the development proposed by the SIR and SALP. This assessment is set out in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 European sites sensitive to air pollution and their proximity to major roads

| European site | Relationship to major roads | Conclusion |
|---------------|---|---|
| Breckland SAC | Various elements of the SAC within the District are within 200 m of: A1065 between Little Eriswell and Brandon A11 between junctions with B1112 and B1106 A1101 between Mildenhall and junction with B1112 | Assessment of traffic growth on these roads is required |
| Breckland SPA | The following major roads pass through or | Assessment of traffic growth on these |

| European site | Relationship to major roads | Conclusion |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| | <p>within 200 m of large parts of the SPA:</p> <p>A1065 between Mildenhall and Brandon</p> <p>A11 between Mildenhall and Thetford</p> <p>A1101 between Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds</p> <p>Section of A14 just outside District boundary to west of Risby</p> | roads is required |
| Devil's Dyke SAC | <p>North west end of SAC is within 200 m of A14 where it crosses District boundary west of Newmarket</p> <p>South east end of SAC is within 200 m of A1304 where it crosses District boundary south west of Newmarket</p> | Devil's Dyke is a linear site that lies perpendicular to the A14 and A1304; this and the fact that the northern end of the SAC is approximately 140 m from the A14 limit the exposure of the European site to air pollution from these roads, such that likely significant effects can be ruled out |
| Fenland SAC | No A-roads within 200 m | Likely significant effects can be ruled out |
| Chippenham Fen Ramsar site | No A-roads within 200 m | Likely significant effects can be ruled out |
| Wicken Fen Ramsar site | No A-roads within 200 m | Likely significant effects can be ruled out |
| Norfolk Valley Fens SAC | No A-roads within 200 m | Likely significant effects can be ruled out |
| Rex Graham Reserve SAC | All of site is within 200 m of A11 between Mildenhall and A11 junction with B1112 (site is located within Breckland SAC) | Assessment of traffic growth on these roads is required |

- 6.66 Table 6.6 indicates the need for further HRA in relation to air quality effects on Breckland SAC (including Rex Graham Reserve SAC) and Breckland SPA. This was carried out by AECOM and the results are presented in a separate report (52) which forms part of the HRA of the SIR and SALP. The result of that work is reproduced in Chapter 8 for ease of reference.

7 Appropriate Assessment

- 7.1 This chapter gives more detailed consideration to whether adverse effects on the integrity of any European site can be ruled out in relation to the types of effect for which HRA Screening (see Chapter 6) was unable to rule out likely significant effects. The types of effect in question were:
- disturbance from construction or operation of roads, with respect to Breckland SPA;
 - water quantity, with respect to Breckland SAC/SPA and Chippenham Fen Ramsar site;
 - water quality, with respect to Breckland SAC/SPA.

Disturbance from construction or operation of roads

Scope of the Appropriate Assessment

- 7.2 The HRA Screening was unable to rule out the potential for likely significant disturbance effects on the stone curlew population of Breckland SPA in relation to the following highway improvements recommended by FHDC's Transport Study to accommodate planned growth in the District:
- Junction 6 - A11 / A1101 Mildenhall Road / A1065 Brandon Road / A1101 Bury Road (A11 Fiveways);
 - Junction 4 - A1101 Kingsway / Brandon Road / A1101 Bury Road;
 - Junction 24 - B1112 / Lord's Walk / Earls Field roundabout;
 - Junction 25 - B1112 / Eriswell Road priority 'T' junction.

Approach to Appropriate Assessment

- 7.3 As described in Chapter 4, a clear avoidance by stone curlews of otherwise suitable habitat adjacent to major roads has been demonstrated in a number of studies and these effects exist up to a distance of at least 1,000 m from trunk roads and possibly up to 2,000 m; this formed the basis of the 1,500 m separation distance used for HRA Screening. Reviewing the two latest and most directly relevant studies in more detail revealed the following study findings.
- 7.4 When all A-roads were treated equally, regardless of whether the nearest was a trunk road (A11, A14 or A47) or a much less busy A-road, it was found that stone curlew nest density is generally lower for areas within 400 m of the nearest A-road, but at greater distances there is no consistent pattern. (19)
- 7.5 For trunk roads only (A11, A14 or A47), regardless of the level of buildings, the nest density was always lowest in areas within 500 m of the nearest trunk road and highest in the areas furthest from the nearest trunk road; stone curlews almost completely avoid nesting on otherwise suitable arable land if it is very near to both a Trunk road and a large area of buildings. (19)
- 7.6 Significantly lower densities of stone curlew nests were found at distances up to 1,500m from settlements, and distances up to 1,000m or more from major (trunk) roads. The best fitting models involved optimally distance weighted variables for the extent of nearby buildings and the trunk road traffic levels. (58)
- 7.7 The Appropriate Assessment therefore considered:
- whether the highway improvement recommended by the Transport Study was within 1,000 of a trunk road (A11, A14 or A47) or within 400 m of a less busy A-road;
 - the separation distance between the junction improvement and the nearest SSSI component of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew or nearest stone curlew nesting attempts grid square; and

- whether any built development (existing or allocated by the SALP) could screen the junction improvement from the relevant SSSI component of Breckland SPA designated for stone curlew or stone curlew nesting attempts grid square.

7.8 The Transport Study (26) (27) (28) which identified the highway improvements likely to be required took into account the cumulative effects on traffic of all relevant growth proposed by the SIR and SALP as well as traffic associated with a number of development locations in East Cambridgeshire. Potential in combination effects were further considered by identifying any separate highway improvements which could result in disturbance of the same area of Breckland SPA.

In-combination effects

7.9 As described fully within the HRA Screening for this effect type in Chapter 6, the Transport Study combines the traffic growth from development in neighbouring districts and the Forest Heath Core Strategy with that from the SIR and SALP to quantify expected traffic growth from all relevant sources in-combination. These growth figures were used to identify where a need for new road infrastructure or road improvements to increase capacity may arise.

Results of Appropriate Assessment

Conclusion: The Appropriate Assessment, set out in Table 7.1, was able to rule out adverse effects on the integrity of Breckland SPA, both from the SIR and SALP and in-combination with other plans and projects.

Table 7.1 Appropriate Assessment of highway improvements

| Junction | Highway improvement suggested by Transport Study | Is junction on a trunk road? | Distance of nearest stone curlew habitat from road junction | Screening of stone curlew habitat from road junction | Overall conclusion |
|--|---|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Junction 6 - A11 / A1101 Mildenhall Road / A1065 Brandon Road / A1101 Bury Road (A11 Fiveways) | <i>"The impact on the junction to be explored when assessed as part of the forthcoming strategic model"</i> | Yes | Whilst parts of Breckland SPA between the A11/A1065 and the built up area of Mildenhall are directly adjacent to the junction, the closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are approximately 280 m to the east of the junction | The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are not screened from the junction by existing built development or by SALP allocations | <p>Potential for adverse disturbance effects on integrity of Breckland SPA since approximately 200 ha of the areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are within 1,000 m of this recommended trunk road upgrade.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has commissioned evidence (59) that describes four high level options for improvement of this junction which could potentially feed into the Highways England Road Investment Strategy for Road Period 2 (2020 to 2025) "RIS2" program. These include a "do minimum" option (a hamburger junction) that would require minimal increase in the footprint of the junction with improvements focused on the existing road corridor that would lead to improvements to the junction in terms of traffic flow and reduced queuing; such an option would be likely to avoid direct effects on Breckland SPA. Highways England will investigate all potential options (which is likely to involve substantially more than the four examined in the existing evidence report) and hold public consultation events, which will allow all stakeholders the opportunity to comment, before a preferred option is selected. Highways England would develop a preferred project in accordance with their Project Control Framework and involve Natural England and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>The Appropriate Assessment has ruled out likely significant effects from the SIR since there are technical options available that could deliver the necessary highway improvements without direct effects on the Breckland SPA and since the chosen option would be subject to the necessary environmental assessments including HRA.</p> |
| Junction 4 - A1101 Kingsway / Brandon Road | <i>"No obvious physical improvement scheme has been identified... potential to</i> | No | The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are approximately 1.0 km to the east | The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are screened | Adverse effects on integrity ruled out as junction is not on a trunk road and closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are more than 400 m |

| Junction | Highway improvement suggested by Transport Study | Is junction on a trunk road? | Distance of nearest stone curlew habitat from road junction | Screening of stone curlew habitat from road junction | Overall conclusion |
|--|--|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| / A1101 Bury Road | <i>prioritise sustainable travel or the potential to direct some movements away from the town centre should be explored"</i> | | of the junction | from the junction by the existing built-up area of Mildenhall as well as by employment allocation SA17(a) in the SALP | from a non-trunk A-road and are screened from the junction by existing built development |
| Junction 24 - B1112 / Lord's Walk / Earls Field roundabout | <i>"widening of the B1112 north and south arms and the Lord's Walk arm to create two entry lanes onto the junction"</i> | No | <p>The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are approximately 940 m to the east of the junction</p> <p>Some areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are within 1,500 m of both this improvement and that at Junction 25 - B1112 / Eriswell Road priority 'T' junction</p> | The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are screened from the junction by the existing built-up area of Little Eriswell/RAF Lakenheath | <p>Adverse effects on integrity ruled out as junction is not on a trunk or other A-road</p> <p>Potential to combine with minor disturbance from improvement at Junction 25 ruled out because the areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are screened from Junction 24 by existing built development so effects from Junction 24 improvement likely to be negligible</p> |
| Junction 25 - B1112 / Eriswell Road priority 'T' junction | signalisation of the junction with the provision of either one or two lanes of entry on the Eriswell Road arm | No | <p>The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are approximately 1.0 km to the east of the junction</p> <p>Some areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are within 1,500 m of both this improvement and that at Junction 25 - B1112 / Eriswell Road priority 'T' junction</p> | The closest areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are not screened from the junction by existing built development or by SALP allocations | <p>Adverse effects on integrity ruled out as junction is not on a trunk or other A-road</p> <p>Likely to be minor disturbance but potential for this to combine with disturbance from improvement at Junction 24 ruled out because the areas of the SPA of importance to stone curlew are screened from Junction 24 by existing built development so effects from Junction 24 improvement likely to be negligible</p> |

Water quantity

Scope of the Appropriate Assessment

- 7.10 Likely significant water quantity effects from the SIR broad distribution of housing could not be ruled out on Breckland SAC/SPA or on Chippenham Fen Ramsar site because the Water Cycle Strategy concluded that the catchments of these European sites included water resource areas impacted by the proposed development.

Approach to Appropriate Assessment

- 7.11 The Appropriate Assessment comprised the more detailed assessment carried out by the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) in relation to Breckland SAC/SPA and on Chippenham Fen Ramsar site, as set out below.

In-combination effects

- 7.12 As described fully within the HRA Screening for this effect type in Chapter 6, any potential in-combination effects from growth in neighbouring districts within the same catchments as Forest Heath District or from non-housing development provided by Policy CS 6 of the Forest Heath Core Strategy are accounted for in the HRA.

Results of Appropriate Assessment

- 7.13 The results of the more detailed assessment for each of the two European sites identified above were as follows.

Breckland SAC and SPA

- 7.14 The Water Cycle Strategy reports that given Breckland SAC/SPA's large size it is understood to be fed from number of sources – fluvial, surface and groundwater. The review of the Cam and Ely Ouse CAMS in Section 4 of the Water Cycle Strategy identified that no changes have been proposed to abstractions relating to Breckland as part of the Environment Agency's Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme. In addition to this, during consultation with the Environment Agency and Natural England, no water supply issues that could lead to a detrimental impact were notified to the authors of the Water Cycle Strategy.

Conclusion: Adverse effects on the integrity of Breckland SAC and SPA can be ruled out in relation to water quantity effects of the SIR and SALP or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects.

Chippenham Fen Ramsar site

- 7.15 The Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) reports that the water balance of Chippenham Fen has been the subject of much research and discussion in recent years but in general, it is supported by: rainfall, flows from Soham Lode/River Chippenham and springs from chalk aquifers below. Water is additionally supplemented through the Lodes Granta Groundwater Support Scheme.
- 7.16 The report 'A Wetland Framework for Impact Assessment of Statutory Sites in Eastern England' (60) was published by the Environment Agency with the aim of summarising some of the key features salient to understanding possible water supply mechanisms. The report describes the water supply of Chippenham Fen as follows:

"The fen surface is fed primarily by rainfall (at least in summer) with some localised seepage of chalk water inwards from dykes and, in places, periodic summer flooding. The possibility of direct chalk water inputs is uncertain – even if these occur, the water table is (on average) well subsurface during the growing period. Rain fed surfaces probably remain base-rich on account of a highly calcareous peat and underlying clays (and perhaps because of episodic flooding)."

- 7.17 Following review of the CAMS and WRMP, the Water Cycle Strategy identified that as part of the Environment Agency's Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme the latest Chippenham Fen

Review of Consents proposed no changes to the existing abstraction licence. It can therefore be concluded that current abstractions licences are not causing negative environmental effects.

- 7.18 In addition, as part of the Water Cycle Strategy, Natural England and the EA were consulted and both parties confirmed that the current mitigation schemes and licences were adequate for Chippenham Fen.

Conclusion: Given the above information it can be concluded that as the development trajectory can be supplied by Anglian Water within existing abstraction licences and no changes to these are required to protect designated sites, an adverse effect on the integrity of Chippenham Fen Ramsar site can be ruled out both from the SIR and SALP and in-combination with other relevant plans and projects.

Water quality

Scope of the Appropriate Assessment

- 7.19 Likely significant water quality effects from the SIR broad distribution and SALP allocations of housing could not be ruled out on Breckland SAC/SPA. This was because the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) concluded that planned growth would result in treated sewage discharges from Tuddenham WRC exceeding existing consents. This could potentially have adverse effects on the quality of the receiving water course that may be hydrologically connected to Breckland SAC/SPA due to Breckland's large area and its proximity to Tuddenham.

Approach to Appropriate Assessment

- 7.20 The Appropriate Assessment comprised the more detailed water quality assessment carried out by the Water Cycle Strategy (44) (45) (46) in relation to Tuddenham WRC, as set out below.

In-combination effects

- 7.21 As described fully within the HRA Screening for this effect type in Chapter 6, capacity assessments considered all relevant growth within the catchments of the WRCs, not just housing growth provided for by the SIR and SALP.

Results of Appropriate Assessment

- 7.22 As the Water Cycle Strategy determined that Tuddenham WRC would exceed existing discharge consents it went on to examine the implications for water quality in the receiving watercourse. This was identified as Tuddenham Stream which flows through Breckland SAC/SPA.
- 7.23 The current strategy to achieve Water Framework Directive (WFD) targets in the Anglian region is set out in a River Basin Management Plan (61). Under the WFD, Anglian Water must ensure 'No Deterioration' in current quality of the receiving watercourse as a minimum; Tuddenham Stream is currently assessed as having 'Moderate' WFD ecological potential and 'Good' WFD chemical status. WFD requirements to improve towards Good status (particularly if the growth is not the primary reason for failure) are subject to technical feasibility and assessment of whether costs would be disproportionate.
- 7.24 The industry regulator, Ofwat, has already confirmed funding for Anglian Water to improve the treatment process at Tuddenham WRC to achieve tighter permitted limits for ammonia and phosphorus concentrations in discharges by 1 April 2018 to ensure 'No Deterioration'. The Water Cycle Strategy confirmed that the achievement of all relevant WFD requirements is not compromised by the proposed growth, i.e. that the already-planned tightening of treatment standards by April 2018 will be sufficient to ensure No Deterioration in water quality for Tuddenham Stream.

