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1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this Report

This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations. A SEA is required if the SPD is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

This report will also screen to determine whether the SPD requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). An HRA screening report is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected Habitats (European) Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan (including those of SPD status) or project.

1.2 The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD

The SPD when adopted will support existing policies for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council ahead of the adoption of a Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which is in preparation jointly by both authorities. The SPD provides advice and guidance on how proposals can comply with national policy and district-wide policies in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (adopted in September 2018), and the Cambridge Local Plan (adopted in October 2018).

The existing policies in the aforementioned Local Plans seek to ensure that biodiversity is adequately protected and enhanced throughout the development process. The SPD will, once adopted, supersede the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity SPD (adopted in 2009) in regard to providing support and guidance for the Greater Cambridge area.

The SPD lists specific objectives to protect and enhance biodiversity. These are:

To explain terminology associated with biodiversity conservation to assist applicants' understanding of the importance of biodiversity within the wider environment of Greater Cambridge;

To be clear on the ways in which development proposals in Greater Cambridge can be formulated in an appropriate manner to avoid harm to biodiversity and to provide a long-term, measurable net gain for biodiversity;

To encourage applicants to protect, restore and enhance locally relevant natural habitats and ecological features on their sites and to create new habitats, as part of a high-quality design; and

To assist applicants to gain planning permission in Greater Cambridge more quickly by informing them of the level of information expected to accompany planning applications.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment states that,

‘Environmental assessment is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(10) All plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors and which set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment(7), and all plans and programmes which have been determined to require assessment pursuant to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna(8), are likely to have significant effects on the environment, and should as a rule be made subject to systematic environmental assessment. When they determine the use of small areas at local level or are minor modifications to the above plans or programmes, they should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(11) Other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects may not have significant effects on the environment in all cases and should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have such effects.’

The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD may influence frameworks for future development or become used ancillary to those plans and programmes that do set such a framework, and as such it has been determined that the principle of the SPD should be screened for the necessary application of the SEA Directive.

The Report from the Commission to The Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions states, on the application and effectiveness of the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC), that

‘the following Plan & Programme (P&P), and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority and required pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions:

P&P prepared for certain sectors and which set the framework for future development consent in respect of projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA-Directive.

P&P requiring an assessment under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

3. SEA Screening

3.1 When is SEA Required?

SEA is a tool used at the plan-making stage to assess the likely effects of a plan, or SPD, when judged against reasonable alternatives. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating the legislative requirements of SEA has been undertaken for both the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Local Plans as required by Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The SPD provides additional guidance on various policies contained within the Local Plans, but it should be acknowledged that the Local Plan policies, of which the SPD supports, have been subject to assessment through the Local Plan SA process.

SEA for an SPD alone can however be required, but typically only in exceptional situations. This is usually only applicable to SPDs which themselves could cause significant environmental effects that have not been previously considered.

Planning Practice Guidance – Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 11-008-20140306) states that,,

‘Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan.

A strategic environmental assessment is unlikely to be required where a supplementary planning document deals only with a small area at a local level (see regulation 5(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004), unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects.’

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive set out the circumstances in which a SEA is required. Table 1 sets out whether the principle of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD will require a ‘full’ SEA.

Table 1: Exploring whether the Principle of the SPD would warrant SEA

Question 1: Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?

Yes - the SPD has been subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority.

Question 2: Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provision? (Typical characteristics of "administrative provisions" are that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with

4. HRA Screening

4.1 Habitat Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any Habitats Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats (European) sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. Habitats (European) sites are also known as Natura 2000 sites and Habitats sites in the NPPF.

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document. The area covered by the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document is shown in Appendix 1.

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for in combination effects from other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

4.2 Court Judgements and their consideration in this Report

4.2.1 CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17

As previously mentioned, in line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.



SPA
Fenland, Devils Dyke, Eversden and Wimpole Woods, Portholme and Ouse Washes
Ramsar
Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen, Ouse Washes and Woodwalton Fen

Fenland SAC is comprised of three fenlands and overlaps with Wicken Fen Ramsar and Chippenham Fen Ramsar. The Impact Risk Zones for the underpinning SSSIs for the aforementioned Habitats sites were interrogated on MAGIC map.

