

**PHASE 6A, NORTH LITTLEHAMPTON, TODDINGTON
LANE, LITTLEHAMPTON**

**SHADOW HABITATS REGULATIONS
ASSESSMENT**

Draft Document

November 2025

Preliminary Ecological Appraisals • Protected Species Surveys and Licensing • NVC • EclA • HRA • Management Plans
Habitats • Badger • Bats • Hazel Dormouse • Birds • Reptiles • Amphibians • Invertebrates • Riparian and Aquatic Species




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SHADOW HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Ecological Survey & Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been appointed by Persimmon Homes to undertake a Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to support a reserved matters application for the redevelopment of Phase 6A, North Littlehampton, Toddington Lane, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as the site).

Within this document where reference is made to 'the site' this refers to Phase 6A and reference to the 'wider site' relates to the wider North Littlehampton development.

The Shadow HRA has been written to support a Reserved Matters application to Arun District Council for the site. Under planning reference LU/47/11 there are four conditions relating to ecology (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Ecological conditions

| Condition | Details |
|-----------|--|
| 17 | Prior to the submission of any Reserved Matters applications, a scheme shall be submitted for the creation of the proposed central wetland area and the restoration of habitat onsite. The scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be constructed as set out in the approved scheme and any subsequent amendments shall be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. |
| 19 | Development shall not begin until further ecological surveys have been carried out and submitted to the Local Planning Authority. These surveys shall relate to water voles, bats, birds, invertebrates and reptiles. |
| 20 | Prior to the commencement of development on any phases of development east of the new road that spans the railway line (running north – south), details of appropriate mitigation, and a programme of implementation, in relation to water voles, bats, birds, invertebrates and reptiles shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the LPA. |
| 21 | No development within any phase or sub-phase shall commence until details of an ecological management plan for the construction phase of that element of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans. |

The purpose of this Shadow HRA is to provide sufficient information for the Local Planning Authority, as a competent authority, to conclude whether the proposals will lead to Likely Significant Effects on any European designated sites.

1.2 The Site

The site is located in Littlehampton, West Sussex, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 0320 0409 (**Map 1**).

The site comprises a site compound surrounded by sparsely vegetated land, with ponds and tree lines to the east of the site and floodplain grazing marsh and ditches to the north-west. The site lies immediately to the east of Phase 5 of the wider development and to the west of the proposed Open Spaces site.

1.3 Aims and Scope of Report

This Shadow HRA aims to assess the Likely Significant Effects of the proposals upon International and/or European sites and their qualifying features, to inform a competent authority undertaking an HRA. The objectives of this assessment are:

- Identify any aspects of the proposed development that would have a Likely Significant Effect on European designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and, as a matter of National Planning Policy, Ramsar sites¹), either in isolation or in-combination with other plans and projects. In addition, it is a matter of UK Government policy that possible SACs (pSACs) and potential SPAs (pSPA) are considered; and
- To advise on appropriate mechanisms for delivering mitigation where such effects are identified.

A detailed description of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process is provided in **Appendix 1** and the relevant planning policy context for this assessment is provided in **Appendix 2**.

1.4 Site Proposals

The proposals entail the construction of 288 new residential units with associated parking, infrastructure and drainage. New footpaths will be created following existing public rights of way and connecting the site to the Open Spaces to the east.

The Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment is based on the proposals plan produced by Persimmon Homes, dated April 2025 (Drawing No. 519_PL_100b, Rev. B) (**Appendix 3**).

Planning permission is being sought during late 2025 and early 2026 with construction proposed to commence soon after permission has been granted.

¹ Wetlands of International Importance designated under the Ramsar Convention 1979

2.0 ASSESSMENT METHODS

2.1 Introduction

This section presents the methodology employed during the Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Methodology

Guidance on HRA screening methodology comprises Planning for the Protection of the National Site Network: Appropriate Assessment guidance (DCLG, 2006) and Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans: Guidance for Plan-making Bodies in Scotland (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2012). These documents have been used for the purpose of this exercise, along with supporting guidance (Infrastructure Planning Commission, 2011). This HRA exercise has been completed in the following stages:

- European Sites have been identified which may be impacted by the development;
- The vulnerabilities and potential development effects, both alone and in combination, have been established;
- The development proposals have been screened for likelihood of significant effect on those European Sites; and
- Measures are introduced to avoid any identified Likely Significant Effect which have been considered as part of the Appropriate Assessment.