Conclusion: The growth planned by the SIR and SALP will not, therefore, have adverse effects on the integrity of Breckland SAC/SPA in relation to water quality either alone or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The HRA Screening of the SIR was able to rule out likely significant effects from the Plan with the exception of the following potential types of effect:
- disturbance from construction or operation of roads;
 - water quantity;
 - water quality; and
 - air quality.
- 8.2 Appropriate Assessment in relation to the first three of these potential effects was able to rule out an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other relevant plans and projects.
- 8.3 The method and conclusions of the HRA of the SIR and SALP in relation to air quality effects are presented in a separate report prepared by AECOM (52). That report concludes that *"no adverse effect on Breckland SAC, SPA or Rex Graham Reserve SAC is expected to occur from growth in Forest Heath District Council alone, or in combination with other projects and plans"*.

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Appendix 1

Review of other relevant plans and projects

Forest Heath Core Strategy

Outline of development proposed by remaining policies of Forest Heath Core Strategy

Policy CS 7 of the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy, which is the subject of the Single Issue Review, defines the total amount of housing to be provided, its broad distribution between the larger settlements, the broad locations for large urban extensions, the minimum average housing density to be achieved, and the proportion of housing to be developed on brownfield land.

The remaining policies of the Core Strategy remain in force and are therefore considered in the in-combination assessment. Many of the Core Strategy policies other than CS 7 were screened out as not likely to have significant effects on European sites by the HRA of the Core Strategy because they would not give rise to development. For the remaining Core Strategy policies which would give rise to development, Table A1 describes the types and amounts of development provided for and the findings of the HRA of the Core Strategy.

Table A1: Review of Core Strategy and findings of HRA of Core Strategy

| Core Strategy policy | Findings of HRA of Core Strategy |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Policy CS 1 Spatial Strategy</i></p> <p>Establishes the settlement hierarchy and summarises the amount and type of development to be provided at the larger settlements (towns and key service centres) by the more detailed Core Strategy policies.</p> | <p>Likely significant effects ruled out since it is an umbrella policy that draws its proposals from other, more detailed Core Strategy policies, each of which has been subject to HRA.</p> |
| <p><i>Policy CS 6 Sustainable Economic and Tourism Development</i></p> <p>Provides for development of 16 ha of employment land, with Newmarket (approximately 5 ha) identified as the primary location for strategic employment growth, and development at other settlements in broad alignment with the scale of housing development - Mildenhall (approximately 4.5 ha), Brandon (approximately 2 ha), Lakenheath and Red Lodge growth. Spatially non-specific support for tourism development that will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment.</p> | <p>While research links housing rather than economic or tourism development to potential adverse effects on Annex 1 birds of Breckland SPA, the HRA assumed on a precautionary basis that likely significant effects could not be ruled out for any of these types of development. The types of likely significant effect not ruled out from economic and tourism development were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A potential reduction in the density of Habitats Directive Annex I bird species, taking a precautionary approach following the negative relationship which has been shown to exist with housing density (stone curlews, nightjars and woodlarks); • Potential reduction in the density of stone curlews due to their avoidance of roads and the impact of increased road traffic; • Increased levels of recreational activity resulting in increased disturbance to Annex I ground nesting bird species sensitive to disturbance (stone curlew, nightjar and woodlark) in the Breckland SPA; • Increased water abstraction requirements to meet the additional water supply needs; and • Increased water discharges to meet the additional waste water treatment needs." <p>The topic-based Appropriate Assessment therefore considered these types of potential effect from all screened in Core Strategy policies.</p> |
| <p><i>Policy CS 8 Provision for Gypsy and Travellers</i></p> <p>Allocation of six additional pitches between 2006-2011 and spatially non-specific commitment to provide for a 3% annual increase in pitches across</p> | <p>Likely significant effects were ruled out as this was a 'general policy without location specificity', the effects of which are more appropriately assessed at a lower tier in the planning process via the HRA of specific allocations or development proposals.</p> |

| Core Strategy policy | Findings of HRA of Core Strategy |
|---|---|
| the District thereafter. | |
| <i>CS 10 Sustainable Rural Communities</i> Spatially non-specific support for limited provision of housing and local facilities within villages and small settlements subject to various criteria. Also support for enterprises requiring a rural location, subject to no significant environmental effects. | Likely significant effects were ruled out by reliance on the protection afforded by the environmental clause within the policy and by Policy CS 2 Natural Environment. |
| <i>Policy CS 11 Retail and Town Centre Strategy</i> Provision for additional retail floorspace and other town centre uses at Newmarket, Mildenhall and Brandon. | Likely significant effects were ruled out because this policy directs development away from European sites. |
| <i>Policy CS 12 Strategic Transport Improvement and Sustainable Transport</i> Supporting partner organisations to deliver strategic transport road, rail and cycle network improvements, including dualling of the A11 between Thetford and Barton Mills and improvements to Fiveways roundabout and improvements to the A14/A142 junction at Newmarket. | <p>The HRA screening was unable to rule out likely significant effects in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Potential reduction in the density of stone curlews from their avoidance of roads;</i> • <i>Pollution of SAC habitats which are vulnerable to air-borne pollution (i.e. heaths which are vulnerable to nitrogen deposition)."</i> <p>The topic-based Appropriate Assessment therefore considered these types of potential effect from the Core Strategy as a whole.</p> |

Potential for effects in-combination

Table A1 shows that the HRA screening of the Core Strategy was unable to rule out a number of types of likely significant effect on European sites from employment, tourism and transport infrastructure development provided by Policies CS 6 and CS 12. These were considered further in the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy and adverse effects on integrity were ruled out following inclusion of a package of avoidance and mitigation measures in Core Strategy policy. The findings of the HRA of the Core Strategy can therefore be relied on to conclude that no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites will arise from the adopted Core Strategy policies alone. However, a possibility exists that the types of effect identified by the HRA Screening of the Core Strategy could become significant in-combination with reviewed Policy CS 7 (as per the SIR) and other relevant plans and projects. For each of the types of potential adverse effect identified in the HRA Screening of the Core Strategy, the HRA of the SIR therefore considers whether the development provided for by adopted Core Strategy policies CS 6 and CS 12 could result in significant effects in-combination with reviewed Policy CS 7 and other relevant plans and projects.

Other county or district level plans providing for development

| Breckland Core Strategy (adopted 2009) |
|--|
| Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Breckland Council |
| Related HRA/AA: Habitats Regulation Assessment: Breckland Council Submission Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Document (November 2008) and Habitats Regulation Assessment Breckland Council Site Specific Policies and Proposals Document Preferred options (May 2010). |
| Summary of Plan proposals: |
| <i>Housing provision:</i> The Core Strategy makes provision for at least 19,100 new dwellings within the period 2001-2026 (Policy CP 1). |
| <i>Employment land provision:</i> The Core Strategy (Policy CP 3) supports the delivery of at least 6,000 jobs in the District |

Breckland Core Strategy (adopted 2009)

to 2021 as identified for Breckland in the Regional Spatial Strategy

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

Following on from the initial screening assessment the following potential adverse effects were identified and addressed within the appropriate assessment:

- Direct effects of built development – the HRA recommended that the Core Strategy was amended to ensure that allocations and policies do not promote housing within the 1500m stone curlew avoidance zone and housing within that zone will not normally be supported. In exceptional circumstances, such as where existing development completely makes the new proposal from Breckland SPA/supporting habitat, project level HRA must be able to demonstrate that adverse effects upon the Breckland SPA stone curlew interest feature will be prevented.
- Indirect disturbance to Annex 1 birds - Reduction in density of Breckland SPA Annex I bird species (stone curlew, nightjar, woodlark) near to new housing. The HRA recommended that amendments to the Core Strategy were made to include policy wording or supporting text to explain the council is committed to ensuring sustainable levels of recreation in and around the Breckland SPA, and work with partners including Natural England, RSPB and Forestry Commission to develop a strategy that sets out an access management and monitoring programme that provides measures to prevent increasing visitor pressure, and suitable mitigation (should monitoring indicate that the Annex I species are failing to meet conservation objectives due to recreational pressure).
- Increased levels of recreational activity resulting in increased disturbance to Breckland SPA Annex I bird species (stone curlew, nightjar, and woodlark).
- Increased levels of people on and around the heaths, resulting in an increase in urban effects such as increased fire risk, fly-tipping, trampling etc. The HRA recommended amendments to the Core Strategy ensuring the council commits to developing a framework of developer contributions, secured by legal agreement, for any new development where the heaths at Thetford (Barnham Cross Common, Thetford Heath, Thetford Golf Club and Marsh), East Wretham or Brettenham are likely to be used as local greenspace by the new residents of employees. Contributions would be used of implementation of an urban heaths management plan (an individual management plan will be produced for Barnham Cross Common), with the primary purpose of achieving SPA/SAC conservation objectives.
- Increased levels of recreation to the Norfolk Coast (including the Wash), potentially resulting in disturbance to interest features to interest features and other recreational impacts. The HRA suggested supporting text of the Core Strategy should recognise that coastal competent authorities promoting visitor access will need to consider the necessary measures required to meet the requirement of the Habitats Regulations and protect the integrity of the coastal European sites, and the possibility that additional housing within the Breckland District may contribute to that visitor pressure, in combination with new housing in other districts. The text should therefore commit to working in partnership with neighbouring authorities and other relevant partners to prevent adverse effects when monitoring indicates it could occur.
- Increased water abstraction requirements to meet the additional water supply needs. The HRA suggested that amendments to the Core Strategy should include the requirement for all new developments to install infiltration and attenuation measures to dispose of surface water in accordance with recommended SUDS and any inadequate waste water infrastructure serving new development should be upgraded as required and operational in time to meet the demands of development. Further action was also recommended in order to seek confirmation from the Environment Agency and/or AWS that existing capacity and available headroom in existing sewage systems is adequate to absorb additional discharges from new development, or that upgraded infrastructure is planned and fully committed to within the Core Strategy period.
- Water quality and waste water discharge – The HRA recommended amendments to the housing figures within the Core Strategy so that they are taken forward in three categories i.e. those immediately provided for in the plan, those that can only be taken forward with the committed works in place and operational in time to meet the demands of development, and those that cannot be taken forward prior to plan review and the revisit of the HRA. Further action to seek the necessary information from the Environment and/or AWS and the consultants commissioned to produce the Breckland Water Cycle Study to enable housing currently promoted to be taken forward under the three categories.
- Increased levels of traffic generated air pollution affecting sensitive features of SAC habitats. The HRA suggested that the Core Strategy was amended to commit to the prevention of road infrastructure improvements or new roads within 200m of the SAC.
- Potential reduction in the density of Habitats Directive Annex I bird species associated with the SPA, due to avoidance of areas close to new roads. The amendments to the Core Strategy suggested in the HRA include the commitment to the prevention of road infrastructure improvements or new roads within 1500m of Breckland SPA/supporting habitat.

In conclusion, the findings of the appropriate assessment and consideration of potential mitigation measures, the direct effects of buildings and road development, the indirect disturbance to Annex 1 birds, the effects of urbanisation and recreational pressure on the north Norfolk Coast, can all be mitigated for with the application of the

Breckland Core Strategy (adopted 2009)

avoidance/mitigation measures proposed and no further assessment is required. Also, Breckland District Council confirmed road infrastructure requirements proposed in the Core Strategy for Thetford would be focussed on the A11 only as the 1500m buffer zone would prevent any options for road improvements south and east of the town. Due to the effects of air pollution, road improvements within 200m of the Breckland SAC will also be avoided. In addition, it was concluded that further clarification and housing categorisation is required to determine if the impact of water demand, water treatment and discharge requirements, and ability of sewer systems to withstand flooding would not result in adverse effects upon European sites. It was noted that Breckland District Council would obtain necessary information from the Environment Agency and/or AWS and the consultants commissioned to produce the Breckland Water Cycle Study in order to take forward proposed measures. Any potential adverse effects upon the integrity of European sites have either been avoided or mitigated for.

Breckland emerging new Local Plan

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Breckland Council

Related HRA/AA: HRA of the Proposed Submission Local Plan (August 2017).

Summary of Plan proposals:

The Breckland Proposed Submission Local Plan was submitted for Examination on 30 November 2017¹⁵.

Housing provision: Breckland Council's Proposed Submission Local Plan (provides for 15,950 houses over the plan period 2011 to 2036).

Employment land provision: The Proposed Submission document provides for 67 ha of land for employment growth between 2011 and 2036.

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

The key impact and mitigation themes identified by the HRA in relation to European sites scoped into the HRA of the Forest Heath Local Plan (Breckland SAC, Breckland SPA, Norfolk Valley Fens SAC) were:

- impacts of built development on Stone Curlew;
- recreation disturbance to SPA birds;
- urbanisation effects on SAC and SPA habitats;
- additional measures in sensitive areas of focussed growth (Thetford, Swaffham, Mundford);
- air quality and road improvements;
- water supply, water quality and waste water discharge, flood risk.

The adoption of mitigation measures recommended by earlier stages of the HRA allowed a conclusion of no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (adopted 2011)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

Related HRA/AA: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals & Waste LDF Habitats Regulation Assessment: Full Assessment of the Core Strategy DPD Submission Plan.