After consideration on MAGIC website www.magic.gov.uk, the Plan area does lie within the Impact Risk Zone for several of the aforementioned Habitats Sites. Eversden and Wimpole Woods lies within the Greater Cambridge plan area and the Ouse Washes SPA, SAC and Ramsar, Wicken Fen Ramsar/Fenland SAC and Devils Dyke SAC all have Impact Risk Zones that overlap the boundary of South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas.

4.4 Method and Approach

This document relates only to Stage 1 of the HRA process as set out in Figure 1 below.

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	recreational pressure within the Greater Cambridge area are listed in Annex B of Natural England’s advice.		

4.5.1 Screening result from the SPD alone

There are no specific recommendations to deliver for the Biodiversity Issues in this SPD as they have all been assigned to Category A. There is therefore no need to amend the text for Biodiversity Issues as they are not predicted to have a Likely Significant (negative) Effect on any Habitats site.

This SPD provides guidance on the design of biodiversity mitigation and enhancement for planning applications submitted to South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City councils. The guidance and Biodiversity Issues embedded in the SPD has been taken into account for this HRA screening, and it is considered that the draft SPD is not predicted to result in any likely significant negative effects on Habitats Sites alone.

The effects in-combination with other plans and projects are considered separately in the following Section.

4.6 Other Plans and Projects: In-combination Effects

The plans and projects listed below and their HRAs have been carried out by South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City councils or other organisations and none have been found to have a likely significant negative effect on the Habitats sites within scope of this assessment.

The Water Cycle Strategy (WCS) for Major Growth Sites in and Around Cambridge is not in itself a relevant plan or project under the Habitats Regulations but was prepared to support the delivery of the existing development strategy. Whilst it does not provide an assessment of new proposals for the Local Plan, its findings are relevant to support the assessment of this plan. It focused on issues related to the water supply, surface drainage and wastewater sewerage associated with potential development sites, and also concluded no likely significant effects, and that protected sites could be screened out of further assessment.

In the context of this HRA, the other relevant plans to be considered (i.e. those that have

also triggered a requirement for HRA) are listed below.

Table 6: Other plans or projects considered for in combination effects

Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
Greater Cambridge	Draft Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening	Draft Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening	Not applicable
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Northstowe Area Action Plan HRA (April 2007)	“It can be objectively concluded that the Northstowe Area Action Plan is not likely to have any significant effects on any Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. There is therefore no requirement to proceed to the next stage of an Appropriate Assessment.”	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan HRA (May 2007)	“This AAP was subject to an HRA and found not to impact on a Natura site or a Ramsar site.”	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
South Cambridgeshire	Cambridge East Area Action Plan HRA	“It can be objectively concluded that the	It is considered that in combination likely

Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
District Council	(May 2007)	Cambridge East Area Action Plan is not likely to have any significant effects on any Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. There is therefore no requirement to proceed to the next stage of an Appropriate Assessment.”	significant effects are not predicted.
South Cambridgeshire District Council	North West Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA (August 2007)	“It has been objectively concluded that the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan – Preferred Options Draft - is not likely to have any significant effects on any Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. It is therefore concluded that there is no requirement to proceed to the next stage of an Appropriate Assessment.”	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Habitat Regulations Assessment: Chapter 20 of South Cambs Local Plan SA Scoping Report (June 2012) and including the Draft Final	“The Local Plan for the district was subject to an HRA screening and found to have no likely significant impact on a Natura	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.

Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
	Sustainability Report (2014) and Sustainability Appraisal Addendum (2015)	site or a Ramsar site.”	
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Waterbeach New Town SPD HRA screening report (2018)	“The overall conclusion of this screening assessment is that the draft Waterbeach New Town SPD is unlikely to have any significant effects on the Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites identified alone or in combination with other plans or projects.”	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Bourn Airfield New Village SPD SEA / HRA Screening Report (June 2019)	“The HRA element of this Screening Report indicates that the draft Bourn Airfield New Village SPD is not predicted to have likely significant effects on Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.”	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Greater Cambridge Local Plan Habitats Regulations	“This Scoping document has been produced to provide	N/A



Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
	Assessment Issues and Options Scoping Report (Dec 2019)	guidance and parameters for developing the GCLP in the context of European sites and as a reference point for stakeholders wishing to comment on the document.”	
South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council	North East Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA Report (July 2020)	RE: Air Quality, Water Quality, Water Quantity, and Recreation - “In accordance with the precautionary principle, a conclusion of no Adverse Effect on Integrity cannot be reached.”	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted as all Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document Biodiversity issues have been assigned to Category A.