The results of the Screening exercise are presented in Section 3.0, including details of the geographical scope of the assessment, the particular characteristics of the European sites within that area and consideration of how the proposed works may affect those European Sites. The outcomes from this process were used to populate Screening Matrices to determine Likely Significant Effects. The template for the matrices has been taken from the HRA Stage 1: Screening Matrices' template provided with Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 10 (Planning Inspectorate, 2017). Screening Matrices are presented in **Appendix 4**.

2.3 Consultation Resources

This report has involved consultation of the following resources to identify designated sites and their features that may be affected by the proposed works:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (DEFRA, 2025);
- Arun Valley SPA Conservation Objectives;

- Site Improvement Plan for Arun Valley; and
- The Habitat Regulations Assessment Appropriate Assessment for the Arun Local Plan (Urban Edge Environmental Consulting, 2017).

2.3.1 Identifying Source-Receptor Pathways

The Stage 1 Screening assessment used the 'source-receptor pathway' approach to identify European sites to be considered in Screening. The assessment identified potential sources of effects arising from the project along with potential pathways to European site features along which such effects might progress. To determine whether a potential source and pathway were relevant to a European site, the geographical location and nature of the receiving environment were considered, including whether the site would cross or lie adjacent to, upstream or downstream of, a watercourse or water body designated as a European site.

An appraisal of the European site's ecology and specific vulnerability to the anticipated level and nature of the effect was conducted. Consideration was given to the potential for more complex pathways that might link a receptor to an impact source, including indirect linkages. This included qualifying species of European sites that are mobile, and which could be present outside European sites but within functionally linked land. Also considered were habitats and species within the European sites that are not qualifying features but where implications to them are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site. This approach is consistent with the ruling in *Holohan v An Bord Pleanala* (C-461/17).

Source-receptor pathways identified as being relevant to this development are presented in **Table 2**. Each source-receptor pathway is assigned a Zone of Influence based on specific project activities (see **Table 2**).

2.3.2 Identification of Project Activities with Potential for Likely Significant Effects

All project activities were assessed for their potential to lead to Likely Significant Effects. The following criteria were considered when reviewing the proposed activities for Likely Significant Effects:

- Size, scale and area of the works as they relate to land-take;
- Extent of physical changes that could arise from proposed activities;
- Resource requirements (e.g. water abstraction); and
- Emissions and waste (disposal to land, water or air).

Each activity was assessed for its potential to generate Likely Significant Effects using the criteria described in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Source-Receptor Pathways and Potential Effects

| Impact Phase | Category | Potential Effect |
|--------------|--------------------------|--|
| Construction | Physical disturbance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct habitat loss or degradation ▪ Disturbance of substrates |
| | Non-physical disturbance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Noise and visual disturbance from construction traffic, plant, machinery and personnel during construction |
| | Hydrological changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pollution of surface and groundwater (e.g. accidental spillages during construction) |
| Operation | Hydrological changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes to surface water levels and flows (e.g. changes to surface drainage) ▪ Changes to groundwater levels and flows (e.g. due to inadequate soil restoration) ▪ Changes to water chemistry, including changes in nutrient levels (eutrophication) and turbidity |

2.3.3 *In-combination Scope*

The impacts and effects of any plan being assessed are not considered in isolation but in combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the European site in question. In practice, 'in-combination assessment' is of greatest importance when a plan or project would otherwise be screened out because the individual contribution is inconsequential.

For the purposes of this assessment, it has been determined that, due to the nature of the identified impacts, the key plans and projects that are likely to result in 'in-combination' effects with the proposed development relate to other developments (that lie within the Arun Valley SPA Risk Impact Zone (see Paragraph 3.2 for details).