Summary of Plan proposals:

The following strategic Objectives were identified for sustainable minerals development;

- to contribute to the national, regional and local mineral supply by maintaining an adequate and steady supply of minerals and to meet local requirements at a rate sufficient to enable the delivery of the planned growth in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to provide for the creation and servicing of new sustainable communities and infrastructure in the plan area
- to make allocations for new sand and gravel extraction in areas outside of the Ouse and Nene river valleys to safeguard the economic mineral resource of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through the designation of

¹⁵ Breckland Council (August 2017) <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/7343/Evidence-Base-Submission-Documents->

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (adopted 2011)

Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Mineral Consultation Areas Vision

- to minimise the use of virgin mineral by encouraging the efficient use of materials
- to contribute to meeting strategic objectives relating to sustainable flood risk management for the Cranbrook and Counter Drain catchment, and enhancement habitat creation adjacent to the Ouse Washes
- to maximise biodiversity and community benefits including additional green infrastructure
- to encourage operational practices and restoration proposals which minimise or help to address climate change
- to identify planning policy criteria by which to assess mineral proposals, ensure effective planning control and the appropriate location of mineral extraction
- to safeguard and enhance the distinct landscapes of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough including the wet fens, river valleys, chalk and limestone uplands
- to protect and enhance the biodiversity and historic environment, including designated sites, of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to protect the ground and surface water resources of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to safeguard the residential amenity of new and existing communities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to ensure that potential emissions are minimised as part of minerals development
- to ensure high quality in terms of design and operation of mineral operations in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to encourage and safeguard sustainable transport of minerals e.g. by rail and water
- to ensure the sustainable use of soils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The following strategic Objectives were identified for sustainable waste development;

- to ensure suitable provision is made through site specific allocations for sustainable waste facilities to manage the waste of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, London or adjoining authorities
- to develop a network of waste management facilities which will be located having regard to climate change, and key factors including the location and amount of waste arising, and minimising the of movement of waste
- to contribute to ensuring self-sufficiency of the wider area in the management of waste, and to seek self-sufficiency within the Plan area where practical and in accordance with the proximate management of waste
- to ensure that all major new developments undertake sustainable waste management practices
- to use construction and demolition waste in the creation of strategic new enhancement habitat for the internationally important Ouse Washes
- to identify planning policy criteria by which to assess waste development proposals
- to encourage waste management practices which do not incur unacceptable adverse impact on the local and global environment or endanger human health in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to encourage waste management practices which minimise, counter (through off-set arrangements), or eliminate contributions to climate change, including the minimisation of greenhouse gases
- to ensure that waste management sites are resilient to the impacts of climate change at the local level
- to ensure high quality of design and operation of waste management facilities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to encourage sustainable transport of waste by alternative means e.g. rail and water
- to protect the ground and surface water resources of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to safeguard and enhance the distinct landscapes of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough including the wet fens, river valleys, chalk and limestone uplands
- to protect and enhance the biodiversity and historic environment, including designated sites, of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to safeguard the residential amenity of new and existing communities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- to allow scope for new technology and innovation in waste management in the Plan area e.g. exemplar projects in handling and processing of waste
- to determine waste planning applications in the light of the principles for sustainable waste management and the waste hierarchy to ensure the sustainable use of soils
- to safeguard waste management sites from incompatible development that may prejudice the waste use,

| Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (adopted 2011) |
|---|
| through the designation of Waste Consultation Areas |
| <p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Forest Heath Local Plan</p> <p>The assessment of each of the minerals and waste policies found that for all proposed policies in the Core Strategy DPD submission Plan no adverse impacts were identified on European or Ramsar sites that cannot be avoided by legally enforceable measures. The assessment of the minerals and waste strategic allocations in the core strategy DPD submission Plan (Block Fen/ Longwood Fen and Addenbrookes) alone and in combination found that no adverse impacts were identified on European or Ramsar sites that cannot legally be avoided by legally enforceable measures.</p> |

| Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2015) |
|--|
| Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Cambridgeshire County Council |
| Related HRA/AA: Habitats Regulations Assessment: Stage 1 – Screening, October 2014 |
| <p>Summary of Plan proposals:</p> <p>The key objectives identified within the Local transport Plan were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling people to thrive, achieve their potential and improve their quality of life. • Supporting and protecting vulnerable people. • Managing and delivering the growth and development of sustainable communities. • Promoting improved skill levels and economic prosperity across the county, helping people into jobs and encouraging enterprise. • Meeting the challenges of climate change and enhancing the natural environment. |
| <p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Forest Heath Local Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The international sites are not likely to be affected by changes to air pollution due to their distance from the schemes or the nature of the schemes • Significant effects from changes to hydrology are unlikely because the international sites are either not hydrologically linked to any of the proposed schemes, because they are sufficient distance from any of the schemes or because of the small scale nature of the schemes • The schemes and strategies within the Plan will not lead to habitat loss within any of the international sites • The schemes and strategies within the Plan will not lead to habitat loss outside of any of the international sites that could be considered of functional importance to those sites and associated qualifying populations of animals • Significant effects from disturbance and recreation are not likely at any of the international sites either because of the distance of the sites from the schemes or, where sites lie closer to schemes, recreational effects and other types of disturbance are not listed as vulnerabilities of the site. • To conclude, the findings of the HRA Screening are that none of the schemes, interventions or strategies contained within the LTP3 will result in likely significant effects on any of the international sites included within this assessment. |

| St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (adopted 2010) |
|---|
| Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: St Edmundsbury Borough Council |
| Related HRA/AA: St. Edmundsbury Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment: Screening, September 2010 |
| <p>Summary of Plan proposals:</p> <p><i>Housing provision:</i> The Core Strategy makes provision for at least 15,631 new homes within the plan period between 2008 and 2031 (Policy CS1).</p> <p><i>Employment land provision:</i> Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy provides for development to support at least 13,000 additional jobs in the borough by 2026.</p> |

St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (adopted 2010)

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

The HRA concluded that four of the fifteen policies in the Core Strategy would lead to development in the long term; Policies CS1 - St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy, CS9 - Employment and the Local Economy, CS11 - Bury St Edmunds Strategic Growth and CS12 - Haverhill Strategic Growth.

A potential for significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA was identified through increased levels of recreational activity, possibly leading to higher levels of disturbance to Breckland SPA Annex I bird species (stone curlew, nightjar and woodlark) and possible degradation of Annex I habitats within Breckland SAC (e.g. through increased levels of trampling and littering).

It identified that the Plan seeks to protect international sites through Policy CS2 (also recognised in Policy CS1). Policy CS2 puts in place a 1.5 km buffer zone around Breckland SPA for stone curlew and a 400 m buffer zone for woodlark and nightjar. It also puts in place a 1.5 km buffer zone around areas outside of the SPA which have supported five or more nesting attempts by stone curlew since 1995 and as such act as supporting stone curlew habitat. In these areas development may only take place for the re-use of existing buildings and for development which will be completely masked from the SPA by existing development or provided it is demonstrated by an Appropriate Assessment that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA.

The HRA also made reference to the lower tier Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that will arise from Policies CS1, CS9, CS11 and CS12 including Bury St Edmunds Area Action Plan (AAP), Haverhill AAP and Site Allocations DPDs (including Rural Allocation Sites and the Gypsy and Travellers sites) which will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses. The Plan commits to an HRA being carried out at the development control stage/lower tier development plan stage for any development arising out of these policies. If it cannot be proven that there will no significant impacts on the international sites and/or it is not possible to mitigate/compensate for these impacts the development will not be included in the lower tier plans and/or be granted planning permission.

The assessment concluded that there will be no likely significant effects due to the proposals for development outlined in Policies CS1, CS9, CS11 and CS12 or from any of the other policies included in the Plan. It also concluded that there is no potential for in combination effects as no other current plans or projects that are likely to lead to significant effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA or the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC have been identified, or where impacts have been identified they have been adequately mitigated.

St Edmundsbury Vision 2031 Local Plan Documents (adopted 2014)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Related HRA/AA: St Edmundsbury Vision 2031 HRA Screening documents

Summary of Plan proposals:

Site allocation documents for Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, and the Rural Area.

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

Bury St Edmunds: HRA Screening concludes that St Edmundsbury's Core Strategy underwent Appropriate Assessment, and was found to be sound following an Examination in Public. The Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 Local Plan Document adds further detail, but does not increase the amount of development planned for the Bury St Edmunds area. The cumulative effect of all development has already been assessed through the Core Strategy process and does not require further assessment.

Haverhill: HRA Screening concluded that each individual site allocation or policy within the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Haverhill Vision 2031 Local Plan Document is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site, and that no individual site appropriate assessment is necessary. The scale of the allocations, and their location in relation to European sites, means that no in combination effects of individual allocations or policies occur. Concluded that the Haverhill Vision 2031 Local Plan Document would have no likely significant effect on any European site.

Rural Area: HRA Screening concludes that St Edmundsbury's Core Strategy underwent Appropriate Assessment, and was found to be sound following an Examination in Public. The Rural Vision 2031 Local Plan Document adds further detail, but generally does not increase the amount of development planned for the Rural area. The cumulative effect of all development in the Core Strategy has already been assessed and does not require further assessment. Policy RV6 'Ingham' adds a new development of leisure and recreational facilities not described in the Core Strategy. This new development on balance is likely to reduce visitor pressure on European sites and does not add an in combination negative effect upon any European site.

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (adopted 2015)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: East Cambridgeshire District Council

Related HRA/AA: Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Document - updated (September 2013)

Summary of Plan proposals:

Housing provision: The Local Plan makes provision for an agreed target of 11,500 dwellings for East Cambridgeshire which represents an annual rate of 575 dwellings per year during the period 2011-2031.

Employment land provision: The Local Plan aims to maximise opportunities for jobs growth in the district, with the aim of achieving a minimum of 9,200 additional jobs in East Cambridgeshire. Part of this strategy will involve making provision for a deliverable supply of at least 179 ha of employment land for B1/B2/B8 uses, and providing for home working.

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

The following generic vulnerabilities categories were used to assess the likely effects of the Local Plan:

- Physical Habitat Loss – land take by developments
- Physical Damage – from on-site or off-site activities e.g. change in land management, natural erosion, water abstraction, recreational pressure
- Disturbance – e.g. noise from recreation, industry or transport
- Water Quantity – changes in water quantity due to abstraction
- Contamination / Pollution – water pollution, air pollution, water quality

It was determined that Devil's Dyke SAC is vulnerable to encroachment of other coarse dense grasses, while the main potential effect is increased recreation pressure in association with new housing development.

The Ouse Washes, on the other hand, is vulnerable to water quantity, water quality, salinity, turbidity and sediment. As such, the main potential impacts of the Local Plan on the SAC, SPA and Ramsar are changes in water quality as a result of development, through flooding, increased sediment or increased levels of phosphorus (thought to be derived from sewage treatment plants).

Chippenham Fen and Wicken Fen are vulnerable to physical damage, physical habitat loss and associated increases in pollution. While Breckland SPA and SAC is vulnerable to deposition from the atmosphere and adjacent land.

It was concluded that the Local Plan, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is unlikely to have any significant effects on any of the European sites.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy (adopted 2011)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Related HRA/AA: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council's Core Strategy Regulation 25: Local Development Framework Habitats Regulations (Appropriate Assessment) Report - updated (November 2010)

Summary of Plan proposals:

Housing provision: Policy CS01 of the Core Strategy states the plan will identify sufficient land for a minimum of 16,500 new dwellings across the Borough over the period 2001 to 2026: a minimum of 7,510 new dwellings through the regeneration of brownfield land and urban expansion in King's Lynn, at least 2,710 new homes with new allocations of at least 390 house in Downham Market, at least 580 new homes with new allocations of at least 220 dwellings in Hunstanton, considers the provision of at least 550 new dwellings to the east of the town in the area adjacent to Wisbech and makes provision for at least 2,880 new homes within or adjacent to selected Key Rural Service Centres (to be defined in the Site Specific Allocations DPD) in rural and coastal areas.

Employment land provision: Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy aims to facilitate job growth in the local economy, delivering the RSS target of 5,000 additional jobs by 2021 through the provision of employment land as well as policies for tourism, leisure, retail and the rural economy.

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

Breckland SPA

Possible Mechanism(s):

- Direct Impacts – Proximity And Disturbance.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy (adopted 2011)

Affected Policies: CS01 Housing And Jobs, CS02 The Settlement Hierarchy, CS06 Development in Rural Areas and CS09 Housing Distribution

The HRA suggested the policy is amended to policy take into account disturbance/displacement to stone curlews around Breckland SPA, in line with the approach taken by neighbouring local authorities.

New built development will be restricted within 1500m of the Breckland SPA. Development will be restricted to the re-use of existing buildings or where existing development completely masks the new proposal from Breckland SPA. Beyond the SPA, a 1500m buffer will be applied to areas where the qualifying features are known to exist, or where nesting attempts have been made. In this area, development may be acceptable where suitable alternative habitat (outside the SPA) can be secured.

- Indirect impacts - recreation (woodlark and nightjar).

Affected policies: CS1 Housing And Jobs, CS2 Settlement Hierarchy, CS06 Development in Rural Areas, C09 Housing Distribution and C10 The Economy

The HRA suggested the Core Strategy should be amended to stress a partnership approach to recreation management in the SPA.

It also recommended the inclusion of policy wording or supporting text to explain that the council is committed to ensuring sustainable levels of recreation in and around the Breckland SPA, and work with partners including Natural England, RSPB and Forestry Commission to develop a strategy that sets out an access management and monitoring programme that provides measures to prevent increasing visitor pressure.

Suitable mitigation to be installed should monitoring indicate that the Annex 1 species are failing to meet conservation objectives due to recreational pressure.

North Norfolk Coast SPA/Ramsar

Possible Mechanism(s):

- Recreational disturbance impacts to SPA species, especially Ringed Plover and Little Tern.

Affected policies: CS01 Housing And Jobs, CS02 The Settlement Hierarchy, CS07 Development in Coastal Areas, CS09 Housing Distribution, and CS13 Community & Culture.

The HRA suggested core strategy document could be modified to stress a partnership approach to recreation management in the SPA. It recommended that supporting text should be added that recognises that coastal competent authorities promoting visitor access will need to consider the necessary measures required to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and protect the integrity of the coastal European sites, and that it is possible that additional housing within the Borough may contribute to that visitor pressure, in combination with new housing in other districts. The text should therefore commit to working in partnership with neighbouring authorities and other relevant partners to prevent adverse effects when monitoring indicates it could occur. The assessment concluded that the amendments to the Core Strategy satisfactorily address the issues raised, and as a result the above policies will not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (submitted 2014)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: South Cambridgeshire District Council

Related HRA/AA: South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report (March 2014)

Summary of Plan proposals:

South Cambridgeshire District Council has carried out additional work on their Local Plan, to address issues raised by the Planning Inspectors during examination.

Housing provision: Proposed modification to the Local Plan include the provision of 19,500 new homes, including affordable housing and 85 Gypsy & Traveller pitches.

Employment land provision: The Local Plan makes provision for 22,000 additional jobs to support the Cambridge Cluster and provide a diverse range of local jobs.

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

The following possible effect were identified;

- Ouse Washes – additional sewerage discharge, additional flow in sewerage drain network
- Breckland SAC/SPA – impacts on groundwater-dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDYE) and the species

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (submitted 2014)

they support

- Devils Dyke - recreation; additional visitor pressure resulting in trampling and changes to vegetation structure
- Fenland – recreation; additional visitor pressure resulting in trampling and changes to vegetation structure, additional sewage discharge, impacts on water availability
- Portholme SAC – changes in water level and water quality

There are unlikely to be significant effects on the identified European sites as a consequence of the policies and allocations as worded in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission. Therefore no policies require advancement to appropriate assessment. The plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the identified European sites when considered in combination with other plans and projects.

Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy DPD (adopted 2008)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Suffolk County Council

Related HRA/AA: Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment of Potential Impacts of Minerals Policies on Natura 2000 Sites (September 2007)

Summary of Plan proposals:

The key objectives identified within the minerals Core Strategy were:

- to ensure, so far as practicable, the prudent, efficient and sustainable use of minerals and recycling of suitable materials, thereby minimising the requirement for new primary extraction;
- to conserve mineral resources through appropriate domestic provision and timing of supply;
- to safeguard mineral resources as far as possible;
- to prevent or minimise production of mineral waste;
- to secure working practices which prevent or reduce as far as possible, impacts on the environment and human health arising from the extraction, processing, management or transportation of minerals;
- to protect internationally and nationally designated areas of landscape value and nature conservation importance from minerals development, other than in the exceptional circumstances detailed in paragraph 14 of this statement;
- to secure adequate and steady supplies of minerals needed by society and the economy within the limits set by the environment, assessed through sustainability appraisal, without irreversible damage;
- to maximise the benefits and minimise the impacts of minerals operations over their full life cycle;
- to promote the sustainable transport of minerals by rail, sea or inland waterways;
- to protect and seek to enhance the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased, through high standards of restoration, and to safeguard the long-term potential of land for a wide range of after-uses;
- to secure closer integration of minerals planning policy with national policy on sustainable construction and waste management and other applicable environmental protection legislation; and
- to encourage the use of high quality materials for the purposes for which they are most suitable.

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

The following potential sources of impact to the Natura 2000 sites that may arise from the construction or operation of these types of facility were identified within the assessment:

- Physical disturbance of sites;
- Flooding & water quality, including extraction below the water table;
- Noise from road traffic and operation of the plants;
- Air emissions from road traffic (including dust); and
- Human presence.

The assessment concluded that physical disturbance of Natura 2000 sites for the purposes of mineral extraction would not normally be acceptable. However, given that minerals development is only a temporary use of land, restoration to a very high standard, with net environmental and biodiversity gains, may mean that some development could be acceptable.

Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy DPD (adopted 2008)

Any increase in flooding caused by new mineral sites will be unlikely to be acceptable to the Environment Agency. Similarly, a decline in water quality is also likely to be unacceptable, so there should not be any adverse impacts on water-dependent SPAs and SACs in Suffolk.

The assessment determined that appropriately mitigated, noise from road traffic, operation of the plants and minerals developments is unlikely to have a material adverse impact on any Natura 2000 sites.

Also, disturbance to Natura 2000 sites through human presence on minerals sites is only likely to be a factor where the minerals sites are located in, or very close to, the Natura 2000 site. Policy 3: Cumulative environmental impacts and phasing of mineral workings, Policy DC2: Protection of regionally and locally recognised sites of ecological and geological interest and promotion of biodiversity and protection of priority habitats, Policy DC5: Public rights of way and Policy DC8: Progressive working and restoration would mitigate the adverse impacts of disturbance caused by humans.

In conclusion, the Minerals Core Strategy aims to have a positive impact on biodiversity in the long term through appropriate restoration schemes and beneficial after-uses. For example, the creation of new wetland habitat could go towards meeting the County's Priority Habitat Action Plan targets of at least 445 ha of new reed-bed by 2023 and the creation of new wet woodlands.

Suffolk Waste Core Strategy DPD (adopted 2011)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Suffolk County Council

Related HRA/AA: Habitats Regulations Assessment : Suffolk County Council Waste Core Strategy (Minerals & Waste Development Framework); March 2010

Summary of Plan proposals:

The key objectives identified within the waste Core Strategy were:

- To provide policies and identify locations for the management of the quantities of waste apportioned to Suffolk through the East of England Plan.
- To facilitate sustainable waste management by minimising waste as a priority and encouraging communities to take responsibility for the waste they produce through better education via public consultation.
- To facilitate the efficient transportation of waste throughout Suffolk.
- To facilitate the driving of waste up the hierarchy through the provision of sufficient suitable waste management facilities for waste recycling, composting and transfer.
- To facilitate equality of public access to Household Waste Recycling Centres.
- To encourage waste management facilities and practices that do not endanger human health and to ensure that adverse impacts on residential amenity and the quality of life can be prevented or suitably mitigated.
- To minimise adverse impacts on air quality.
- To minimise adverse impacts on landscape quality and the built and historic environment.
- To minimise adverse ecological and geological/geomorphological impacts, and to encourage opportunities for restoration, creation and enhancement of wildlife habitats.
- To minimise adverse impacts on water quality.

To facilitate proposals and encourage waste management practices that reduce the effects of the emissions of greenhouse gases and deliver renewable energy production where feasible and appropriate and mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

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

The policies within the Waste Core Strategy can achieve their aims and objectives and not result in any significant impacts either alone or in combination upon any features of European Interest on any Natura 2000 Site in Suffolk or the neighbouring Counties. Because of Suffolk County Council's commitments to the conservation of Biodiversity and the explicit Objectives 9 and 10 in the Waste Core Strategy: "To minimise adverse ecological and geological/geomorphological impacts and to encourage opportunities for restoration, creation and enhancement of wildlife habitats" and "To minimise adverse impacts upon water quality" together with an on-going consultation process with the National nature conservation body (Natural England), it is considered that that any possible negative effects on the integrity of European Sites as a result of the policies within this Waste Core Strategy will be considered, mitigation sought and compensation agreed in order to reduce or negate any negative impacts.

Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Preferred Options Draft, October 2017)

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Suffolk County Council

Related HRA/AA: Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan Strategic HRA (October 2017)

Summary of Plan proposals:

The Suffolk Minerals & Waste Local Plan (SMWLP) contains planning policies for determining planning applications for minerals and waste development, as well as safeguarding the same from other forms of competing development. Policies include those that specify sites for future minerals and waste development.

The SMWLP has allocated 10 sites for the extraction of sand and gravel sufficient to supply 10.422 Mt over the Plan period to the end of 2036. Policy also states that the County Council will seek to maintain a land bank of permitted reserves of at least 7 years based upon the average of the last ten years' sales.

There is no immediate shortfall in waste management capacity and only one site for waste development has been allocated at Sizewell "A" Nuclear Power Station for the treatment and temporary storage of radioactive material removed as part of decommissioning.

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

Potential effects on Breckland SAC and SPA were identified from a number of site specific allocations but these allocations were considered to have a neutral effect on the European sites until such time as a project-specific HRA screening process and Appropriate Assessment have been undertaken.

Suffolk Local Transport Plan 2011-2031

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Suffolk County Council

Related HRA/AA: Regulation 61 Assessment for Suffolk Local Transport Plan 3

Summary of Plan proposals:

The plan includes a the delivery of a number of strategic transport improvements including:

- dualling of the A11 between Barton Mills and Thetford
- the Ipswich major scheme, 'Ipswich- Transport fit for the 21st Century'
- the Beccles rail loop allowing increased frequency of trains between Ipswich and Lowestoft
- the Beccles southern relief road
- the Lowestoft northern spine road to help remove through traffic from the town
- Ipswich rail chord to improve freight connections from Felixstowe
- Copdock A14/A12 junction improvements.

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

The matters of concern for each of the relevant European sites include:

- Breckland SPA – impacts on internationally important populations of Stone-curlew, woodlark and nightjar and disturbance of these Annex 1 birds
- Breckland SAC – impacts on habitats of internationally important populations of Stone-curlew, woodlark and nightjar and disturbance of these Annex 1 birds

The conclusion of the assessment of the draft LTP3 was that it would have a likely significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The only scheme identified as having potential to lead to a significant effect (habitat loss, disturbance and pollution) on a European site was the Brandon relief road LTP3 scheme. In order to remove any likely significant effect on the conservation objectives of Breckland SPA, a project level HRA would be required for the Brandon Relief Road at the design stage. For Natural England to approve such a document, adequate mitigation would need to be sought and compensation agreed in order to reduce or negate any negative impacts. As a result of the HRA, revisions to the LTP3 were made to avoid likely significant effects on any European Sites before it was adopted by SCC. The re-assessment concluded that the direct effect of road improvements and the indirect effect of disturbance to Annex I bird could be mitigated for with the application of the avoidance/mitigation measures proposed (a detailed package of mitigation and monitoring measures to ensure the LTP schemes do not result in impacts on European sites were to be considered at the project level).

Major infrastructure projects¹⁶

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|--|
| A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme |
| Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Highways England |
| Related HRA/AA: Report On The Implications For European Sites Proposed A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme (October 2015) |
| <p>Summary of Plan proposals: A development consent order for A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme was taken in May 2016.</p> <p>The scheme comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> widening of the A1 between Brampton and Alconbury over a length of approximately 5.6 km (3½ miles) from the existing two lane dual carriageway to a three lane dual carriageway. Between Alconbury and Brampton Hut, this would generally be achieved by widening on the east side of the existing road; between Brampton and Brampton Hut a new road would be constructed to the west of the existing A1 which would become the new A1. This would enable the existing carriageway over this length to form part of the new A14 Huntingdon Southern Bypass. A local access road approximately 2.5 km (1.6 miles) would link the Ellington Junction with Woolley Road; a new Huntingdon Southern Bypass of approximately 20 km (12½ miles) in length, which would provide a two lane dual carriageway between Ellington and the A1 at Brampton and a three lane dual carriageway between Brampton and Swavesey. The new bypass would cross over the River Great Ouse and the East Coast Mainline railway. It would include junctions with the A1 at Brampton and with the A1198 at Godmanchester; downgrading the existing A14 trunk road (de-trunking to county road status) over approximately 21 km (13 miles) between Brampton Hut and Swavesey, as well as between Alconbury and Spittals interchange; Huntingdon Town Centre improvements, to include the closure and demolition of the A14 viaduct over the East Coast Mainline railway and Brampton Road in Huntingdon. A new link road would be constructed to improve accessibility into Huntingdon from the south and east by connecting the old A14 directly with Huntingdon Ring Road near the bus station and by constructing a new link road from Brampton Road to connect with the A14 to the west. As such, a through route for light vehicles would be maintained; widening of the existing A14 over approximately 7.9 km (5 miles) to provide three lanes in each direction between Swavesey and Report to the Secretary of State 6 A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Bar Hill and four lanes in each direction between Bar Hill and Girton; widening of a 2.5 km (1½ mile) section of the Cambridge Northern Bypass between Histon and Milton; improvement of existing A14 junctions at Swavesey, Bar Hill and Girton; to improve the capacity of the road, ensure compatibility with adjacent proposed developments such as Northstowe and provide improved connections for non-motorised users; <p>a new local access road following the route of the A14 over a distance of approximately 8 km (5 miles), including construction of a dual carriageway link between the existing A14 near Fen Drayton and Swavesey junction and a single carriageway between Swavesey and Girton. The road would provide a route for local traffic between Cambridge and Huntingdon as well as providing access to properties and businesses along the corridor.</p> |
| <p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Forest Heath Local Plan</p> <p>Five European sites were screened prior to examination including Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar. The applicant concluded that there would be no likely significant effect on the Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar and its qualifying features.</p> |

| |
|--|
| Kings Lynn B Connection Project |
| Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: National Grid |
| Related HRA/AA: Habitats Regulations Assessment – No Significant Effects Report (July 2012) |
| <p>Summary of Plan proposals: A development consent order for Kings Lynn B Connection Project – a 2.8km 400 kilovolts overhead electric line - was taken in December 2013. The Project is required to make a connection from Centrica's approved King's Lynn B 981 MV combined cycle gas turbine power station and substation to the national grid high-voltage electricity transmission network.</p> |
| Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Forest |

¹⁶ National Infrastructure Planning website <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Kings Lynn B Connection Project

Heath Local Plan

The HRA concludes that the proposed 400Kv connection from King's Lynn B Power Station to the existing 400Kv route is not likely to have a significant effect on either the Ouse Washes SPA or The Wash SPA. This view is confirmed by Natural England.

Palm Paper 3 CCGT Power station Kings Lynn

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Palm Paper Ltd

Related HRA/AA: Habitat Regulations Assessment, No Significant Effects Report (August 2014)

Summary of Plan proposals: Development consent for Palm Paper 3 CCGT Power station Kings Lynn, a 162 megawatt Combined Cycle Gas Turbine, was granted in February 2016.

The Site comprises two separate areas. When built, the CCGT plant will occupy an area of 3,500m². Some areas will also be required during the construction phase for contractors' working areas and storage, and this will be contained within the present Palm Paper premises. This area is approximately 7,000m² in size.

In summary, the Proposed Development will comprise:

- Fuel supply
- Gas turbine-generator set
- Heat Recovery Steam Generator (HRSG)
- Steam turbine and steam turbine generator
- Condensers
- Water treatment plant including associated ancillary systems
- Transformers
- Switchyard
- Fire protection system

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

The HRA concludes that the only potential mechanism through which the project may act upon The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC and the Wash SPA at such a distance (circa 6.0km), and the only one that has been raised as a concern, is through the aerial emissions generated by the proposed development.

It was determined that by taking into account the avoidance and mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the CCGT it could be concluded that the proposed development would have no adverse effect on any of the Natura 2000 sites relevant to this document.

Progress Power Station

Plan Owner/ Competent Authority: Progress Power Limited

Related HRA/AA: Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment: No Significant Effects Report (February 2014)

Summary of Plan proposals: Development consent for Progress Power Station, a Gas Fired Power Station at Eye Airfield Industrial Estate in Mid Suffolk, was granted in July 2015.

The Project consists of three main elements: The Power Generation Plant, the Gas Connection, and the Electrical Connection.

- A new Power Generation Plant, a Single Cycle Gas Turbine gas fired power generating station capable of providing up to 299 MW, incorporating up to five gas turbine generators (GTG) with up to five exhaust gas flue stacks.
- A new electrical connection, (referred to as the Electrical Connection) to export electricity from the Power Generation Plant to the National Grid Transmission System. This element incorporates a new underground cable circuit connection, and a new access road, with a new road junction off the A140 (the A140 Junction), and a new Electrical Connection Compound comprising a new substation and sealing end compound; and
- A new gas pipeline connection to bring natural gas to the Power Generation Plant from the National Grid

Progress Power Station

Transmission System in the vicinity of the Project Site. This element incorporates an Above Ground Installation at its southern end and a new access road off Potash Lane.

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

The HRA concludes that there will be no likely significant effects either alone or 'in combination' on any of the Natura 2000 sites relevant to this document.

Other relevant projects

Planning consent has been sought from FHDC or a pre-application EIA Scoping request consulted on for a number of developments within the District which have not yet been developed and which are not included as allocations in the SALP but which are large enough to present a credible risk that they might have significant effects in combination with the SIR.