However, effects on biodiversity resulting from the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document can be ruled out and only positive outcomes can be assumed from the purpose of the SPD. There is therefore no pathway for in-combination negative effects.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The SPD has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The guidance and advice of the SPD can be considered to assist in the determination of the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

The SPD does not designate or allocate any land for any (including development) purposes and does not include any content that could give rise to significant negative effects on the environment, or any social or economic tenets of sustainability.

The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD can therefore be **screened out** for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA screening report indicates that the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document is not predicted to have likely significant negative effects on any Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore **screened out**.

We note that Natural England's consultation comments (ref: 355622 dated 5 July 2021) on the SEA/ HRA screening report (June 2021) are supportive as follows:

Natural England believes that the SEA and HRA Screening Report (Place Services, June 2021) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Table 2 sets out Greater Cambridge's key natural environment assets including statutorily designated and local nature conservation sites, priority habitats and priority and protected species, local landscape, and best and most versatile land. Potential pathways for impacts including air and water quality, groundwater abstraction and recreational pressure and disturbance have been identified.

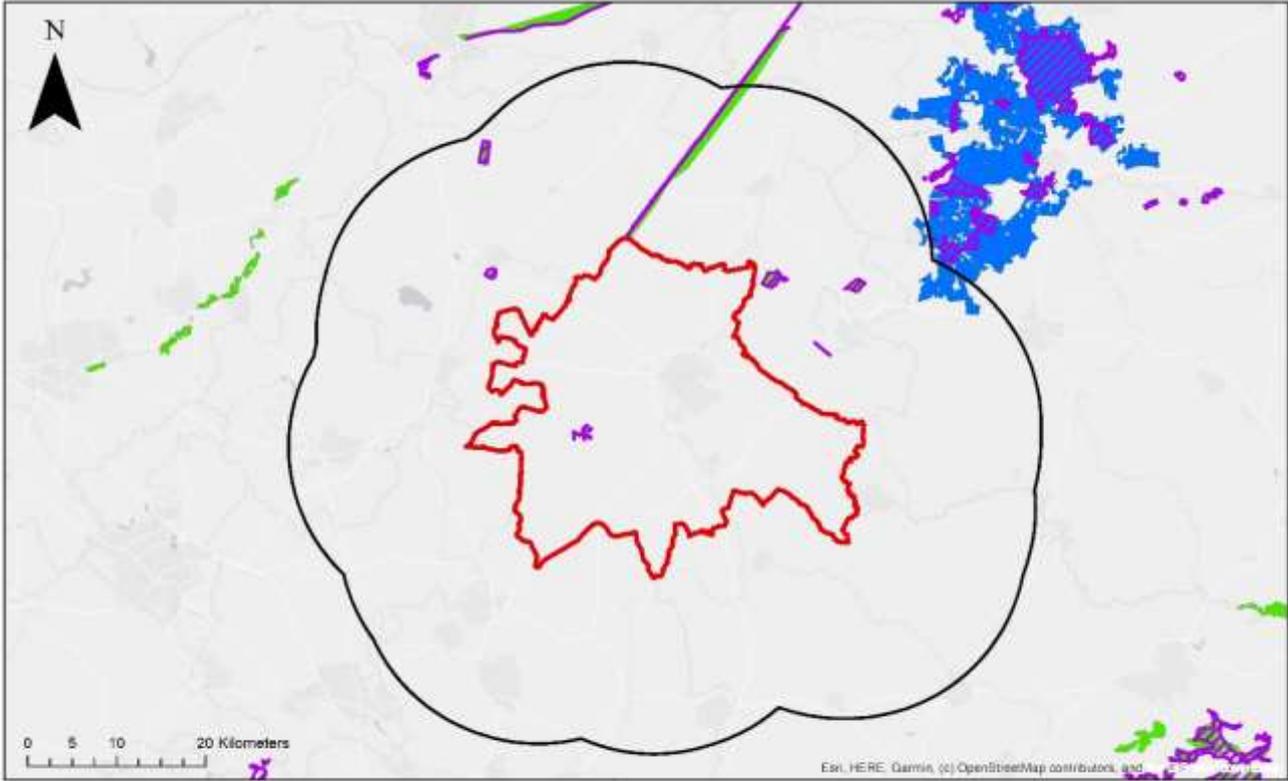
We are satisfied that the relevant natural environment receptors, including Habitats Sites have been screened into the assessment and that the potential effects of Biodiversity SPD policies on these alone, and in-combination with other plans and projects, has been appropriately considered. As a guidance document aiming to contribute towards achieving sustainable development, protecting biodiversity and maximising opportunities for enhancement we support the Report's conclusions that the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effect including impact to Habitats Sites and that preparation of SEA and detailed HRA is therefore not required.