3.0 SCREENING

3.1 Introduction

This section details the process for screening for Likely Significant Effects and a discussion of the findings to establish how the Likely Significant Effect outcome was determined.

3.2 Relevant European Sites

The only European site identified as relevant to this Shadow HRA is Arun Valley (SPA), located nine kilometres to the north of the site.

The boundary of this European site has been mapped in relation to the development site (shown in **Map 1**).

3.3 Characteristics of the European Sites

A summary of qualifying features of each relevant European site can be found in the Stage 1 Screening Assessment Matrix in **Appendix 4**.

3.4 Potential Effects on European Sites

Details of the potential effects on each relevant European site and the associated Zones of Influence are summarised in **Table 3**. Those which are relevant to the proposed development are then discussed in further detail below.

Table 3. Impact Categories and Potential Effects

| Impact Phase | Category | Potential Effect | Zone of Influence |
|--------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| Construction | Physical disturbance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct habitat loss or degradation (e.g. through pollution events, groundworks, tracking of machinery, tramping by personnel, vegetation removal, storage of materials) Disturbance of substrates (e.g. increased sediment loading, groundworks, machinery movement) | <p>Direct habitat loss only likely to be significant within the European Site or within functionally linked land.</p> <p>Effects of habitat degradation likely to be significant where there is direct hydrological connectivity between the boundary of the project and the European site and its qualifying features.</p> |
| | Non-physical disturbance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise and visual disturbance from construction traffic, plant, machinery and personnel during construction | Effects likely to be significant within 100 metres of the construction area (RPS, 2018). |
| | Hydrological changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution of surface and groundwater (e.g. accidental spillages during construction) | Effects likely to be significant where there is direct hydrological connectivity between the boundary of the project and the European site and its qualifying features. |
| Operation | Hydrological changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to surface water levels and flows (e.g. changes to surface drainage) Changes to groundwater levels and flows (e.g. due to inadequate soil restoration) Changes to water chemistry, including changes in nutrient levels (eutrophication) and turbidity | Effects from changes to surface and ground water levels would likely be significant where there is direct hydrological connectivity between the boundary of the project site and the European site and its qualifying features. |

3.4.1 Construction Phase

Physical Disturbance

The development site lies within functionally linked land to the Arun Valley SPA. However, wintering bird surveys carried out in 2024 and 2025 recorded no Bewick's swan on or adjacent to the site. As such, there will be **no Likely Significant Effect** as a result of this source-receptor pathway.

Non-Physical Disturbance

The Arun Valley SPA is not within 600 metres (NatureScot, 2022) of the development site (the Zone of Influence for this source-receptor pathway) (see **Table 3**). As such, this source-receptor pathway is screened out.

Hydrological Changes

There is a direct hydrological connectivity between the boundary of the development site and the Arun Valley SPA; however the site is downstream of the Arun Valley SPA, therefore any pollution events on site would not have a negative effect on the Arun Valley SPA or its qualifying features (see **Table 3**). As such, this source-receptor pathway is screened out.

3.4.2 Operational Phase

Hydrological Changes

The proposals will not result in higher levels of nutrients entering the Arun Valley SPA or lead to water pollution or inappropriate water levels within the Arun Valley SPA as the site lies downstream of the SPA. As such, there will be **no Likely Significant Effect** as a result of this source-receptor pathway.

3.5 Conclusion

At the screening stage, four source-receptor pathways were considered. These were physical disturbance, non-physical disturbance and hydrological changes. It has been determined that the proposals alone will have **no Likely Significant Effects** on the Arun Valley SPA as a result of these source-receptor pathways.

In accordance with a European Court of Justice ruling (Peter Sweetman and Others v An Bord Pleanála – Case C258/11, 2013), where a development project has a neutral effect or no appreciable effect alone, an in-combination assessment is not required.

As it has been possible to ‘screen out’ the project, it will not be necessary to progress to the later Appropriate Assessment stage.

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Map 1 Site Location in relation to Arun Valley SPA

Appendix 1 Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

Introduction

This section provides an outline of the Habitats Regulations and the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.