Each of the projects and any associated project level HRA have been reviewed for its potential to have significant effects on European sites in combination with the SIR, following the methodology described in Chapter 4.

| FHDC Local Plan ref. (at Options stage) | Planning application/ EIA Scoping Request ref. | Site address | Outline of current proposal | Is site in a location requiring project level HRA under Core Strategy Policy CS2? | Current position in relation to HRA |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Brandon | | | | | |
| B/17 | DC/15/1072/OUT | Land to West of Brandon | Outline application for up to 9,264m ² gross external area floor space (in total) for class A1, A3, A4, C1, D1 and sui generis use. Such development to include up to 1,650 dwellings ; a relief road; public transport facilities; pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular ways; green infrastructure; groundworks; drainage works; provision and/or upgrade of services and related media and apparatus; miscellaneous ancillary development and associated engineering and other operations. | Yes – site is within the 1,500 m stone curlew constraint zone and the 400 m woodlark / nightjar constraint zone for Breckland SPA | <p>There is an ES supporting the application and appendix 11.2 is a report to inform a habitats regulations assessment. A project level HRA has not yet been completed as there is insufficient information; the applicant is in discussion with NE.</p> <p>Conclusion: Since there is not yet sufficient information to complete project level HRA, FHDC should carry out such HRA when the information becomes available and refuse permission if adverse effects on the integrity of a European site cannot be ruled out in combination with other plans and projects, including with the SIR and SALP.</p> |
| Newmarket | | | | | |
| N/A | DC/16/2063/FUL | New Gallops, Hamilton Road' Newmarket | Artificial 'uphill training' gallop with lagoon, car park, access and all associated works | No | <p>Application is supported by an ES. Natural England confirmed that potential effects on surface water quality are adequately addressed by the proposed lagoon. Natural England identified potential effects on Devil's Dyke SAC and Chippenham Fen SAC due to emissions from horse waste on site (consultation responses dated 16/1/2016 and 26/10/2016). The Council has confirmed that conditions will be sought that secure the necessary mitigation, namely that horse waste must be stored on-site in a secure container and removed</p> |

| FHDC Local Plan ref. (at Options stage) | Planning application/ EIA Scoping Request ref. | Site address | Outline of current proposal | Is site in a location requiring project level HRA under Core Strategy Policy CS2? | Current position in relation to HRA |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | regularly. Conclusion: There is no potential for minor effects that could act in-combination with the SIR and SALP. |
| Lakenheath | | | | | |
| N/A | DC/18/0456/EIASCR | RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath Suffolk IP27 9PR | Screening opinion for New campus to facilitate the new F-35A Lightning II aircraft; re-development of hospital to provide new and refurbished facilities; new high school to replace existing school within RAF Lakenheath; extension to existing on-base shopping mall and food court; and replacement of existing oil and water separator | Yes - site is adjacent to Breckland SPA and includes a component of SAC | Current planning application is supported by an EIA screening request. Natural England has confirmed to the Council (email dated 21/3/18) that all issues raised by it have been resolved, i.e. that it is happy with the information provided and proposed mitigation. An EIA Screening carried out by the Council (dated 22/3/2018) identifies that elements of the project site form part of Breckland SAC and that Breckland SPA and other areas of the SAC are immediately to the east of it. Despite this, the Council has concluded that there would be no significant effects to these designations. The factors affecting the SAC are likely to be enhanced by the project because of enhanced air quality conditions (compared to existing base line conditions) resulting from a reduced emissions from decreased aircraft activity (jet take-offs in particular). No impacts to the adjacent SPA and SAC designations to the east of the site are anticipated, subject to careful construction management during the sensitive bird nesting seasons (as part of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan). Conclusion: EIA Screening indicates |

| FHDC Local Plan ref. (at Options stage) | Planning application/ EIA Scoping Request ref. | Site address | Outline of current proposal | Is site in a location requiring project level HRA under Core Strategy Policy CS2? | Current position in relation to HRA |
|---|--|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| | | | | | that significant effects are not likely. However, prior to determining this planning application, FHDC should carry out a project level HRA informed by the information available and refuse permission if adverse effects on the integrity of a European site cannot be ruled out in combination with other plans and projects, including with the SIR and SALP. |
| Other settlements | | | | | |
| N/A | DC/16/1360/OUT | Land at Little Eriswell | Outline Planning Application (Means of Access to be considered) - (i) Up to 550 dwellings (ii) Primary School (iii) Retail unit (iv) Associated open and play space, allotments, landscaping and infrastructure works | Yes – site is within the 1,500 m stone curlew constraint zone | <p>Current planning application is supported by an ES and additional supporting HRA information but the HRA has not yet been completed. Mitigation is proposed as part of the application in relation to disturbance and recreational effects including in-combination recreational effects on Breckland SAC and SPA. The local planning authority is not supporting this application - it is not included in the local plan. Natural England has confirmed (consultation response dated 6/6/2017) that they have no objection subject to securing mitigation in the form of provision of habitat for stone curlew and provision of green infrastructure on-site.</p> <p>Conclusion: Prior to determining this planning application, FHDC should carry out a project level HRA informed by the information available and refuse permission if adverse effects on the integrity of a European site cannot be ruled out in</p> |

| FHDC Local Plan ref. (at Options stage) | Planning application/ EIA Scoping Request ref. | Site address | Outline of current proposal | Is site in a location requiring project level HRA under Core Strategy Policy CS2? | Current position in relation to HRA |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | combination with other plans and projects, including with the SIR and SALP. |
| N/A | East Cambridgeshire District 16/01196/SCOPE | Land Southwest Of 98 To 138 Station Road Kennett Suffolk | SCOPING OPINION 500 dwellings , new primary school, other community facilities, strategic green infrastructure and commercial development opportunities | Yes – site is within 1,500 m of 2011-2015 stone curlew nesting attempts grid squares associated with Breckland SPA (although it would not be subject to CS2 as it is in the neighbouring authority of East Cambridgeshire) | Natural England consultation response indicates the need to assemble a variety of information for HRA but this has not yet been carried out. Conclusion: Since there is not yet sufficient information to complete project level HRA, East Cambridgeshire District Council should carry out such HRA when the information becomes available and refuse permission if adverse effects on the integrity of a European site cannot be ruled out in combination with other plans and projects, including with the SIR and SALP. |

Appendix 2

European sites information

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Breckland SPA Low rainfall and free-draining soils led to the development of dry heath and grassland communities. Much of Breckland was planted with conifers through the 20th century, and elsewhere arable farming is the predominant land use. The remnants of dry heath and grassland that have survived these changes support heathland-breeding birds, where grazing by sheep and rabbits is sufficiently intensive to create short turf and open ground. These species have also adapted to live in forestry and arable habitats. | Article 4.1, Annex I species: Breeding populations of stone curlew (60.1% GB breeding population), nightjar (12.2% GB breeding population) and woodlark (28.7% GB breeding population). | Current pressures Lack of ground disturbance, under-grazing and inappropriate scrub and weed control. Planning permission: general – development, especially for housing, roads and solar farms. Potential future threats Inappropriate forestry and woodland management. Stone curlew monitoring and intervention – vulnerability of nests and chicks to farming operations. Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition. Public access / disturbance – does not appear to be currently significantly affecting bird populations but impacts of increased recreational activities uncertain. Climate change. Inappropriate pest control – predation on ground-nesting SPA birds. | 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. | None. |
| Breckland SAC | Annex I habitats: inland dunes with open <i>Corynephorus</i> and <i>Agrostis</i> grasslands; natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i> -type vegetation; European dry heaths; semi- | Current pressures Lack of ground disturbance, under grazing, inappropriate scrub and weed control, inappropriate cutting/mowing. Water pollution: There has been a considerable loss of | 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 | Inland dunes with open <i>Corynephorus</i> and <i>Agrostis</i> grasslands for which this is the only known outstanding locality in the UK and is considered to be rare as its total extent is estimated to be less than 1,000 |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| | <p>natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates; alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>.</p> <p>Annex II species:</p> <p>Great Crested Newts <i>Triturus cristatus</i>.</p> | <p>aquatic species in Ringmere and high nutrient levels recorded in previous water analysis suggest nutrients are impacting the mere. Langmere too shows signs of nutrient enrichment.</p> <p>Changes in species distributions.</p> <p>Potential future threats</p> <p>Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.</p> <p>Public access / disturbance – SAC features may be affected through eutrophication (dog fouling, unauthorised fires) and disturbance of soils.</p> <p>Climate change.</p> <p>Habitat fragmentation.</p> | <p>maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | <p>hectares.</p> |
| <p>Rex Graham Reserve SAC</p> <p>This is a disused chalk pit with developing dry grassland characterised by false oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>. The site has been selected as it supports the largest population of military orchid <i>Orchis militaris</i> in the UK, comprising more than 95% of the current total population.</p> | <p>Annex I habitats:</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (important orchid sites)</p> | <p>Current pressures</p> <p>Changes in species distributions.</p> <p>Potential future threats</p> <p>Air pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition – exceeds site-relevant critical load with risk of harmful effects.</p> <p>Habitat fragmentation.</p> <p>Deer.</p> <p>Invasive species.</p> <p>Public access / disturbance – ongoing threat to site features from illegal plant collection.</p> | <p>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;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural | <p>Managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust</p> |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| | | | habitats; and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely. | |
| Devil's Dyke SAC (on FH boundary, part in FH and part in East Cambridgeshire DC) Devil's Dyke consists of a mosaic of CG3 <i>Bromus erectus</i> and CG5 <i>Bromus erectus</i> – <i>Brachypodium pinnatum</i> calcareous grasslands. It is the only known UK semi-natural dry grassland site for lizard orchid <i>Himantoglossum hircinum</i> . | Annex I habitats: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (important orchid sites) | Current pressures Inappropriate scrub control Potential future threats Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition. | 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | None. |
| Fenland SAC (outside FH) The Fenland SAC is comprised of three fenland Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Woodwalton Fen, Wicken Fen and Chippenham Fen. Each site generally consists of standing water bodies, ditch systems, bogs, marshes and broad-leaved woodland carr. | Annex I habitats: Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) Annex II species: Spined Loach (<i>Cobitis taenia</i>), Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>) | Current pressures Water pollution – nutrient enrichment of Chippenham Fen component, fed from a mixture of groundwater, rainfall and surface runoff. Hydrological changes related to public water supply abstraction. Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition Potential future threats None identified. | 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; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; The structure and function (including typical species) of | National Trust undertaking remedial land management work. |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | <p>qualifying natural habitats;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, <p>The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</p> | |
| <p>Ouse Washes SAC, SPA and Ramsar site (outside FH)</p> <p>An extensive area of seasonally flooding wet grassland ('washland') with a diverse and rich ditch fauna and flora located on a major tributary of The Wash. The washlands support both breeding and wintering waterbirds.</p> | <p><u>SAC qualifying species</u></p> <p>Annex II: Spined loach <i>Cobitis taenia</i></p> <p><u>SPA qualifying species</u></p> <p>Article 4.1, Annex 1 species (breeding season):</p> <p>Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>; Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i></p> <p>Annex I species (over winter): Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>; Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>; Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>; Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>,</p> <p>Article 4.2 (migratory species – breeding season):</p> <p>Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa limosa</i>; Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>; Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i></p> <p>Article 4.2 (migratory species – over winter):</p> | <p>Current pressures</p> <p>Inappropriate water levels – interest features are being adversely affected by increased flooding.</p> <p>Potential future threats</p> <p>Water pollution.</p> | <p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving...</p> <p>- the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features (SAC), or</p> <p>- the aims of the Wild Birds Directive (SPA)</p> <p>...by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species/features • The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying species/features • The supporting processes on which | <p>Long term tidal strategy - regular problems summer flooding- severe siltation of Great Ouse River. Discharges into River Lark, River Little Ouse (and various other smaller watercourses in Forest Heath) could drain into Great Ouse River and to Ouse Washes SPA/SAC. Large land holdings by RSPB, Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust and Wetlands and Wildfowl Trust.</p> |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|--|--|--|--|-------------|
| | <p>Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>; Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>; Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>; Pochard <i>Aythya farina</i>; Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>; Wigeon <i>Anas Penelope</i></p> <p>Article 4.2 Assemblage qualification: regularly supports at least 20,000 waterfowl</p> <p><u>Ramsar criteria</u></p> <p>1. Extensive area of seasonally-flooding washland</p> <p>2. Nationally scarce aquatic plants, relict invertebrates, assemblage of nationally rare breeding waterfowl.</p> <p>5. Bird assemblages of international importance.</p> <p>6. Water birds for potential future consideration</p> | | <p>the habitats of qualifying species/features rely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The populations of qualifying species/features, and, • The distribution of qualifying species/features within the site. | |
| <p>Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar (outside FH)</p> <p>The site is an extensive example of lowland base-rich valley, remarkable for its lack of fragmentation. The diversity of the site is due to the lateral and longitudinal zonation of the vegetation types characteristic of valley mires, such as dry birch woodland, scrub and carr, floristically-rich fen grassland, mixed fen, wet heath and areas of reed and saw sedge. The site supports many rare and scarce invertebrates, including a population of the fen raft spider <i>Dolomedes plantarius</i>.</p> | <p><u>Ramsar criteria</u></p> <p>1. The site is an extensive example of spring-fed lowland base-rich valley, remarkable for its lack of fragmentation.</p> <p>2. The site supports many rare and scarce invertebrates, including a population of the fen raft spider <i>Dolomedes plantarius</i>.</p> <p>3. The site supports many rare and scarce invertebrates, including a population of the fen raft spider <i>Dolomedes plantarius</i>. The diversity of the site is due to the lateral and longitudinal zonation of the vegetation types characteristic of valley mires.</p> | <p>Current pressures</p> <p>Inappropriate scrub control</p> <p>Inappropriate water levels - Historical evidence suggests that water levels have significantly dropped over time and as a result habitats and features have been damaged.</p> <p>Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition - Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads.</p> <p>Water pollution - Poor water quality arising from agricultural run-off particularly from nearby outdoor poultry and pig units causes nutrient enrichment and can lead to a reduction in</p> | | |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|--|--|---|---|-------------|
| | | biodiversity. Potential future threats None identified | | |
| The Wash SPA/Ramsar (outside FH) The largest estuarine system in the UK, fed by the rivers Witham, Welland, Nene and Great Ouse that drain much of the east Midlands of England. The Wash comprises very extensive saltmarshes, major intertidal banks of sand and mud, shallow waters and deep channels. The intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes represent one of Britain's most important winter feeding areas for waders and wildfowl outside of the breeding season. The saltmarsh and shingle communities are of considerable botanical interest and the mature saltmarsh is a valuable bird breeding zone. Also very important as a breeding ground for Common seals. | <u>SPA qualifying species</u> Article 4.1, Annex 1 species (breeding season): Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ; Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> ; Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> Article 4.1, Annex 1 species (over winter): Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> ; Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> ; Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> , Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> Article 4.2 (migratory): Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> ; Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> ; Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> ; Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> ; Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> ; Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> ; Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ; Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> ; Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> ; Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> ; Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> ; Redshank <i>Tringa tetanus</i> ; Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> ; Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> Article 4.2 Assemblage qualification: regularly supports at least 20,000 waterfowl | Current pressures Inappropriate water levels - structures which control water along the North Norfolk Coast have fallen into disrepair, preventing appropriate water level controls for breeding birds. Change in species distribution. Potential future water threats Public access/Disturbance – ongoing threat to site from recreational activities and low flying aircraft. Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine - potential to impact on fish stocks as a resource for designated birds. Inappropriate coastal management. Fisheries: Commercial and marine estuaries - risk to site features due to uncertainty of current management. Predation. Coastal squeeze. | 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; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. | None. |
| The Wash and North Norfolk | Annex I habitats: Sandbanks slightly covered by sea water all | Current pressures | Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or | None. |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Coast SAC (outside FH) | <p>the time; mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>); Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>); coastal lagoons.</p> <p>Annex II species: Common seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>); otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</p> | <p>Change in land management</p> <p>Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition</p> <p>Potential future water threats</p> <p>Public access/Disturbance – ongoing threat to site from recreational activities and low flying aircraft</p> <p>Siltation</p> <p>Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine - potential to impact on fish stocks as a resource for designated birds</p> <p>Invasive species</p> <p>Inappropriate coastal management</p> <p>Fisheries: Commercial and marine estuaries - risk to site features due to uncertainty of current management. No restriction on harvesting methodology</p> <p>Coastal squeeze</p> | <p>restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | |
| Chippenham Fen Ramsar (outside FH) | <p>Criterion 1: Spring-fed calcareous basin mire with a long history of management, which is partly reflected in the diversity of present-day vegetation. Criterion 2: The invertebrate fauna is very rich, partly due to its transitional position between Fenland and Breckland. The species list is very long, including many rare and scarce invertebrates characteristic of ancient fenland</p> | <p>Pressures and threats documented in the Fenland SAC Site Improvement Plan relate to the designated features of the SAC (see above) but are also likely to be relevant to the designated Ramsar features, particularly hydrological changes which are cited in the Ramsar Information Sheet.</p> | Not applicable. | Inappropriate scrub control, cutting and mowing in several units contributing to unfavourable no change status. |