6. References

- Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD (May 2021)
Greater Cambridge
Northstowe Area Action Plan HRA (April 2007)
South Cambridgeshire District Council Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan HRA (May 2007)
Cambridge East Area Action Plan HRA (May 2007)
North West Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA (August 2007)
South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (adopted July 2009)
Bourn Airfield New Village SPD SEA / HRA Screening Report (June 2019)
Waterbeach New Town SPD HRA screening report (2018)
South Cambridgeshire District Council South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (September 2018)
Greater Cambridge Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Issues and Options Scoping Report (Dec 2019)
North East Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA Report (July 2020)
Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website
Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (June 2021) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited

Appendix 1

Greater Cambridge Plan Area and Habitats Sites within 20km



Legend
Greater Cambridge 20km buffer Special Area of Conservation Ramsar Special Protection Area

Source: Place Services, 2021

Appendix 2

Characteristics of Habitats Sites in Scope of this Report

This appendix contains information about the Habitats Sites included in the scoping for this HRA. Information about each site's area, the site descriptions, qualifying features and pressures and threats are drawn from Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) and the Standard Data Forms or Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) available from the JNCC website. Site conservation objectives are drawn from Natural England's website and are only available for SACs and SPAs. Supplementary Advice has also been added to describe the range of ecological attributes that are most likely to contribute to a site's overall integrity and key vulnerabilities to consider within Habitats Regulations assessments. The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting site's ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes and noteworthy features are not treated as qualifying features in the application of HRA tests. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the Ramsar criteria.

Table 7: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Breckland SPA

Breckland SPA - The Breckland of Norfolk and Suffolk lies in the heart of East Anglia on largely sandy soils of glacial origin. In the nineteenth century the area was termed a sandy waste, with small patches of arable cultivation that were soon abandoned. The continental climate, with low rainfall and free draining soils, has led to the development of dry heath and grassland communities. Much of Breckland has been planted with conifers throughout the twentieth century, and in part of the site, arable farming is the predominant land use.

The remnants of dry heath and grassland which have survived these recent changes support heathland breeding birds, where grazing by rabbits and sheep is sufficiently intensive to create short turf and open ground. These breeding birds have also adapted to live in forestry and arable habitats. Woodlark *Lullula arborea* and nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* breed in clear-fell and open heath areas, whilst stone curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus* establish nests on open ground provided by arable cultivation in the spring, as well as on Breckland grass-heath.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
Breckland SPA EU Code: UK9009201	39432.55	A224, b - Nightjar, <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> A133, b - Stone-curlew, <i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i> A246, b - Woodlark, <i>Lullula arborea</i>	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; - The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying	Current pressures - Lack of ground disturbance, under grazing, inappropriate scrub and weed control, inappropriate cutting/mowing. - Water pollution: There has been a considerable loss

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			<p>species;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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>of 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. Changes in species distributions.</p> <p>Potential future threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition. - Public access / disturbance – SAC features may be affected through eutrophication (dog fouling, unauthorised fires) and disturbance of soils. - Climate change.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				- Habitat fragmentation.