The Habitats Regulations

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), hereafter referred to as ‘the Habitats Regulations’, is a piece of national legislation which was originally derived from the European Union’s Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Wild Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). Following the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union and the end of the transition period on 31st December 2020, these two directives are no longer legally binding in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the legislation on which the HRA process is based is set out within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). However, it is also important to note that under s6(3) of the EU (Withdrawal Act) 2018 (as amended) retained EU law (such as the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2017) is to be interpreted in line with “retained caselaw” which includes retained EU caselaw. Therefore, any EU caselaw prior to the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union remains relevant for the purposes of Habitats Regulations Assessments.

The aim of this legislation is to protect and maintain a National Site Network (formally known within the UK as Natura 2000) which includes all existing SACs and SPAs (designated before 31st December 2020) and any new SACs and SPAs designated under the Habitats Regulations.

Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations sets out that where a plan or project is being proposed which is likely to have a significant effect on a site within the National Site Network the competent authority must undertake an Appropriate Assessment in light of the site’s conservation objectives. A competent authority is in practice the decision maker which undertakes, gives consent, permission or other authorisation for such a plan or project. The authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site. However, the onus is on the applicant for any consent or authorisation to provide such information that the competent authority requires in order to undertake the assessment.

Where an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and any proposed avoidance or mitigation measures anticipated are unable to reduce the potential effect, so it is no longer significant, or if uncertainty remains over the significant effect, consent will only be granted if:

- There are no alternative solutions;
- There are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest for the development;
and

- Compensatory measures have been secured.

National Site Network

Types of sites considered in the Habitats Regulation Assessment process are detailed in **Table 4**. This report considers SPAs, SACs and, as a matter of National Planning Policy, Ramsar sites². In addition, it is a matter of UK Government policy that possible SACs (pSACs) and potential SPAs (pSPA) are considered. For the purposes of this report these sites are collectively referred to as the National Site Network and individually referred to as European sites.

Table 4: National Site Network considered in HRA

| Designation Type | Origin | Description |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Special Protection Area (SPA) | EU Birds Directive | Strictly protected sites classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex I of the Directive), and for regularly-occurring migratory bird species. |
| Potential SPA (pSPA) | EU Birds Directive | Sites that are proposed as SPAs but have yet to be formally classified. These sites are assessed within HRA in accordance with National Planning Policy. |
| Special Area of Conservation (SAC) | EU Habitats Directive | Strictly protected sites forming part of a national network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the habitat types and species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive (as amended). The listed habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a national level (excluding birds). |
| Possible SAC (pSAC) | EU Habitats Directive | Sites that are proposed as SACs and have been submitted but have yet to be formally designated. These sites are assessed within HRA in accordance with National Planning Policy. |
| Ramsar site | Ramsar Convention | Internationally-important wetland habitats are recognised under the Ramsar Convention, with Ramsar sites overlying SPA classifications and SAC designations. While the criteria differ from those of SPAs and SACs, the criteria for Ramsar sites are equally significant in terms of maintaining the ecological integrity of the site. Ramsar designated sites are not part of the National Site Network (although by proxy they relate to the same sites). However, they are assessed within HRA in accordance with National Planning Policy. |

Conservation Objectives

SPAs and SACs

Each SPA and SAC has set conservation objectives defining what constitutes a favourable conservation status of each primary qualifying feature. These are set out by Natural England and describe the targets to be met in order for the feature to qualify as 'favourable'. Conservation objectives vary from site to site but follow the same general principles:

² Whilst Ramsar sites are not protected under the Habitats Regulations, National Planning Policy is that they should be subject them to the same HRA process as if National Site Network sites

- To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats and the habitats of qualifying species;
- To avoid significant disturbance of qualifying species;
- To ensure the integrity of the site is maintained; and
- To ensure that the site makes a full contribution to achieving the favourable conservation status of each of the qualifying features.

The aims are broadly to maintain or restore the structure, function, extent, distribution and supporting processes of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species, and to maintain or restore the populations and distribution of qualifying species.