| Site | Summary of reasons for designation | European site pressures and threats | Conservation Objectives | Other notes |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|---|
| | <p>sites in Britain.</p> <p>Criterion 3: The site supports diverse vegetation types, rare and scarce plants. The site is the stronghold of Cambridge milk parsley (<i>Selinum carvifolia</i>).</p> | | | |
| Wicken Fen Ramsar (outside FH) | <p>Criterion 1: One of the most outstanding remnants of the East Anglian peat fens. The area is one of the few which has not been drained.</p> <p>Traditional management has created a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields. Criterion 2: The site supports one species of British Red Data Book plant, fen violet (<i>Viola persicifolia</i>), which survives at only two other sites in Britain. It also contains eight nationally scarce plants and 121 British Red Data Book invertebrates.</p> | Pressures and threats documented in the Fenland Site Improvement Plan relate to the designated features of the SAC (see above) but are also likely to be relevant to the designated Ramsar features, particularly hydrological changes which are cited in the Ramsar Information Sheet. | Not applicable. | Issues caused by inappropriate water levels and scrub control in some areas. WLMP in place to address these issues. |

Sources: Natural England's Site Improvement Plans for European sites and SSSI condition assessments (www.naturalengland.gov.uk) and JNCC's Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms and Ramsar Information Sheets (www.jncc.gov.uk), accessed January 2016

Appendix 3

Consultation comments on the HRAs of the 'Issues and Options', 'Preferred Options' and 'Proposed Submission' versions of the SIR

Consultation on the 'Issues and Options' SIR

| Consultee | Summary of comment (N.B. Section and page numbers refer to the HRA report at Issues and Options stage) | LUC response |
|---|---|---|
| Natural England (statutory consultee) | | |
| Natural England | Natural England is broadly satisfied that the assessments have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Conservation (of Habitats and Species) Regulations (2010). We concur with the conclusion of the screening assessment that significant effects to European sites cannot be ruled out for either option, and agree with the conclusions of the housing distribution options screening matrix. | Noted. |
| Natural England | However we note there are some areas that are lacking detail or require clarification; we have therefore provided detailed advice below concerning the structure of the report and any further information that we consider necessary. | In light of the detailed issues raised by Natural England, the categorisation of types of potential effect and the screening assumptions set out at Issues and Options stage was revised for subsequent stages of HRA through discussion and correspondence with Natural England. |
| Non-statutory consultees | | |
| Suffolk County Council | <p>The development of a strategic approach to green infrastructure and ecological mitigation could, if implemented, assist in delivering housing and economic growth, with a planned and programmed approach to managing the cumulative pressures on habitats and species.</p> <p>The County Council is already working with authorities in East Suffolk to consider how to manage pressures on European sites. The same assistance can be provided to Forest Heath District Council (and neighbouring authorities) if helpful. In particular, improvements to the County Council's Rights of Way Network could be useful in managing recreational pressures.</p> | Noted. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <p><i>HRA para 2.9 and Table 2.2</i></p> <p>Insufficient information included on reasons for designation, threats and reasons for adverse conditions of European sites.</p> | European site information, in particular on pressures and threats, was revised to reflect the latest information available in Natural England's Site Improvement Plans. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <p><i>HRA Para 3.3</i></p> <p>Other plans which should have been included are the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Waste and Minerals Plan and any transport plan for Cambridgeshire.</p> | Review of other plans and projects was been extended for subsequent stages of HRA. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket | <p><i>HRA Para 4.19</i></p> <p>The condition restricting development '1500m of any 1 km grid which</p> | The spatial data on stone curlew nesting attempts zone used to carry out this element of the HRA Screening at Issues and Options stage related to 1995-2006 and was the same as that used for the HRA of |

| Consultee | Summary of comment (N.B. Section and page numbers refer to the HRA report at Issues and Options stage) | LUC response |
|---|---|--|
| Horsemen's Group | has supported 5 or more nesting attempts by stone curlew since 1995'. This condition potentially becomes more onerous as time progresses as more sites may be used for nesting. It should be taken for the last 10 years as was envisaged at the time when the 2009 HRA was in preparation. Further the use of a 1 km grid is excessively onerous. Nevertheless the need for Appropriate Assessment cannot be screened out. | the Core Strategy. FHDC had commissioned a study to update this spatial data but the results were not available at the Issues and Options stage. Updated data were used once available at the Proposed Submission and subsequent stages. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.49</i> No evidence has been put forward to reduce the constraint zone for disturbance from 10 km as recommended by Fearnley et al (2010) to 7.5 km; a distance of 10 km should be retained and an Appropriate Assessment undertaken with this in mind. | Disagree. The 10 km distance referred to by (40) is measured from home postcodes to survey locations within Thetford Forest whilst the 7.5 km distance identified by analysis in the HRA of the Breckland Site Specific Policies and Proposals Document (62) is measured from home postcodes to the boundary of Thetford Forest. (40) state that the two sets of findings are similar. See paragraphs 4.51 to 4.55 of this HRA report for further discussion. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.68 and following</i> Negative effects of urban development do not only affect Breckland sites and further consideration needs to be given to this topic. | Categorisation of effect types and the European sites that are vulnerable to each of these was reassessed, informed by Natural England's Site Improvement Plans. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA para 4.90</i> The EA flood risk maps together with the site descriptions should help ascertain which sites might be affected by increased flooding. For example, Devil's Dyke is a raised chalk embankment and Rex Graham Reserve a chalk pit. This should be clarified to aid scoping. | A precautionary approach was taken in identifying European sites potentially affected by water environment issues due to an absence of up to date, spatially specific information. The Council had commissioned an updated Water Cycle Strategy to inform the SIR and SALP and the HRA of these documents but the results of this study were not available at the time of the HRA of the Issues and Options. The issue was revisited once this became available. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.114 and following</i> 1. This consideration is inadequate. The position with regard to the potential effects of abstractions has been considered in detail with regard to the west of the region in detail at the recent Hatchfield Farm Inquiry and this evidence has not been considered. 2. Important sources e.g. Reviews of Consents and Management Plans have been omitted. 3. No consideration has been given to identifying which sites are vulnerable to changes in groundwater. 4. There has also been no consideration of the Breckland SAC. | See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket | <i>HRA Para 4.122</i> Mott MacDonald assessed the scheme options, for example the effects of the pipeline routes not the water supply implications and this is not | See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |

| Consultee | Summary of comment (N.B. Section and page numbers refer to the HRA report at Issues and Options stage) | LUC response |
|---|--|---|
| Horsemen's Group | clear in the HRA. The conclusion in relation to this point is not therefore correct. | |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.123</i> Detailed consideration was given to the breakdown of housing in relation to the Resource Zones at the recent Hatchfield Farm Inquiry and has not been considered. | See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.123 and 4.124</i> There are already underlying problems (re. assessment of potential effects of water abstraction) which have not been addressed. | See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.127</i> This erroneously states that Devil's Dyke is heathland when it is in fact chalk grassland. This is repeated throughout this section and affects the conclusions. | Accepted that Devil's Dyke was described as having designated heathland rather than chalk grassland plant species and this has been corrected in the current stage of HRA. Both types of habitat are sensitive to air pollution from roads (nutrient build-up from nitrogen deposition), therefore broad conclusions were unaffected. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 4.138</i> No consideration has been given to any Highways Agency plans. | HRA Screening in relation to effects on air quality was amended at Proposed Submission and subsequent stages to rely on the Council's Transport Study. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Paras 5.5 and 5.6</i> There were failures in the Appropriate Assessment undertaken in 2009 such that issues, for example water supply were not satisfactorily considered and could have been subject to challenge. On the grounds above and on the basis of a different data set since the publication in 2009 it cannot be concluded that likely significant effects from Option 1 will not arise. | The consultee's opinion on the soundness on the HRA of the 2009 Core Strategy is noted but the Inspector's report into the examination of the Core Strategy concluded that subject to recommended changes to Policy CS2, "there would be no significant harm to the conservation of any European and nationally protected biodiversity sites as a result of the policies and proposals within this DPD". In any event, para. 5.6 the HRA Screening at Issues and Options stated that the potential for the total housing distribution options to have likely significant effects had been reassessed. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Table 5.1</i> Various comments, mainly referencing those already made above. | The approach to HRA screening of the total housing provision was revised after Issues and Options stage. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 5.7</i> This should be a much fuller assessment identifying sites and possible effects. | The approach to consideration of in-combination effects was revised after Issues and Options stage. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of | <i>HRA Para 6.4</i> | See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |

| Consultee | Summary of comment (N.B. Section and page numbers refer to the HRA report at Issues and Options stage) | LUC response |
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| Newmarket Horsemen's Group | Water supply: this is not strictly true because water availability varies across FHDC area and this can be related to possible housing distribution – detailed evidence on this matter was presented to the recent Hatchfield Farm Inquiry. | |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Table 6.3</i> In relation to Newmarket see comments on para 4.49 and the detailed evidence submitted to the Hatchfield Farm Inquiry. | See response to 'HRA Para 4.49' above. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Table 6.4</i> In terms of Newmarket the NHG considers the appraisal to be incorrect (see considerations for Chippenham Fen). There is a failure to consider water supply. | See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Para 6.10</i> This should be a much fuller assessment identifying sites and possible effects. | The approach to consideration of in-combination effects was revised after Issues and Options stage. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Table 7.1</i> Disturbance to Annex 1 birds - the zone of 7.5 km has not been justified and varies from that of Fearnley. Urban Effects - Not all potential sites are named. Water supply - It would be possible to identify sites. The recommendations are inadequate given the data base available and, given that some sites already show signs of adverse impacts from water abstraction. | Disturbance to Annex 1 birds - see response to 'HRA Para 4.49' above. Urban effects – categorisation of types of effect and identification of European sites that are sensitive to each of these was revised after the HRA at Issues and Options stage. Water supply - see response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |
| Pegasus Group on behalf of Newmarket Horsemen's Group | <i>HRA Table 7.1</i> All options Newmarket should be added to potential LSE sites for disturbance together with all other sites in 10 km. No consideration is given to water supply No consideration is given to flood risk | 10 km disturbance zone of influence - see response to 'HRA Para 4.49' above. Water supply and flood risk - See response to 'HRA Para 4.90' above. |

Consultation on the 'Preferred Options' SIR

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| Natural England (statutory consultee) | | | |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C-24206-12637] | General point | Natural England is broadly satisfied that the assessment have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Conservation (of Habitats and Species) Regulations (2010). You will be aware that Natural England provided comments at the Issues and Options stage in our letter dated 2015. Following these comments we note that much of our previous advice, particularly in relation to providing clarity in the documents, has been taken into consideration in the updated HRA. We find the report clearer, particularly in terms of the various components of urban and recreational effects. However we recommend some changes to Section 4, the information used and assumptions made in the HRA. | Noted. Specific concerns addressed below. |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C-24206-12637] | Section 4: Information used and assumptions made in the HRA | Before progressing with your appropriate assessment, we recommend that your authority reviews the criteria by which development sites have been screened in or out. | Specific concerns addressed below. |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C-24206-12637] | 4.36-4.61 Recreation Pressure | As explained in our response to the Issue and Options consultation, we agree that it is necessary to consider cumulative recreational effects to the qualifying species of Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) up to a distance of 7.5km. This distance was agreed during the Breckland Local Plan process as this is the distance within which it has been established that the majority of recreational effects can be captured. However these discussions focussed around the woodland and heathland areas of the SPA rather than the farmland areas as it was felt that visitors were likely to travel some distance to forest/heathland areas, but would only use farmland (for walking dogs etc.) near to home. With this in mind, the distance was largely put in place to protect nightjar and woodlark. Having considered the issue further, Natural England agrees that it should also be applied to stone curlew, as this species also uses heathland (but not forested) areas. However, given the above, this distance does not need to apply to farmland areas, so for example is not relevant to Breckland Farmland SSSI. We appreciate it may be difficult to separate the farming areas from the heathland/forested areas | Breckland SPA 7.5 km zone of influence used for screening for recreation pressure has been redrawn to exclude those parts of the SPA which are overlain by SSSI units which Natural England website (43) identifies as having a 'Arable and horticulture' habitat type. |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| | | easily during the HRA screening process but it would be worth reviewing the site allocations again with that in mind. | |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C- 24206-12637] | 4.36-4.61 Recreation Pressure | <p>Furthermore the above discussions had no bearing on any agreed distances regarding cumulative recreational effects to Breckland Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Although recreational effects to Breckland SAC need to be taken into account when reviewing applications at the planning stage, there is no evidence that the 7.5km distance needs to be applied to the Breckland SAC sites. This distance relates to effects on the qualifying species of Breckland SPA, being initially focused on Thetford Forest (in view of concerns regarding extensive development in Thetford). The site improvement plan for Breckland SAC mentions that recreation may cause an effect in future but we do not consider that it is currently affecting any specific interest features on site, hence why the site improvement plan does not list any SAC interest features currently under pressure. Taking this into account, we would expect site allocations affecting Breckland SAC would be reviewed very much on a case by case basis and appropriate mitigation applied but would not expect this distance to be applied. Should further evidence become available, we would be happy to review our position on this.</p> <p>Rex Graham Reserve is generally closed to the public and, as we understand it, the illegal plant collection is more a case of organised theft, i.e. it is not linked to recreation.</p> <p>Taking this into account, the above 7.5km distance to review cumulative recreational effects does not, in our view, need to apply to either Breckland SAC or Rex Graham SAC. We recommend you review the HRA Screening of housing distribution options again with the above advice in mind.</p> | The method applied to HRA screening of the Proposed Submission and subsequent stages of the SALP has been amended to remove the assumption that likely significant recreation pressure effects cannot be ruled out for housing allocations within 7.5 km of Breckland SAC or Rex Graham Reserve SAC. |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C- 24206-12637] | 4.1 The FHDC Deliverability Study (Screening Criteria) | <p>Natural England is currently undertaking an internal review of the effectiveness of the screening criteria used to decide whether developments may pass the likely significant effect test in relation to the 1500m constraints zone. Note that this does not specifically apply to Forest Heath's criteria but relates to the screening criteria of all the relevant councils.</p> <p>We note that the Site Allocations Plan HRA includes reference to screening criteria used by the Core Strategy which includes a) totally screened from the European site by built</p> | <p>The method applied by the HRA Screening of the SALP (see separate report) does not rely on the screening criteria applied by FHDC in its Deliverability Study.</p> <p>LUC agrees that criteria (a) and (b) cited in Natural</p> |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| | | development, and b) would not advance the line of built development towards the European site (4.1). We note that these mitigation options address impacts to stone curlew associated with the visual impact of increasing development (screening) and in terms of a gradual loss of area within the zone; however they cannot mitigate against indirect impacts, particularly those associated with housing (disturbance by human activity). Therefore whilst we do not have particular concerns about any of the site allocations set out in the current site allocations document, having worked with your authority on any we felt may affect the qualifying species of Breckland SPA, we suggest that in future the suitability of these criteria are reviewed against the types of development proposed for each allocation, to ensure they are appropriate and that the Habitats Regulations Assessment is robust. | England's comment cannot address all aspects of the type of potential effect categorised by the HRA as 'Disturbance and other urban edge effects from construction or occupation of buildings' and this has been reflected in the approach to Appropriate Assessment of site allocations for which the HRA Screening of the SALP cannot rule out likely significant effects. |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C-24206-12637] | 7. Conclusions and Recommendations | Natural England is currently working towards a strategic land use planning solution for the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA), which will seek to progress sustainable development solutions for stone curlew. We anticipate that, whilst a general principle of the avoidance of built development within the 1,500m constraint zone will remain (consistent with best practise), and should remain the preferred approach to the allocation of sites for development, a strategic solution will be devised which would identify options for mitigation which have so far not been available to developers. Some limited development within the 1,500m constraint zone may therefore be possible in the future, subject to a set of clearly defined criteria, and commitment to a mitigation strategy proportionate to the type, scale, and location of development. We will be writing to all the relevant authorities in due course about our proposal. Whilst it is not yet available and so cannot be included in your section on current or recommended mitigation for Breckland SPA, we hope that it can be mentioned within the Forest Heath local plan and at least briefly considered within the appropriate assessment (depending on timing). | Noted. Information on this solution was not available at the time of the HRA. |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C-24206-12637] | 7.21 | We welcome the Accessible Natural Greenspace study, which we have commented on separately, and are happy to work with Forest Heath District Council on the proposed recreational pressure mitigation strategy. | Noted. The HRA has taken account of this strategy, as outlined in the Accessible Natural Greenspace Study and referenced in relevant Local Plan policies. |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C- 24206-12637] | 4.22 The stone curlew nest attempts data | We understand that the stone curlew nest attempts information is not yet ready and agree that the data should be updated at the proposed submission stage. | The HRA at the Proposed Submission and subsequent stages of the SALP is based on updated stone curlew nesting attempts data supplied to FHDC by Footprint Ecology in July 2016 (63). |
| Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [C- 24206-12637] | General point | We note that your authority has not yet begun the Appropriate Assessment. As this is often a long process, we would encourage you to begin work as soon as possible. | Noted. |
| Non-statutory consultees | | | |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24544 - 11392] | General point | The NHG submitted detailed evidence to the Hatchfield Farm inquiry raising significant concerns regarding the Council's approach to the Habitats Regulations. These concerns were reiterated in the NHG's response to the 2015 consultation of this document. The NHG's consultant has reviewed this latest draft of the HRA and considers that the previous concerns raised have not been addressed and therefore remain. | See responses to individual points in preceding table. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24545 - 11392] | 4.1 The FHDC Deliverability Study (Screening Criteria) | As the constraint zones are being reconsidered, it means that the Policy CS2 is effectively out of date and therefore that the allocations and distribution options cannot be considered as properly determined. The presence of other significant barriers such as the A 14 has not been used to screen site options - this leads to some sites e.g. in Kentford being excluded on the basis of spurious grounds and can skew allocations. | The method applied by the HRA of the SIR and SALP does not rely on the screening criteria applied by FHDC in its Deliverability Study. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24546 - 11392] | 4.9 Disturbance and other urban edge effects | There is an omission of other effects including fragmentation, vandalism, connectivity in the assessment | <p>Vandalism is not identified by Site Improvement Plans as a particular current pressure or potential future threat facing any of the scoped-in European sites and would, in any case, be difficult to differentiate from the generic effects categories of 'disturbance and other urban edge effects' and 'recreation pressure'.</p> <p>The potential importance of habitat areas outside European site boundaries to their designated species populations is given due consideration under the effects category 'direct loss or physical</p> |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| | | | damage due to construction'. More diffuse fragmentation/ loss of connectivity effects are not identified by Site Improvement Plans as a particular current pressure or potential future threat facing any of the scoped-in European sites and there is no evidence to suggest that the Local Plan poses a credible threat to site integrity in this regard. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24547 - 11392] | 4.15 Disturbance and other urban edge effects | Non-residential building may have a cumulative or in combination effect with residential construction and this should be considered. | The approach to HRA screening for disturbance and other urban edge effects considers all forms of built development not just residential development. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24548 - 11392] | 4.20 Disturbance and other urban edge effects – stone curlew nesting attempts | <p>This predates the reappraisal of stone curlew records and will need reconsideration.</p> <p>A 1km grid square is unnecessarily onerous and may include land that is suitable thus skewing the allocation of sites, consideration of options.</p> | <p>The HRA screening of the Preferred Options Local Plan document used the most up-to-date stone curlew nesting attempts data available at the time. An updated data set is used for HRA of the Proposed Submission and Adoption stages of the Local Plan document.</p> <p>The screening uses the most appropriate stone curlew nesting attempts data available and this is reported using 1 km grid squares (63). The approach has been agreed with Natural England.</p> |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24549 - 11392] | 4.37 Recreation pressure – European sites potentially affected | <p>The distance of 7.5km from the district boundary is not appropriate because of the potential for in combination effects.</p> <p>Two sites are vulnerable to recreational pressure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chippenham Fen has a public footpath with easy access to other parts of the site and is vulnerable to pressure. Natural England reports vandalism (evidence to Hatchfield Farm Inquiry (HFI)). • Devil's Dyke has a public footpath along the top of a vulnerable structure which already shows signs of erosion. <p>Rex Graham reserve - theft is not a result of recreational pressure but specific criminal activity. It is considered that this needs a separate section.</p> | <p>Disagree. The justification for use of a 7.5 km zone of influence set out in the HRA report stands and has been agreed with Natural England.</p> <p>The site is generally closed to the public and the plant collection is organised theft rather than linked to recreation. In addition, the related SSSI is in 100% favourable condition. Natural England has confirmed that an assumption of cumulative recreation pressure from all housing allocations within 7.5 km of Rex Graham Reserve SAC is not necessary.</p> |
| Pegasus Planning | 4.47-4.50 7.5 km | The NHG's previous comments about the applicability of the | Disagree. The justification for use of a 7.5 km zone |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24550 - 11392] | recreation zone of influence | 7.5km v 10km buffer have been ignored. It does not matter where Fearnley measured to, the precautionary principle established by the Sweetman case indicates that in the light of very clear advice the 10km boundary should be adhered to. The report says that the majority of visitors live within 10km but there is in fact a case for a greater than 10km radius as the average distance from home to survey location in the Fearnley report was 16.7km. Further, no efforts were made to assess travel time and from some major towns journey time to core SPA areas is very quick along major roads. | of influence set out in the HRA report stands and has been agreed with Natural England. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24552 - 11392] | 4.48 | Object for the reasons set out in relation to 4.48. | Specific points addressed above. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24553 - 11392] | 4.64-4.93 Water quantity and water quality | <p>The NHG's consultant has reviewed the Water Cycle Study that has been prepared alongside the HRA and has the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The WCS appears to have been prepared and reviewed without awareness of any of the detailed water resource and groundwater issues reviewed in the HFI. * This report does not reflect the totality of the Anglian Water's Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) and reviews Newmarket, Ely and West Suffolk RZ plans in isolation. * There is no quantitative comparison of housing projections used by the WRMP and FHDC. * The review of water-dependent protected species is inadequate * There is no reference to the Review of Consents for Chippenham Fen (Atkins Report, 2010) which was extensively reviewed in the HFI. There is also no reference to the impact of the Ely RZ abstraction at Isleham on Newmarket RZ, on which much time was spent at HFI. <p>The NHG considers that these concerns undermine the credibility of the HRA work that has been undertaken.</p> | FHDC has updated its Water Cycle Strategy since the HRA of the Preferred Options SIR; part of the brief for the updated report was to identify any water environment effects on European sites as a result of the growth proposed by the SIR and SALP and it is judged reasonable to rely upon this source of evidence for HRA of the SIR and SALP. |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24554 - 11392] | 4.64 Water quantity | No information is given about the regarding individual sites or their vulnerability. The NHG considers that this section is noticeably light given the magnitude of the issue. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24555 - 11392] | 4.65 Water quantity | The NHG considers this to be incorrect. The potentially affected sites may depend on the additional water resource schemes but may also depend on the impact of even small levels of additional abstraction on already challenged sites. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24556 - 11392] | 4.68 Water quantity | Irrespective of what the Water Cycle Study found, there are sites listed in Appendix 2, including the Fenland SAC and Chippenham Fen Ramsar, which are known to be suffering negative effects and no consideration has been given to this. The licensing system is known not to be protecting European sites, viz the Review of Consents for Chippenham Fen | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24557 - 11392] | 4.71 Water quantity | Mott MacDonald report undertook an HRA screening on the effects of options not on the underlying abstraction. It cannot therefore be used to say that there is no likely significant effects from the impacts of development. | The HRA of the Preferred Options SIR stated at paras. 7.23-7.27 that likely significant effects could not be ruled out in relation to water quantity. This issue is revisited in the HRA at the Proposed Submission and subsequent stages of Local Plan preparation, informed by an updated Water Cycle Strategy. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24558 - 11392] | 4.72 Water quantity | The NHG considers this to be incorrect. There are a series of Water Resource Zones and each will behave differently. Thus there may be site specific and local allocation issues and potential effects should be considered on the detailed scale of the housing growth as well as on the broader distribution. The Water Cycle study which is now available does not address this. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24559 - 11392] | 4.73 Water quantity | Detailed information was presented to the HFI that compared the residential growth to the Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) and identified the relevant allocations for each Water Resource Zone. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24560 - | 4.73 Water quantity | NHG considers that the recent Water Cycle Study has not adequately addressed water resources. The HFI considered the 2015 WRMP at length and highlighted discrepancies in numbers and projections. It is in the Water Cycle that the | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| 11392] | | Newmarket RZ will be in surplus (4.1.1). However, the AW report actually says in one place 'confirms that there is a greater than 90% probability that the RZ water balance will be in deficit from the mid-part of the forecast period' Thus much more detailed consideration needs to be given to these issues and the current assessments made as part of the Water Cycle update cannot be relied upon. These therefore cannot be taken forward to the HRA without considerable further work. | |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24562 - 11392] | Section 6. HRA Screening of housing distribution options re. water quantity | The NHG considers that this needs to take account of the different Water Resource Zones. Furthermore, the screening does not consider in combination effects and as such is inadequate. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24563 - 11392] | Page 35. HRA Screening of housing distribution options re. disturbance and other urban edge effects | <p>The NHG has the following concerns :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The stone curlew nesting data is being reanalysed and thus CS2 this cannot be verified as a constraint. * Newmarket: Given earlier comments on the 10 km radius this should not be ruled out. The issue of the nearest constraint zone is not relevant, it is the boundary of the SPA. * No in combination effect has been considered. * Kentford is the opposite side of the A 14 and as such is not functionally linked to the Breckland SPA . It should be omitted from the constraint zone and the allocation of housing reconsidered. | <p>The HRAs of the Proposed Submission and subsequent stages of the SIR and SALP reference the updated (2011-2015) stone curlew nesting attempts information.</p> <p>Disagree. The justification for use of a 7.5 km zone of influence set out in the HRA report stands and has been agreed with Natural England.</p> <p>The assessment method considers the potential disturbance and other urban edge effects of the total scale of growth proposed at each settlement and these effects are assumed to not operate over distances greater than 1.5 km. It is unclear which potential in combination effects have been omitted by this approach.</p> <p>The evidence relied upon by the HRA concerning which stone curlew nesting attempts areas are functionally linked to Breckland SPA has been accepted by Natural England and it judged reasonable to rely upon this.</p> |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24564 - 11392] | Page 38 - Recreation Pressure Table | <p>The 7.5 km boundary should be reconsidered and extended to 10 km. On this basis Newmarket would not be considered to have no likely significant effects.</p> <p>The Rex Graham reserve issue is criminal damage not recreational pressure and as such the boundary needs</p> | See response to [O - 24549 - 11392]. |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| | | considering. | |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24565 - 11392] | Page 43 - Water Pressure Table | <p>Overall this is inadequate and needs substantial revision including identification of sites.</p> <p>Column 2 : Evidence was presented at the HFI to compare the residential growth of FHDC with the other Districts . This could readily be updated.</p> <p>Column 3 : The existing abstraction regime has not ensured that there are no likely significant effects on European sites. This is documented in Reviews of Consents and in citation sheets.</p> <p>Column 6 : Consideration has been given to the Water Cycle Report (4.74) and it will not be possible to rule out likely significant effects based on information within that document. It also ignores the existing adverse effects.</p> | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24566 - 11392] | 7.5 In combination effects | Given that likely significant effects could not be excluded with certainty, as is required under the legislation, for recreation and water quantity, there is a need to properly consider the potential in-combination effects for every relevant European designated site. Comments made previously indicate that the plan has not necessarily mitigated additional pressure and the supporting tables in section 6 need reconsideration | Para. 7.5 does not state that likely significant effects could not be excluded with certainty, rather that no relevant residual effects from other plans and projects were identified by the in combination assessment. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24566 - 11392] | 7.17-7.18 Recreation pressure | As previously discussed the NHG considers that there are good reasons for the buffer zone to be 10 km. That described is not an appropriate reason for the establishment of a buffer zone. The NHG considers that if development is to be allocated an Appropriate Assessment needs to be undertaken to establish no likely significant effects. On this basis Newmarket cannot be ruled out. | See response to [O - 24549 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24569 - 11392] | 7.20 Recreation pressure | The NHG considers that it is not sufficient to 'reduce the potential' and depend on an Accessible Greenspaces Policy. If greenspace is to be compensation and/ or mitigation, then it needs to be 'at least equally if not more attractive'. It is by no means certain that this can be achieved and there is an absence of evidence to prove otherwise. | Natural England commented on FHDC's Natural Accessible Greenspace Study at Preferred Options stage that " <i>it has not been proved that strategic recreational effects are having an effect on the qualifying species of Breckland SPA</i> " but recognising the potential for development in the district to give rise to such effects and stating that " <i>we welcome the approach set out in the report to address this potential issue</i> ". Where Natural England has made suggestions to strengthen the mitigation offered by |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| | | | the study, FHDC has given consideration to these and reflected them in latest (January 2017) version of the study, for example by adding. As such, it is judged appropriate for the HRA to rely on the approach to mitigation set out in the study and referenced in the Local Plan documents. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24570 - 11392] | 7.23 Water quantity | No detailed information is given on the sites that would be potentially affected. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24571 - 11392] | 7.24 Water quantity | The NHG considers that information is available to assist with this. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24572 - 11392] | 7.25 Water quantity | The NHG considers that it is incorrect to suggest that the sites potentially affected would depend on particular schemes when there is already documented evidence of damage. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24573 - 11392] | 7.24/7.27 Water quantity | The Water Cycle Study is now available and does not provide confirmation that likely significant effects can be ruled out. | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket Horsemen's Group [O - 24574 - 11392] | Appendix 3 Response to consultation comments on HRA of Issues and Options | <p>The NHG objects to the response, which points to the WCS dealing with impacts of abstraction effects. The WCS does not deal with in- combination effects of abstractions other than in a superficial manner. It is noted that these issues are to be dealt with at Proposed Submission.</p> <p>Furthermore, review of water-dependent protected sites only assesses those with European protective designation. There is an inadequate reference to ground water related issues.</p> | See response to [O - 24553 - 11392]. |
| Sellwood Planning for Lord Derby [S - 24081 - 5831] | Section 4. Water quantity and water quality | Paragraph 4.70 The March 2016 Water Cycle Strategy Update concludes that that Forest Heath preferred sites can be supplied with water without increased abstraction and there is therefore no negative impact from the development plans | Support noted. |

| Respondent [comment reference] | Section of Preferred Options HRA report | Comment summary | LUC response |
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| | | <p>in terms of water supply. Even if it had been considered that additional water resources had been required, there are a series of technical and regulatory measures which interlock to ensure there could be no risk to European sites.</p> <p>Therefore there will be no likely significant effects on internationally important sites in terms of water supply which is in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.87 The updated Water Cycle Strategy, referenced by LUC, confirms no that there are no technically insurmountable issues associated with treatment of wastewater from the Preferred Option and hence likely significant effects can be ruled out in terms of water quality.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.69 Whilst no air quality issue has been raised in terms of Hatchfield Farm, the allocation would not be likely to result in air quality concerns in relation to European designated sites.</p> | |
| Breckland District Council (Martin Pendlebury) [C-24099-12898] | SPA and designated features terminology | We note some inconsistency in the drafting of the documents in terms of the Special Protection Area and referencing all the features from which it derives the designation. We would recommend making this consistent especially in terms of Habitats Regulation Assessment. | Unclear which particular references to the SPA and designated features are inconsistent in the HRA for the Preferred Options SIR but the HRA at subsequent stages of plan preparation has sought to be consistent. |
| Eclipse Planning Services for Animal Health Trust [C - 24186 - 4678] | General comment | <p>The SIR Habitats Regulations Assessment has also been examined. The presence in Forest Heath District itself and within 20km of the District boundary of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation is acknowledged. To paraphrase paragraph 7.18 from the document's concluding section, there is potential for significant effects on these areas from development at all the District's major settlements except Newmarket, and at the primary villages, for both Options 1 and 2. The only alternative would be to redirect a significant proportion of the development proposed elsewhere in the District to Newmarket, a strategy which AHT did not support at the previous consultation stage and which the Council has itself since rejected. There is no avoiding the fact that potential impacts must be evaluated and suitable methods of mitigation found.</p> <p>However, the corollary is that to increase housing provision to what we regard as an appropriate level need not increase to</p> | <p>Paragraph 7.18 states the finding of the initial screening assessment, prior to consideration of existing mitigation. The overall conclusion is in the boxed text after para. 7.20. The potential effects of recreation pressure have been revisited in the HRA at Proposed Submission and subsequent stages, including in light of FHDC's recreation mitigation strategy.</p> <p>Other points noted.</p> |

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| | | <p>any great extent the potential for adverse effects on these areas, the Breckland SPA in particular.</p> <p>The land at Kentford in AHT's ownership which we recommend for allocation lies outside the buffer zones for areas used for nesting by stone curlew. It is thus free from this constraint.</p> <p>More generally, we see that the HRA also contains a review of the plans and programmes of nearby local planning authorities containing or within a certain radius of SPAs and SACs. We note the extent of housing provision in Breckland District, where the scale of proposed housing development (19,500 dwellings for the period 2001 to 2026) and the proximity of the District's principal town, Thetford, to the SPA/SAC has the potential to give rise to greater impacts than from development in Forest Heath District. These potential impacts appear to have been dealt with satisfactorily. We conclude therefore that the presence within the District and in surrounding areas of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation does not act as an overriding constraint to the provision of an additional 700 dwellings (10.3%) over the proposed 6,800 dwellings for the Plan period.</p> <p>In the light of the above, we advocate total housing provision in Forest Heath District for the Plan period 2011 to 2031 of 7,500 dwellings, based on the relationship between affordable housing need and total housing provision which informed our representations at the previous stage.</p> | |
| Eclipse Planning Services for Crest Nicholson (Eastern) [C - 24444 - 11393] | General comment | <p>The SIR Habitats Regulations Assessment has also been examined. The presence in Forest Heath District itself and within 20km of the District boundary of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation is acknowledged. To paraphrase paragraph 7.18 from the document's concluding section, there is potential for significant effects on these areas from development at all the District's major settlements except Newmarket, and at the primary villages, for both Options 1 and 2. The only alternative would be to redirect a significant proportion of the development proposed elsewhere in the District to Newmarket, a strategy which Crest Nicholson did not support at the previous consultation stage and which the Council has itself since rejected. There is</p> | Noted. |

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| | | <p>no avoiding the fact that potential impacts must be evaluated and suitable methods of mitigation found.</p> <p>However, the corollary is that to increase housing provision to what we regard as an appropriate level need not increase to any great extent the potential for adverse effects on these areas, the Breckland SPA in particular. An increased level of housing at Red Lodge could be accommodated in a compact and well planned fashion (desirable characteristics even in the absence of nature conservation constraints) so that the impacts in terms of two of the HRA's concerns - the dwellings themselves and the necessary infrastructure to support them, including roads - could be absorbed and mitigated.</p> <p>It might reasonably be assumed that any increase in recreational pressures would be commensurate with any increase in population; but then again paragraph 7.19 of the HRA refers to the potential to mitigate adverse effects in adopted policies, starting with Policy CS2.</p> <p>The HRA also contains a review of the plans and programmes of nearby local planning authorities containing or within a certain radius of SPAs and SACs. We note the extent of housing provision in Breckland District, where the scale of proposed housing development (19,500 dwellings for the period 2001 to 2026) and the proximity of the District's principal town, Thetford, to the SPA/SAC has the potential to give rise to greater impacts than from development in Forest Heath District. These potential impacts appear to have been dealt with satisfactorily.</p> <p>We conclude therefore that the presence within the District and in surrounding areas of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation does not act as an overriding constraint to the provision of an additional 700 dwellings (10.3%) over the proposed 6,800 dwellings for the Plan period.</p> | |
| Newmarket Horsemen's Group (NHG) [C-24551- 11392] | 4.47 Recreation pressure – Rex Graham Reserve SAC | This is not recreation pressure. | See response to [O - 24549 - 11392] |
| Pegasus Planning for Newmarket | 7.9-7.12 Mitigation of disturbance and other | Depending on the results of the review of stone curlew data | Natural England has endorsed use of the most recent nesting attempts data (2011-2015) for the |

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| Horsemen's Group [O - 24567 - 11392] | urban edge effects by CS2 | CS2 may need to be amended. | HRA of the SIR and SALP. A literal interpretation of Core Strategy Policy CS2 would require reference to all nesting attempts data 'since 1995'. Since this is a more precautionary approach it does not affect the ability of the HRA of the SIR and SALP to rely on assurance provided by CS2 that unallocated development proposals that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of Breckland SPA will be subject to project level HRA. |

Consultation on the 'Proposed Submission' SIR

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| Natural England (statutory consultee) | | | |
| 24885 - Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [12637] | General point | Habitats Regulations Assessment Natural England agrees with the approach taken and conclusions drawn within this HRA. We consider that the background information, approach to screening and information within the Appropriate Assessment have all been explained clearly. We have provided our view on the various sections of the HRA below. | Noted. |
| 24885 - Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [12637] | Air quality | We have reviewed the Forest Heath Local Plan Air Quality Assessment Regarding Breckland Special Area of Conservation and Breckland Special Protection Area and agree with the conclusions regarding potential pollution levels at specific road networks close to these sites. We consider that the information provided is sufficient to rule out effects to the integrity of Breckland SPA and Breckland SAC at this stage. | Noted. |
| 24885 - Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [12637] | Effects in relation to the 1.5km Breckland SPA constraints zone | We agree that effects in relation to stone curlew within the 1.5km Breckland SPA constraints zone are better addressed within the HRA for the site allocations, as effects due to allocations within this buffer can often only be ruled out during discussions with Natural England , a project level HRA and mitigation. It would not be possible to entirely rule out effects of increased housing within this zone at the strategic level. | Noted. |
| 24885 - Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [12637] | Disturbance from construction or operation of roads | Natural England would welcome any options that would avoid direct effects to Breckland SPA but if this is not possible, as stated, we would expect the selected option to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment and sufficient mitigation to be provided to address any effects to the qualifying species of Breckland SPA. Providing this approach is taken we agree that this can be screened out from further assessment. | Disturbance from construction or operation of roads - The Appropriate Assessment has shown that where the potential for adverse effects on integrity of Breckland SPA exists, technical options are available that could deliver the necessary highway improvements without direct effects on the Breckland SPA. It is therefore appropriate for the HRA of the SIR to rely on the fact that the chosen option would be subject to project level HRA. |
| 24885 - Natural England (Cheshire) (Ms Francesca Shapland) [12637] | Water Quality and Quantity | We agree with the information provided and the conclusions regarding water quality. | Noted. |

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| Shapland) [12637] | | | |
| Non-statutory consultees | | | |
| 24937 - Elveden Farms Ltd. [13111] | Para 6.7 -6.17 | Paragraphs 6.7 - 6.17 fail to include the various methods which can be used in order to mitigate the impacts of development proposals on the Breckland SPA. These paragraphs refer to one method only in which we consider to be unacceptable. This point is reiterated by Policy CS2 which states, 'proposals for development in these areas will require a project level Habitat Regulations Assessment'. This policy remains appropriate and therefore should be included and described within these paragraphs. For example, Elveden Farms Ltd has submitted a planning application for a housing development at Little Eriswell and through discussions with Natural England it has been determined that there would be no likely significant impact on the Breckland SPA. This information is based on the careful analysis of precise stone curlew nest locations that took place throughout the application process and the most appropriate suitable mitigation measures. Therefore it is considered that these paragraphs make the HRA unsound if policy CS2 is not applied; | Paragraphs 6.7-6.17 set out an initial screening prior to consideration of mitigation; the mitigation offered by Policy CS2 is considered in paragraph 6.21. Likely significant effects from the SIR's broad distribution of housing are ruled out. More detailed consideration of the potential effects of individual allocations is provided in the HRA of the SALP. |
| 24937 - Elveden Farms Ltd. [13111] | Para 6.21 | Paragraph 6.21 states that policy CS2 is unavailable for use in this assessment of broad distribution. This statement is incorrect as policy CS2 has provided this safeguard within the adopted Core Strategy which was found sound prior to adoption. CS2 provides the opportunity for development within certain locations subject to a HRA. The policy does not pre-empt the findings of project level HRA, as stated, because it leaves open a range of outcomes of the project level HRA, and would only permit favourable outcomes to result in planning permission. There have been no policy changes to suggest that policy CS2, which was acceptable as adopted within the Core Strategy, is no longer acceptable. | It was judged inappropriate to rely solely on the generic protection offered by the Policy CS2 requirement to carry out project level HRA when more detailed assessment of the potential effects of the SIR broad distribution of housing was available from the parallel HRA of the SALP allocations that implement this broad distribution. Likely significant effects from the SIR's broad distribution of housing were ruled out by reference to this more detailed assessment. |
| 24937 - Elveden Farms Ltd. [13111] | Para 6.25 | With reference to paragraph 6.25, it is generally not acceptable for HRA of a plan to delegate its conclusion to the results of lower tier plan, especially where that other | It is a matter of fact that the HRA of the Proposed Submission SALP was carried out and consulted on in parallel to that of the SIR and was available to inform it. |

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| | | plan has not been adopted. In this case, the author suggests that the HRA of the Site Allocations Local Plan document is necessary to determine the HRA conclusion of the Core Strategy Review. If that suggestion was true, the adopted core strategy could not have been adopted. | That parallel HRA work demonstrates that it is feasible to implement the broad distribution of housing within the SIR without likely significant effects in relation to disturbance and other urban edge effects. It is therefore appropriate for the HRA of the SIR to refer to the findings of the HRA of the SALP. |
| 24937 - Elveden Farms Ltd. [13111] | Para 6.3-6.36 | With reference to paragraphs 6.30 - 6.36 we consider it to be unacceptable for HRA of a plan to delegate its conclusion to the results of a lower tier plan, especially where that other plan has not been adopted. In this case, the author suggests that the HRA of the Site Allocations Local Plan document is necessary to determine the HRA conclusion of the Core Strategy Review. If that suggestion was true, the adopted Core Strategy could not have been adopted. It is clear that with the safeguard of policy CS2 it is perfectly possible to conclude no likely significant effect on European Sites from the Single Issue Review broad distribution of housing. Furthermore, the analysis should not be of distances from the SPA boundary, but from access points to the SPA which has not been considered. | The first point is addressed in the response to the comments on paragraph 6.25 above. In relation to the appropriate screening distance, this is justified at paragraphs 4.54-4.55 of the HRA report and has been agreed with Natural England. |
| 24938 - RSPB - Eastern England (Mr Mike Jones) [6257] | General point | We would not normally consider it acceptable for a plan to defer to a lower tier document's requirement for HRA in order to demonstrate that it would result in No Likely Significant Effect on European Sites. However, as the consultations for both the SIR and SALP are running in parallel, it is possible to see from the evidence provided in both that the proposed allocations are able to comply with Core Strategy policy CS2 and therefore deliverable, so we have no outstanding concerns on this point. | Noted. This approach was judged acceptable because both Local Plan documents and both HRAs are prepared and consulted upon in parallel. The HRA has therefore been informed by the best information available to it. |