Table 8: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Ouse Washes

Ouse Washes - The Ouse Washes is one of the country's few remaining areas of extensive washland habitat. The associated dykes and rivers hold a great variety of aquatic plants; the pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. are particularly well represented. The associated aquatic fauna is similarly diverse and includes spined loach *Cobitis taenia*. The Counter Drain, with its clear water and abundant aquatic plants, is particularly important, and a healthy population of spined loach is known to occur.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
Ouse Washes SAC EU Code: UK0013011	311.35	S1149. <i>Cobitis taenia</i> ; Spined loach	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; - The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying	Inappropriate water levels: Notified interests (including breeding birds, overwintering birds and supporting grassland communities) are being adversely affected by increased flooding on the Ouse Washes. Flooding during spring / early summer severely damages the breeding bird interest by flooding nests,

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			<p>species;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; - The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely; - The populations of qualifying species; and - The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<p>drowning young and affecting habitat. Deep flooding during winter also impacts overwintering birds such as wigeon and impacts on the wetland fauna, especially invertebrate populations. Wetland flora is also affected through prolonged submersion, favouring swamp communities over the designated grassland species. Prolonged summer flooding disrupts essential management of the washland, affecting the condition of the grassland for breeding birds in subsequent spring/summer season(s).</p> <p>Water Pollution:</p> <p>Inappropriate levels of nutrients from diffuse pollution in combination with inappropriate water levels from flooding have adversely affected the extent/composition of vegetation communities on the washes.</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				<p>Resulting changes to the grassland mosaic has potential to affect the notified bird interests by destroying habitat suitable for many of the birds that visit or breed at the site. Occasional incidences of low oxygen levels on River Delph and Counter Drain have potential to impact spined loach populations.</p>
<p>Ouse Washes SPA EU Code: UK9008041</p>	<p>2469.08</p>	<p>A037 <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>; Bewick's swan (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A038 <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>; Whooper swan (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A050 <i>Anas penelope</i>; Eurasian wigeon (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A051 <i>Anas strepera</i>; Gadwall (Breeding)</p>	<p>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;</p> <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 	<p>Inappropriate water levels:</p> <p>Notified interests (including breeding birds, overwintering birds and supporting grassland communities) are being adversely affected by increased flooding on the Ouse Washes. Flooding during spring / early summer severely damages the breeding bird interest by flooding nests, drowning young and affecting habitat. Deep flooding during winter also impacts overwintering birds such as wigeon and impacts on the wetland fauna,</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>A052 Anas crecca; Eurasian teal (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A053 Anas platyrhynchos; Mallard (Breeding)</p> <p>A054 Anas acuta; Northern pintail (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A055 Anas querquedula; Garganey (Breeding)</p> <p>A056 Anas clypeata; Northern shoveler (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A056 Anas clypeata; Northern shoveler (Breeding)</p> <p>A082 Circus cyaneus; Hen harrier (Non-breeding)</p>	<p>on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The population of each of the qualifying features; and, - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<p>especially invertebrate populations. Wetland flora is also affected through prolonged submersion, favouring swamp communities over the designated grassland species. Prolonged summer flooding disrupts essential management of the washland, affecting the condition of the grassland for breeding birds in subsequent spring/summer season(s).</p> <p>Water Pollution:</p> <p>Inappropriate levels of nutrients from diffuse pollution in combination with inappropriate water levels from flooding have adversely affected the extent/composition of vegetation communities on the washes. Resulting changes to the grassland mosaic has potential to affect the notified bird interests by destroying habitat suitable for many of the birds that visit or</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>A151 Philomachus pugnax; Ruff (Breeding)</p> <p>A156a Limosa limosa limosa; Black-tailed godwit (Breeding)</p> <p>Waterbird assemblage</p> <p>Breeding bird assemblage</p>		<p>breed at the site. Occasional incidences of low oxygen levels on River Delph and Counter Drain have potential to impact spined loach populations.</p>
Ouse Washes Ramsar	2469.08	<p>Ramsar criterion 1:</p> <p>The site is one of the most extensive areas of seasonally-flooding washland of its type in Britain.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2:</p> <p>The site supports several nationally scarce plants, including small water pepper Polygonum minus,</p>	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		whorled water-milfoil Myriophyllum verticillatum, greater water parsnip Sium latifolium, river waterdropwort Oenanthe fluviatilis, fringed water-lily Nymphoides peltata, long-stalked pondweed Potamogeton praelongus, hair-like pondweed Potamogeton trichoides, grass-wrack pondweed Potamogeton compressus, tasteless water-pepper Polygonum mite and marsh dock Rumex palustris. Invertebrate records indicate that the site holds relict fenland fauna, including the British Red Data Book species large darter dragonfly Libellula fulva and the rifle beetle		

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>Oulimnius major. The site also supports a diverse assemblage of nationally rare breeding waterfowl associated with seasonally-flooding wet grassland.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 6: species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.</p>		

Table 9: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Eversden and Wimpole SAC

Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC - The site comprises a mixture of ancient coppice woodland (Eversden Wood) and high forest woods likely to be of more recent origin (Wimpole Woods). A colony of barbastelle bats *Barbastella barbastellus* is associated with the trees in Wimpole Woods. These trees are used as a summer maternity roost where the female bats gather to give birth and rear their young. Most of the roost sites are within tree crevices. The bats also use the site as a foraging area. Some of the woodland is also used as a flight path when bats forage outside the site.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
<p>Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC</p> <p>EU Code: UK0030331</p>	<p>66.48</p>	<p>S1308 Barbastelle bat Barbastella barbastellus</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 the habitats of qualifying species; - The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; - The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely; - The populations of qualifying species; and - The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<p>Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown:</p> <p>Two transects within the site are monitored each year as part of the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP). However, there is some evidence that there could be other Barbastelle roosts or important foraging sites close to but not within the site. If this is the case, then potentially important sites for the bats in the area are not protected.</p> <p>Offsite habitat availability/ management:</p> <p>The bats have a limited area in which to roost and forage within the site and it is unclear which habitats they use in the wider countryside. In order to maintain a sustainable population, additional suitable habitat should be identified and to</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				<p>maintain/improve its value, suitable long-term management secured.</p> <p>Forestry and Woodland Management:</p> <p>The woodland upon which the bats depend must be maintained in the medium to longer term by ensuring that tall trees, especially oak, grow up to replace those currently in place.</p> <p>Air Pollution:</p> <p>Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition</p> <p>Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads.</p>

Table 10: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Devils Dyke SAC

Devils Dyke SAC - The Devil’s Dyke holds an extensive area of species-rich chalk grassland of a type characteristic to chalklands of south, central and eastern England. The Dyke is an ancient linear earthwork comprising a deep ditch and high bank. It was originally

colonised by plants from adjacent grassland (much of which is now arable) and remains as one of the few areas still supporting these vegetation communities. The species-rich grassland is dominated by upright brome *Bromopsis erecta* and a range of typical chalk herbs are present including salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* and rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. Some uncommon plants such as purple milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, bastard toadflax *Thesium humifusum* and the pasque flower *Pulsatilla vulgaris* are also present. It is the only known UK semi-natural dry grassland site for lizard orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
Devils Dyke SAC EU Code: UK0030037	8.02	H6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia), (note that this includes the priority feature "important orchid rich sites")	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 	Inappropriate scrub management: There is some scrub encroachment which is beginning to become damaging on some parts of the site and is likely to cause the notified grassland to deteriorate. Grassland vegetation management is currently managed by hand cutting as grazing cannot be carried out due to equestrian practices which have taken place for centuries. The current HLS agreement does not provide sufficient funding to allow appropriate management of the sward because of the

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			habitats rely.	steepness of the site. Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site. This requires further investigation

Table 11: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Portholme SAC

Portholme SAC - This site is the largest surviving traditionally-managed lowland hay meadow in the UK. It holds grassland communities of the alluvial flood meadow type. The meadow is surrounded by channels of the River Ouse. The grassland communities are characterised by the presence of such grasses as Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, yellow oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*, meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* and meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*. The range of herbs present, typical of such meadows, includes lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*. The site supports a small population of fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
Portholme SAC EU Code: UK0030054	91.93	H6510. Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>)	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 	Inappropriate water levels: Portholme's MG4 grassland habitat community is very sensitive to prolonged flood events. Given the proximity to the River Ouse, periodic winter flooding is a naturally occurring event. However, there are concerns that the duration of flooding and phosphate/sediment levels in the flood water are having a detrimental effect upon the habitat. Works were implemented in 2010 to assist water movement from north east corner of the SAC. However, this has been followed by a series of very wet winters where excessive flooding is thought to have been detrimental to the flora Water pollution: Portholme's MG4 grassland habitat community is very sensitive to input of nutrients.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				This encourages more competitive grasses and 'weeds' at the expense of rarer more desirable herbaceous species. High nutrient levels are arising from floodwaters from the River Ouse, having a detrimental effect upon the habitat.