Ramsar Sites

While Ramsar sites lack set conservation objectives, the correlation between Ramsar qualifying criteria and SAC/SPA qualifying features is such that the objectives of SPAs and SACs negate the need for separate objectives. For sites that are designated both as an SPA/SAC and a Ramsar site, the conservation objectives of SPAs and SACs incorporate the designated features of the Ramsar site.

Conservation Status

Conservation status of a habitat is taken to be (European Economic Community (EEC), 1992): *'The sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species'*.

Species conservation status is defined as:

'The sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations'.

Favourable conservation status of a site is defined as when (McLeod, 2005):

'Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing; the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable'.

The National Site Network has associations with, or is overlaid by, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs are assessed on the basis of their condition at the time of the most recent assessment survey in order to determine whether the site meets its objectives. The assessment of SSSIs draws upon recent and historic condition assessments, capable of establishing whether a site or component unit is *declining* or *recovering*. It should be noted that

European sites often have one or more component SSSIs, any potential impacts to which, or any implications of current condition may also impact the condition of the European site.

European sites are assessed in more depth, on the basis of their conservation status, including an assessment of the presence of specific structure and functions required for its long-term maintenance. It also takes account of whether these necessary structures and functions are likely to persist into the future.

Habitat Regulations Assessment Process

The four stages of HRA (Infrastructure Planning Commission, 2011) are detailed in **Table 5**. If the proposed development cannot be screened out as being unlikely to lead to significant effects, then Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required which will include detailed analysis of identified Likely Significant Effects in order to develop appropriate mitigation that will enable the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in their role as ‘competent authority’ to conclude that no adverse effect on the integrity of European sites will result. In certain circumstances, a proposal that has failed the integrity test can be allowed to go ahead. This is known as a derogation and combines stages 3 and 4 of the process. The proposal must pass all three of the legal tests for a derogation to be granted:

1. There is no feasible alternative solution that would be less damaging;
2. The proposal needs to be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI); and
3. The necessary compensatory measures can be secured.

Table 5: HRA screening process

| Stage | Description |
|---|---|
| Stage 1 Screening | The process to identify the likely impacts of a project upon a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and consider whether there is a Likely Significant Effect. |
| Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment | The consideration of the impacts on the integrity of the European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, with regard to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of mitigation options is carried out to determine adverse effect on the integrity of the site. If these mitigation options cannot avoid adverse effects, and that there will an adverse effect on site integrity, then development consent can only be given if stages 3 and 4 are followed. |
| Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions | Examining alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project to establish whether there are solutions that would avoid or have a lesser effect on European sites. |

Table 5: HRA screening process

| Stage | Description |
|--|--|
| Stage 4 Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) | This is the assessment where no alternative solution exists and where adverse impacts remain. The process to assess whether the development is necessary for IROPI and, if so, the potential compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the site or integrity of the European site. |

The Habitats Regulations apply the precautionary principle to SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites. This means that it is presumed that a Likely Significant Effect may occur unless it can be demonstrated with a sufficient level of confidence that it will not.

Throughout this document the phrase Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been used to refer to the overall process required, while Appropriate Assessment (AA) is used for the specific stage of the process in which it is necessary to determine in more detail adverse effects on the integrity of European sites and mitigation required. The need for HRA and AA is set out within Article 6.3 of the EC Habitats Regulations 1992 and transposed into British law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The ultimate aim of the Regulations is to “maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest” (Habitats Regulations, Article 2(2)). This aim relates to habitats and species, not the European sites themselves, although the sites have a significant role in delivering favourable conservation status.

Habitats Directive 1992

“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, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.”

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

“A competent authority, before deciding to ... give any consent, permission or other authorisation for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site... must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that sites conservation objectives ... The authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site”.

Screening

The first stage of any Habitats Regulations Assessment is a Likely Significant Effect test which is a high-level risk assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as Appropriate Assessment is required. The essential question is:

“Is the project, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon European sites?”

Likely Significant Effect

The process will firstly involve identifying any effects on the ecological functionality of National Site Network sites likely to arise from the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other development projects in the area.