Table 12: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Fenland

Fenland - The individual sites within Fenland SAC each hold areas of calcareous fens, with a long and well-documented history of regular management. There is a full range from species-poor great fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus*-dominated fen to species-rich fen with a lower proportion of great fen-sedge and containing such species as black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*. There are good transitions to the tall herb-rich East Anglian type of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* – meadow thistle fenmeadow and rush pastures, all set within a mosaic of reedbeds and wet pastures.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
Fenlands SAC EU Code:	619.4089	H6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peat or clay-	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the	Water pollution: Woodwalton Fen is affected by

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
UK0014782		<p>silt soil</p> <p>H7210 Calcareous fens with <i>C. mariscus</i> and species of <i>C. davalliana</i></p> <p>S1149 Spined loach, <i>Cobitis taenia</i></p> <p>S1166 Great crested newt, <i>Triturus cristatus</i></p>	<p>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 	<p>high-nutrient water which inundates the site in winter and flows into the reserve ditches in summer. Despite recent improvements in the water quality feeding the site from the Great Raveley Drain, due to phosphate stripping in nearby sewerage treatment works, historical poor water quality has contributed to a decline in biodiversity and a decline in site features within the fen. This historic pollution has potentially bound to the silt of the slow moving internal ditches causing a distinct loss in rooted aquatic species. Despite the reduction in phosphates the nitrates still remain high in the Great Raveley Drain and high nutrient water can flood the site, particularly in winter. Over the past few decades, deteriorating water quality and more persistent flooding have contributed to a reduction in biodiversity and a</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			<p>species within the site.</p>	<p>decline in many site features.</p> <p>Chippenham Fen is affected by high nutrient water reaching the fen from a mixture of groundwater, rainfall and run off. In periods of low flow, poor quality water may have a more dramatic effect on the site's vascular plant assemblages. There is uncertainty of the current water quality within Chippenham Fen at present</p> <p>Hydrological changes:</p> <p>The winter flood water at Woodwalton Fen has high silt and nutrient loads which get deposited on the site and can lie on the fields for prolonged periods. Flooding also delays the start of the grazing and mowing season, which in turn promotes the vigorous growth of invasive species like soft rush and reed. These species are replacing</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				<p>more diverse grassland communities in some areas in the south of the site where much of the site's SAC interests are situated. Instant impacts include damage and disruption to management infrastructure, flooding of nests and hibernacula (depending on time of year) and, in some instances, local extinction of species. There are concerns that water does not seep into site compartments between ditches to the extent it once did. A current project is underway at Chippenham Fen to look at how a site abstraction licence could be used to explore an alternative method to deliver support water. The water augmentation pilot project explores an alternative method of delivery of support water. The scheme is mitigation for the effects of public water supply abstraction.</p>

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				<p>Air Pollution:</p> <p>Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.</p> <p>Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads. This has the potential to affect the Molinia meadow and calcareous fen features although there is no information known on any current impacts.</p>
Wicken Fen Ramsar	254.39	<p>Ramsar criterion 1:</p> <p>One of the most outstanding remnants of the East Anglian peat fens. The area is one of the few which has not been drained. Traditional management has created a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields.</p>	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>Ramsar criterion 2:</p> <p>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>		
Chippenham Fen Ramsar	112.13	<p>Ramsar criterion 1:</p> <p>A spring-fed calcareous basin mire with a long history of management, which is partly reflected in the diversity of present-day vegetation.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2:</p> <p>The invertebrate fauna is very rich, partly due to</p>	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>its transitional position between Fenland and Breckland. The species list is very long, including many rare and scarce invertebrates characteristic of ancient fenland sites in Britain.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 3:</p> <p>The site supports diverse vegetation types, rare and scarce plants. The site is the stronghold of Cambridge milk parsley <i>Selinum carvifolia</i>.</p>		
Woodwalton Fen Ramsar	208.13	<p>Ramsar criterion 1:</p> <p>The site is within an area that is one of the remaining parts of East Anglia which has not been drained. The fen is near natural and has</p>	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>developed where peat-digging took place in the 19th century. The site has several types of open fen and swamp communities.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2:</p> <p>The site supports two species of British Red Data Book plants, fen violet, <i>Viola persicifolia</i> and fen wood-rush <i>Luzula pallidula</i>. Woodwalton also supports a large number of wetland invertebrates including 20 British Red Data Book species. Aquatic beetles, flies and moths are particularly well represented.</p>		





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