These effects would be considered significant if they undermine any of the National Site Networks site’s conservation objectives.

The likelihood of each significant effect is then determined. A likely effect is defined as one which cannot be ruled out based on the objective information available.

A European Court of Justice ruling (People Over Wind and Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta - Case C323/17, 2018) has determined that it is not sufficient to screen out projects that include mitigation if that mitigation would not form part of the plan or project were it not for the consideration of the conservation objectives of National Site Network sites. In other words, the project must be screened on its own merits and if mitigation would be required to prevent Likely Significant Effects on European sites, then this must be subject to full Appropriate Assessment. With regard to those European sites where it is considered not possible to ‘screen out’ the project without detailed appraisal, it is necessary to progress to the later Appropriate Assessment stage to explore the adverse effects and devise mitigation.

In Combination

HRA takes into account the impacts of proposals both in their own right and in combination with other developments in the vicinity. It is possible for a proposed development to have a de minimis³ impact when taken in isolation, but in conjunction with other proposed development projects it may contribute to a Likely Significant Effect. This is known as an ‘in-combination’ effect. In accordance with a statement made by Advocate-General Eleanor Sharpston in a European Court of Justice ruling (Peter Sweetman and Others v An Bord Pleanála – Case C258/11, 2013), where a development project has a neutral effect or no appreciable effect alone, an in-combination assessment is not required.

Likewise, where it has been concluded at screening stage that there is a risk of Likely Significant Effects, or where a Likely Significant Effect has been identified, an in-combination assessment is not required, and an Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken.

Where it has been determined at screening stage that there is a risk of a de minimis or appreciable adverse effect alone, an in-combination assessment is required.

³ Too small to be meaningful or taken into consideration on its own.

Appropriate Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment is required when HRA screening of the proposals and the in-combination assessment cannot rule out the possibility that a European site's conservation objectives will be undermined, because of one or more Likely Significant Effects.

Integrity

An effect that directly or indirectly affects a European site's qualifying features resulting in harm to the ecological structure and functioning of the site, its supporting processes and/or adversely affects the site's ability to meet conservation objectives would be considered an adverse effect on the integrity of the site. Site integrity is defined as (Jones, 2002):

'The coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified'.

Appendix 2 Planning Policy Context

Introduction

This section summarises the national and local planning policy in relation to Habitats Regulations Assessment and European sites within England and the Arun District Council administrative area.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's requirements for the planning system in England. The original document was published in 2012 with the most recent revised NPPF published in December 2024. A number of sections of the NPPF are relevant when taking into account development proposals and the environment.

A number of principles are set out in Paragraph 1193, including that where harm cannot be adequately avoided then it should be mitigated for, or as a last resort, compensated for. Where impacts occur on nationally designated sites, the benefits must clearly outweigh any adverse impact and incorporating biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged. Paragraph 181 also sets out that potential SPAs, SACs and listed or proposed Ramsar sites or sites acting as compensation for SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites, should receive the same protection as habitat sites.

As set out within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF *“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”*. However, Paragraph 195 goes on to state that *“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”*

Local Policy

Local planning policy within Arun District, outside of the South Downs National Park, is provided by the Arun Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted July 2018. Five policies are of relevance to ecology and biodiversity:

- **Policies ENV SP1: Natural Environment and ENV DM1: Designated Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance**

These policies refer to the Protection of Pagham Harbour Ramsar site, SPA and SSSI, Arun Valley SAC and SPA, Solent and Dorset Coast SPA, Bognor Reef SSSI, Felpham SSSI and Climping Beach SSSI;

- **Policy ENV DM2: Pagham Harbour**

This policy states that development within 400 metres of Pagham Harbour will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. New development within five kilometres of the site will require mitigation;

- **Policy ENV DM3: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas**

This policy refers to the retention and incorporation of locally-valued and important habitats, including wildlife corridors, and for schemes to be designed to minimise disturbance to habitats; and

- **Policy ENV DM5: Development and Biodiversity**

This policy refers to the need of development schemes to achieve biodiversity net gain and to incorporate biodiversity features including green walls and roofs, bat and bird boxes.

Appendix 3 Site Proposals

An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely in the UK, showing a patchwork of agricultural fields in various shades of green and brown. A large, irregular area in the center is highlighted in a semi-transparent yellow. A bright blue line outlines a specific path or boundary, starting from the top center, winding through the yellow area, and ending near the bottom center. Within the yellow area, towards the bottom right, there is a small region outlined in red and blue, possibly indicating a specific site or feature. The bottom of the image shows a coastline with a sandy beach and the sea. A copyright notice is visible at the very bottom left.

An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely in the Netherlands, showing a complex patchwork of agricultural fields in various shades of green and brown. A large, irregular area in the center is highlighted in a semi-transparent yellow. A bright blue line outlines a specific path or boundary that winds through the landscape. In the lower-middle part of the yellow area, there is a small region outlined in red and blue, possibly indicating a specific site or feature. The bottom of the image shows a coastline with a sandy beach and the sea. The map is overlaid with a grid of latitude and longitude lines. At the bottom left, there is a copyright notice for Mapbox and other contributors.

An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely in the Mediterranean. A large, irregular area in the center is highlighted in yellow. A blue line outlines a specific path or boundary within the yellow area. A small, irregular area near the coast is outlined in red and blue. The map shows a mix of green fields, brown agricultural land, and urban areas. The coastline is visible at the bottom, with the sea to the right. The map is overlaid with a grid of latitude and longitude lines. The bottom of the image contains a copyright notice: "© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap contributors, NASA, USGS, Airbus, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies".

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- An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely in the Netherlands, showing a complex patchwork of agricultural fields in various shades of green and brown. A large, irregular area in the center is highlighted in a semi-transparent yellow. A bright blue line outlines a specific path or boundary that winds through the landscape. In the lower-middle part of the yellow area, there is a small region outlined in red and blue, possibly indicating a specific site or feature. The bottom of the image shows a coastline with a body of water. The map is overlaid with a grid of latitude and longitude lines. The bottom of the image contains a copyright notice: "© mapbox ©OpenStreetMap contributors, NASA, USGS, Airbus, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies".

An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely in the Mediterranean. A large, irregular area in the center is highlighted in yellow. A blue line outlines a specific path or boundary within the yellow area. A small, irregular area near the coast is outlined in red and blue. The map shows a mix of green fields, brown agricultural land, and urban areas. The coastline is visible at the bottom, with the sea to the right. The map is overlaid with a grid of latitude and longitude lines. The bottom of the image contains a copyright notice: "© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap contributors, NASA, USGS, Airbus, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies".

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Appendix 4 Stage 1 Screening Assessment Matrix

Matrix Key:

Yes = Likely Significant Effect cannot be excluded

No = Likely Significant Effect can be excluded

(a) = justification supporting conclusion

N/A = feature is not vulnerable to the effect pathway

Table 6. Arun Valley SPA Screening Matrix

| Site Name and Reference: Arun Valley SPA (UK9020281) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Site Area: 528.62 hectares | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Distance to Site: Nine kilometres north | | | | | | | | | | | |
| European Site Features | | | Source-Receptor Pathways | | | | | | | | |
| | | | Physical Disturbance | Non-Physical Disturbance | Hydrological Changes (Construction) | Ground Contamination | Air Quality Changes | Invasive Non-Native Species | Hydrological Changes (Operation) | Recreational Pressure | In-combination effects |
| Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> (overwintering) | | <i>Cygnus bewickii</i> | No (a) | No (a) | No (a) | No (a) | No (a) | No (a) | No (a) | No (a) | No (b) |

Justification for supporting conclusions:

- This pathway of impact is unlikely to lead to Likely Significant Effects on this qualifying feature either because the feature is not present within the Zol or because the habitats within the working areas are not suitable for supporting the feature. Therefore, this pathway of impact with regards to this qualifying feature has been screened out.
- Where it has been concluded at screening stage that there is a risk of Likely Significant Effects, or where a Likely Significant Effect has been identified, an in-combination assessment is not required, and an Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken.