

Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

June 2021 (v2 Dec 2021 with Natural England comments)





About us

Place Services is a leading public sector provider of integrated environmental assessment, planning, design and management services. Our combination of specialist skills and experience means that we are uniquely qualified to help public organisations meet the requirements of the planning process, create practical design solutions and deliver environmental stewardship.

Place Services has a proven track record of delivering sustainable, creative and effective solutions for the built environment. Our in-house expertise comprises a multidisciplinary team which includes planners, urban designers, landscape architects, flood specialists and public art consultants. Our approach is client led; we work alongside our clients to deliver services, projects and planning objectives in a collaborative and cost effective way.

Copyright

This report may contain material that is non-Place Services copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Historic England), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Place Services is able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences or permissions, but for which copyright itself is not transferable by Place Services. Users of this report remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

Disclaimer

The material contained in this report was designed as an integral part of a report to an individual client and was prepared solely for the benefit of that client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and is not intended to nor should it be relied upon by a third party. To the fullest extent permitted by law Place Services will not be liable by reason of breach of contract, negligence, or otherwise for any loss or damage (whether direct, indirect or consequential) occasioned to any person acting or omitting to act or refraining from acting in reliance upon the material contained in the report. Loss or damage as referred to above shall be deemed to include, but is not limited to, any loss of profits or anticipated loss of profits damage to reputation or goodwill, loss of business, or anticipated loss of business, damages, costs, expense incurred or payable to any third party (in all cases whether direct, indirect or consequential) or any other direct, indirect or consequential loss or damage.

Contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Legislative Background	8
3. SEA Screening	11
4. HRA Screening	27
5. Conclusions	49
6. References	50
Appendix 1	51
Appendix 2	52

List of Tables

Table 1: Exploring whether the Principle of the SPD would warrant SEA.....	11
Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment.....	15
Table 3: Habitats Sites within 20km to be considered in this assessment	29
Table 4: Assessment of potential impacts on Habitats Sites from the SPD	33
Table 5: Assessment of potential impacts from the SPD Biodiversity Issues.....	36
Table 6: Other plans or projects considered for in combination effects.....	45
Table 7: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Breckland SPA	53
Table 8: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Ouse Washes	55
Table 9: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Eversden and Wimpole SAC.....	61
Table 10: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Devils Dyke SAC	63
Table 11: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Portholme SAC.....	65
Table 12: Characteristics of Habitats Sites within 20km of the Plan / SPD area – Fenland	67

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.

1.3 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan & Cambridge Local Plan

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out the planning policies and land allocations to guide the future development of the District up to 2031. It includes policies on a wide range of topics such as housing, employment, services and facilities, and the natural environment.

1.3.1 Content regarding Biodiversity within the Local Plans

Both the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the Cambridge Local Plan include various policies that either reference or are thematically related to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. For the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, these are:

NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character

NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land

NH/4 Biodiversity

NH/5 Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance

NH/6 Green Infrastructure

NH/7 Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees

CC/8 Sustainable Drainage Systems

HQ/1 Design Principles

For the Cambridge Local Plan, these policies are:

Policy 7 The River Cam

Policy 8 Setting of the city

Policy 31 Integrated water management

Policy 52 Protecting garden land and the subdivision of existing dwelling plots

Policy 57 Designing New Buildings (criteria h.)

Policy 58 Altering and extending existing buildings

Policy 59 Designing landscape and the public realm

Policy 66 Paving over front gardens

Policy 69 Protection of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance

Policy 70 Protection of Priority Species and Habitats

Policy 71 Trees

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).

P&P setting the framework for development consent in respect of projects (not limited to those listed in the EIA Directive; see above) and determined by "screening" as being likely to have significant environmental effects.'

This report represents this screening process in regard to the content and influence of the SPD.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

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 an assessment screening the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats 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.

HRA is a screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats (European) sites, in order to identify whether effects are likely so as to require a full appropriate assessment. 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 or in integrity of that site.

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to accompany the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD. 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.

On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the Prime Minister triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which commenced a period of negotiations regarding the UK's exit from the EU. On 26 June 2018 The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent, work to prepare the UK statute book for Brexit was completed and the UK has now left the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 made sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and these are unchanged until amended by Parliament. The requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place with minor changes being affected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Parliament will however be at liberty to introduce future changes to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) since, after 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.

At the present time, the position under section 6(3) EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), is that the courts in the UK, with the sole exception of the Supreme Court, will continue to be

bound by HRA judgements handed down by the CJEU and by domestic courts prior to 31 December 2020 when interpreting the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is the case as long as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain unmodified by Parliament.

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

interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a Plan to be prepared.)

Yes - the SPD would be considered as falling within the category of an 'administrative provision'.

Question 3: Is the Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?

Yes to both criteria - the SPD has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 4: Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?

The SPD's likely effect on sites and requirement for an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive is explored in Section 4 of this Report.

Question 5: Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a Plan likely to require assessment under the Habitats Directive?

Yes to one of the criteria - the SPD can be considered to assist the determination (through guidance) of the use of small areas at the local level commensurate to its status in determining local planning applications.

Question 6: Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?

Yes - the SPD has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 7: Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget Plan, or is it co financed by structural funds or European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) programmes 2000 to 2006/7?

The SPD does not serve a purpose related to national defence or civil emergency, a financial or budget Plan. The SPD is not co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7.

Question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

Likely significant effects are explored in more detail in Section 3.3 of this Screening Report. The 'conclusions' section of the Report outlines whether the SPD requires SEA or not in regard to its effects on the environment and the significance of any effects.

The following sub-sections look at the identified effects of the draft SPD in line with the criteria for assessing effects as per Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive). Crucially, it will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on the environment arising from the SPD.

3.2 Criteria for Assessing the Effects on the Environment of the SPD

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment, referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below.

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC Significant Effects

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC Significant Effects

- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - * special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - * exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - * intensive land-use,
 - * the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

3.3 Likely Significant Effects resulting from the SPD

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment. The table below will explore the likelihood of effects on the following required themes, as included within Annex I of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC):

- Biodiversity;
- Population;
- Human health;
- Fauna;
- Flora;
- Soil;
- Water;
- Air;
- Climatic factors;
- Material assets;
- Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage;
- Landscape; and

- The interrelationship between the above factors.

Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The SPD sets out support, advice, and guidance for the implementation of relevant Local Plan policies which will be used to determine proposals for development within the Greater Cambridge area. The SPD does not specifically include any land use allocations for mitigation purposes although 'Biodiversity Issue B5' sets out biodiversity provision in the design of new buildings and open spaces. Nevertheless, the principle of new provision is included within Local Plan policies which are adopted, and will have been subject to SA and HRA at the Plan level. The degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects and other activities is therefore considered low.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Local Plans of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge provide policies for the Greater Cambridge area, relevant to those administrative areas. The SPD does not identify any land that is required for mitigation purposes of the Local Plan policies and by design the SPD's content is strongly in conformity to that of the aforementioned Local Plans. The status of SPDs is such that their content is capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions, but do not formally form part of the development plan for an area. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes is therefore low.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in	The SPD in principle and through its contents will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The SPD ensures that biodiversity considerations are understood, taken into account, and enhancements maximised through the development management process. The SPD includes

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	content related directly to ensuring environmental considerations will be integrated into any forthcoming development within the Plan area. This content pertains to sections regarding: Biodiversity Issue B1 - Mitigation hierarchy Biodiversity Issue B2 - Protection of irreplaceable habitats Biodiversity Issue B3 - Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Biodiversity Issue B4 - Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity Biodiversity Issue B5 - Biodiversity provision in the design of new buildings & open spaces Biodiversity Issue B6 - Provision of biodiverse and living roofs Biodiversity Issue B7 - Biodiversity Net Gain Biodiversity Issue B8 - Habitats Regulations Assessment Biodiversity Issue B9 - Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation bat protocol Biodiversity Issue B10 - Recreational pressure on sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest The above Biodiversity Issues advise and support the implementation of adopted Local Plan policies. These have been subject to thorough assessment within the Local Plans' Sustainability Appraisals and Habitats Regulations Assessments. This ensures that environmental considerations, alongside a balance of social and economic objectives / tenets of sustainability, have been considered in the development of the SPD.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan area	The Greater Cambridge area reflects a relatively large area and the SPD seeks to ensure that environmental issues are not forthcoming from development proposals in regard to biodiversity. The content of the adopted Local Plans will additionally apply to any proposals within Greater Cambridge.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Local Plan policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) within the context of the Local Plan. This Screening Report identifies the following potential (direct / indirect) environmental problems or sources of potential problems relevant to the Greater Cambridge area: There is one Habitats Site (Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)) located within the Greater Cambridge area, and a further four within 20km of the Councils' administrative boundaries. There are 41 Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Greater Cambridge area, covering a range of habitats and geological formations, including chalk grassland, species-rich neutral grassland, reedbed and fen, Ancient Woodland, chalk pits, gravel pits and clay pits. The Greater Cambridge area is therefore within various Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) of these Habitats Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In many cases, development proposals within IRZs are required to be consulted on with Natural England, should they be of a type or size that could warrant negative effects on the relevant SSSI. The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation comprises a mixture of ancient coppice woodland (Eversden Wood) and high forest woods likely to be of more recent origin (Wimpole Woods). Wimpole Woods holds the summer maternity roost of a population of Barbastelle bats (<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>), a protected species. There are 13 statutory Local Nature Reserves within the Greater Cambridge area. These are statutorily protected sites of land designated by Local Authorities because of their special natural interest, educational value and access to nature. Local Sites, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, have been identified for all Councils in Cambridgeshire and are referred to as County Wildlife Sites. These are designated for their importance for nature conservation at a county level. County Wildlife Sites often

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	present opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, by improving existing management. Within Cambridge City, a second layer of non-statutory sites have been identified and are referred to as City Wildlife Sites, recognizing the importance of natural green space and habitats within the urban context. Cambridgeshire's Protected Roadside Verges represent the best examples of road verge grassland across the county, identified for special management by Cambridgeshire County Council against a defined set of criteria based upon the presence of rare species or those indicating quality grassland habitat. Road verges constitute the largest area of unimproved grassland within the Greater Cambridge area and will be protected from development impacts. Many Protected Roadside Verges are also designated as County Wildlife Sites. European Protected Species with known populations within the Greater Cambridge area are Great Crested Newts, 12 species of bats (including the population of Barbastelle bats at Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation) and Otter, with a very few records of Dormouse. A range of other UK species are known to be present in the Greater Cambridge area include White-clawed Crayfish, Water Vole, Badger, Common Lizard, Grass Snake and Barn Owl. The area also supports populations of Fairy Shrimp, including at the Whittlesford Thriplow Hummocky Fields Site of Special Scientific Interest. Priority Habitats are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. Lowland Calcareous Grassland is predominantly found to the south east of the Cambridge, within the Gog Magog Hills. To the east and north east is the fenland, with concentrations of Lowland Fen, Reedbeds and Lowland Meadows. The corridor of the River Cam and its tributaries supports Floodplain Grassland Mosaic, Wet Woodland and Lowland Meadows, as well as the River habitat itself and Chalk Stream sections. To the west of Cambridge are Lowland Mixed

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Deciduous Woodland, Hedgerows, Lowland Meadows and Traditional Orchards on the boulder clay. To the north of Cambridge, the presence of Traditional Orchards on the fen edge reflect the significance of former land uses. Priority Species are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. Over 200 UK Priority Species are found in Cambridgeshire as a whole, which includes recognisable but declining species such as Common Toad, Brown Hare, House Sparrow and Hedgehog alongside a range of lesser known invertebrates, and plants such as Purple Milk-vetch. There is also good representation of farmland bird species such as Skylark, Turtle Dove, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Yellowhammer, whose populations could be affected by any development on arable land. The loss of breeding territories of such farmland birds is likely to require compensation by provision on nearby farmland. Over-wintering birds such as Lapwing and Golden Plover are also important farmland species to be considered in ecology surveys. South Cambridgeshire contains 2,692 listed buildings, 86 Conservation Areas and 107 scheduled monuments, as well as 12 registered parks and gardens. The City of Cambridge includes over 1,500 listed buildings, 12 Conservation Areas, six scheduled monuments and 12 registered parks and gardens. Within South Cambridgeshire, five Conservation Areas have been included on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register alongside five listed buildings and 20 scheduled monuments. Within Cambridge City, two listed buildings and one scheduled monument are also included on the Heritage at Risk register. The Plan area is located within five National Character Areas (NCAs): the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA; the East Anglian Chalk NCA; the South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands NCA; The Fens NCA; and the Bedfordshire and Greensand Ridge NCA.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	There is one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within South Cambridgeshire (a stretch of the A14). Within Cambridge, there is an additional AQMA. There are currently three Minerals Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) within the City of Cambridge and three within South Cambridgeshire. There are also seven Mineral Consultation Areas (MCAs) within Greater Cambridge. Greater Cambridge contains areas of Grade 1 ('excellent') agricultural land / soils, as well as significant areas of Grade 2 ('very good'). Grade 1 and Grade 2 agricultural land represents the best and most versatile soils nationwide. The Rivers Cam and Ely Ouse, Upper and Bedford Ouse and Old Bedford, lie within the Greater Cambridge area. 'Priority issues' for the catchment areas of these rivers include diffuse pollution (and pollution), biological impacts of low flow rates, and invasive non-native plant and animal species. The Environment Agency categorizes a number of these catchments as having 'bad' or 'poor' ecological status. Various Source Protection Zones (SPZs) are scattered through Greater Cambridge. SPZs are defined around large and public potable groundwater abstraction sites. The purpose of SPZs is to provide additional protection to safeguard drinking water quality through constraining the proximity of an activity that may impact upon a drinking water abstraction.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The content of the SPD is not in conflict with those relevant planning documents within the wider district and county area related to waste management or water protection.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects on the following factors:	The following impacts have been identified within this Screening Assessment:
Biodiversity	The SPD sets out the requirements for development in regard to biodiversity mitigation and enhancement. The SPD sets out: a mitigation hierarchy for Greater Cambridge; the protection of irreplaceable habitats; how Great Crested Newts can be protected, through district level licensing; how biodiversity should be conserved and enhanced; that biodiversity provision should be incorporated into the design of new buildings and open spaces, and how this can be done; the provision of biodiverse and living roofs; and how to ensure Biodiversity Net Gain. The SPD also offers more detail and guidance on project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment; bat protocol at Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC; and measures to alleviate or avoid recreational pressure on SSSIs. Negative effects on biodiversity resulting from the SPD can be ruled out and only positive outcomes can be assumed from the purpose of the SPD.
Population	It is considered that there would be no effects on population resulting from the SPD. The SPD sets out how growth can be supported without ensuring effects on biodiversity, through setting out clear guidance regarding mitigation and biodiversity provision from new development.
Health	The SPD sets out that the subject of biodiversity overlaps significantly with other policy and strategy areas, including landscape, arboriculture, green infrastructure, health and wellbeing, sustainability, and climate change. It can be assumed that although not within the specific remit of the SPD, the SPD's successful implementation can ensure

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	indirect positive effects on human health.
Fauna	The SPD seeks the protection and enhancement of biodiversity throughout Greater Cambridge. The SPD enables and advises that any effects on fauna are understood at the development management stage, and suitable assessments are produced to ensure that planning decisions can be considered on an informed case-by-case basis.
Flora	The SPD seeks the protection and enhancement of biodiversity throughout Greater Cambridge. The SPD enables and advises that any effects on flora are understood at the development management stage, and suitable assessments are produced to ensure that planning decisions can be considered on an informed case-by-case basis.
Soil	Soil quality is not considered to be within the remit of the SPD and instead, other relevant Local Plan policies will apply. There are no identified negative implications surrounding soil quality as a result of the SPD.
Water	The Plan area is within various groundwater Source Protection Zone (Zones I, II and III). The SPD does not include any content that would or could give rise to ground water pollutants (e.g. give rise to hazardous substances such as pesticides, oils, petrol and diesel, solvents, arsenic, mercury or chromium VI; or non-hazardous substances such as ammonia or nitrates). Pollution control policies within Local Plans will apply to ensure that no negative effects on water quality should be experienced within the Greater Cambridge area. The HRA element of this Report concludes that although Wicken Fen Ramsar and Fenland SAC all have Impact Risk Zones that overlap the boundary of Greater Cambridge, and water quality is a major issue of concern for the Wicken Fen Ramsar site (and thereby Fenland SAC), the Plan does not

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	contain any policies or proposals that would give rise to any deterioration of water quality.
Air	The SPD indicates that the inclusion of street trees within developments can make a contribution to Biodiversity Net Gain as well as providing a range of other benefits, including to air quality and urban cooling. The SPD outlines that the selection of the right tree species in the right place is essential to maximise these benefits. Aside from the indirect effects of ensuring biodiversity provision, air quality is not considered to be within the remit of the SPD and instead, other relevant Local Plan policies will apply. There are no identified negative implications surrounding air quality as a result of the SPD.
Climatic factors	The SPD does not directly address flood risk issues as they are considered outside the remit of the SPD. Nevertheless, the SPD acknowledges that indirectly, localised surface water flooding can be minimised through effective planting and by managing risk by protecting natural blue and green spaces from development. More specifically though, adopted Local Plan policies regarding flood risk exist for the Greater Cambridge area.
Material assets	Regarding minerals specifically, opportunities exist broadly to maximise new biodiversity provision through the restoration of mineral voids. Such activities are not within the remit of the Local Planning Authorities of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. Therefore, such opportunities are not considered to be within the remit of the SPD and instead, relevant Local Plan policies apply of Cambridgeshire County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority (MPA). There are no identified negative implications surrounding material assets as a result of the SPD. Regarding other material assets, the content of the SPD is not considered to have any significant effects. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case basis at the development management stage and in accordance with

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	relevant development management policies contained within the adopted Local Plans.
Cultural heritage	Greater Cambridge contains various Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens and Listed Buildings, as well as many Conservation Areas. The SPD does not designate or allocate any land that could have any negative effect on any of these assets. The remit of the SPD is not considered directly relevant to the historic environment (above or below ground), however indirect positive outcomes in regard to the protection of the historic environment can be forthcoming as a result of the SPD's content. Irrespective of the likely positive outcomes that the SPD may have regarding the historic environment, policies in ensuring the protection and enhancement of heritage assets also exists at the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Local Plans. The effects on heritage are, as a result, considered a development management issue. There are not considered to be any elements of the SPD that would give rise to significant effects on the historic environment at the strategic level that would require the application of the SEA Directive.
Landscape	Greater Cambridge is within a sensitive landscape, in regard to the protection objectives of the various National Character Areas (NCAs) contained within the Greater Cambridge area. Nevertheless, the Plan does not designate or allocate land for any purposes that would conflict with the wider landscape, and can be considered strongly in support of existing features and characteristics; as the SPD states, 'biodiversity is a valuable addition to development, often helping to create attractive natural green spaces which integrate development of a high-quality design into the local landscape or townscape.' The SPD acknowledges that landscape design will be required to enhance existing habitats and link them to new habitats created within the development site that are suited to the landscape character. Furthermore, policy exists within

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	both the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Local Plans regarding landscape specifically, and a 'Landscape in New Developments' SPD exists to add further guidance within South Cambridgeshire. Both councils are also currently developing a new local landscape character area study SPD. There are therefore no identified strategic landscape effects identified within this Report that would warrant the requirement for the application of the SEA Directive and the formulation of a SEA Environmental Report.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	In line with the above considerations that explore the possible individual effects of the SPD's content, no significant effects have been highlighted as possible that could lead to any cumulative impact.
The trans boundary nature of the effects.	The adopted South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Local Plans can be seen to support the protection and improvement of conditions relevant to those sustainability factors listed within the SEA Directive. The SPD is not in conflict with these wider thematic policies. The HRA Screening element of this Report, which explores in-combination effects with other relevant plans and projects, also identifies no in-combination effects regarding Habitats (European) Sites.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	It is considered that there is no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the SPD. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The SPD is unlikely to give rise to any accidents that can be considered to have a significant risk to human health or the environment.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The SPD relates to the Greater Cambridge area only. The magnitude and spatial extent of the SPD's content is unlikely to be significant in any wider context. Negative effects are not considered relevant over a wide geographic area.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: special natural characteristics or cultural heritage exceeded environmental quality standards intensive land use	As highlighted above in the screening of the SPD per sustainability theme, the SPD has not been assessed as having any possible negative effect associated with environmental themes.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	As highlighted above in the screening of the SPD per sustainability theme, the SPD has not been assessed as having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

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.

This HRA Screening Report does not therefore consider mitigation measures within the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD.

4.2.2 CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement now imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage:

1. [...] an 'Appropriate Assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.
2. [...] the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.
3. [...] where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'Appropriate Assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

Within this HRA Screening report, the assessment determines the requirement whether an Appropriate Assessment is needed for the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.

4.3 Habitats (European) Sites

Habitats Sites is the term used in the NPPF (2019) to describe any site which would be included within the definition at Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations. These now form part of the UK national network of sites for nature protection. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites are considered as Habitats Sites in England (NPPF, 2019).

4.3.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within EU countries. Example: Ouse Washes is internationally important for wintering waterfowl. Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: woodland habitat of Eversden and Wimpole Woods for the population of Barbastelle bats. Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl habitats. For example, Wicken Fen is an outstanding remnant of East Anglian peat fens and supports one species of British Red Data Book plant fen violet *Viola persicifolia* which survives at only two other sites in Britain. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

4.3.2 Habitats Sites to be considered

There are 11 Habitats sites which lie within 20 km of the South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas. These are listed in the table below and shown on the map in Appendix 2.

Table 3: Habitats Sites within 20km to be considered in this assessment

SPA
Ouse Washes and Breckland
SAC

SPA

Fenland, Devils Dyke, Eversden and Wimpole Woods, Portholme and Ouse Washes

Ramsar

Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen, Ouse Washes and Woodwalton Fen

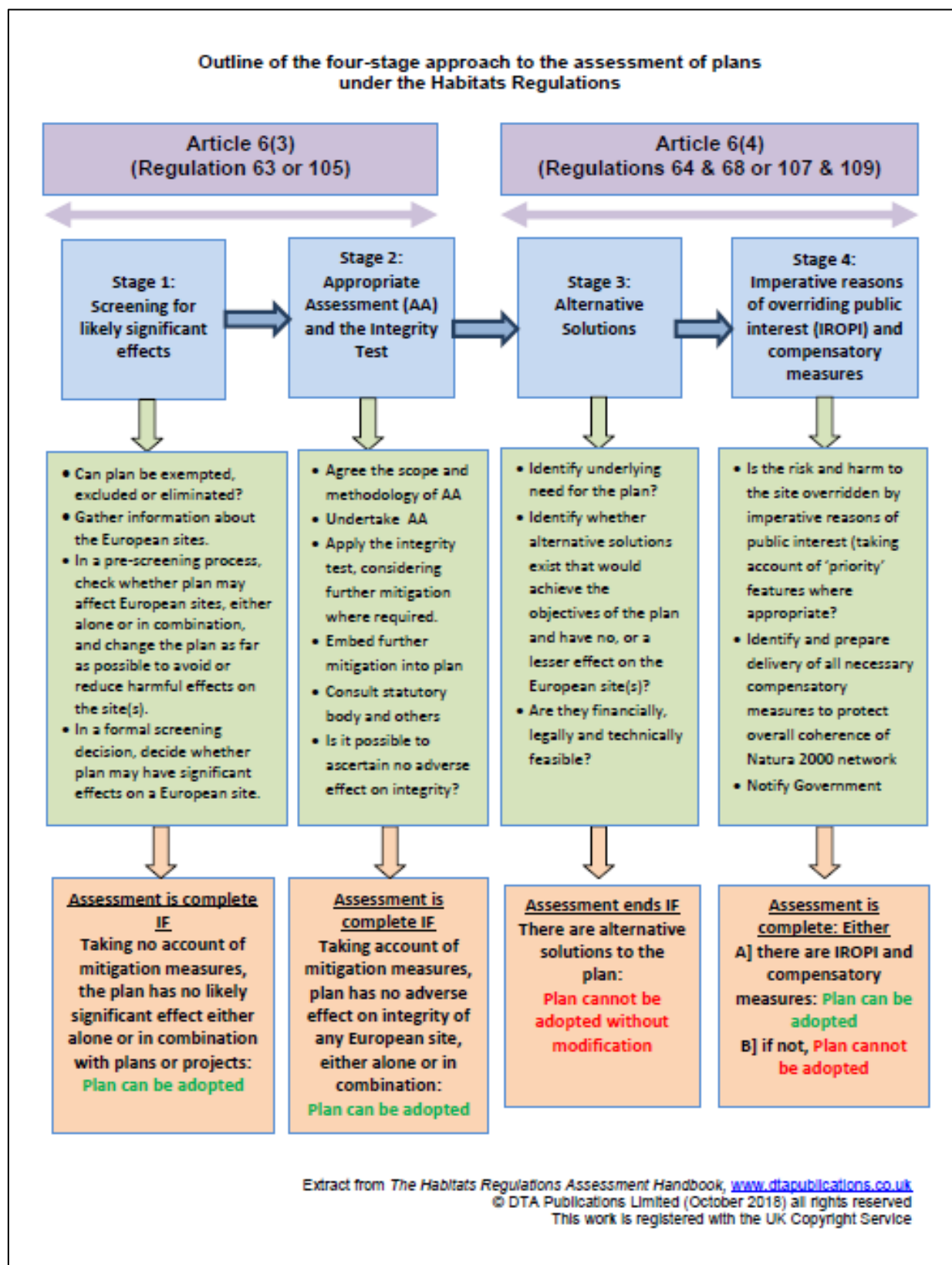
Fenland SAC is comprised of three fenlands and overlaps with Wicken Fen Ramsar and Chippenham Fen Ramsar. The Impact Risk Zones for the underpinning SSSIs for the aforementioned Habitats sites were interrogated on MAGIC map.

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.

Figure 1: Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations (taken from the DTA handbook).



4.4.1 Stage 1: HRA Screening

The screening stage identifies if any significant effects are likely because any policies or projects will have an impact on a Habitats Site. Table 4 identifies the different categories assigned to each Biodiversity Issue identified in the SPD: Category A identifies those policies or projects that are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitats Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Section 4.5 considers each Biodiversity Issues or project and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

Table 4: Screening categorisation

Category A: No negative effect
The SPD of itself is not be likely to have any negative effect on a Habitats site.
Category B: No Likely Significant Effect
The SPD of itself could have an effect but would not be likely to have a <i>significant</i> negative effect on a Habitats site alone or in combination. This conclusion could only be reached if the effects, even in combination and taking the precautionary principle into account, are considered trivial.
Category C: Likely Significant Effect
The SPD of itself is predicted to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats Site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

4.4.2 Potential impacts of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD on Habitats Sites

There are a wide range of potential impacts on Habitats Sites that could arise from development plans. These can be summarised as -

- Land take by development;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding grounds for an identified species.
- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use resulting from new housing development and / or improved access due to transport infrastructure

projects;

- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for waste water treatment, and changes in groundwater regimes due to increased impermeable areas;
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to increased traffic, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial developments, quarries and waste management facilities.

However, as the SPD is aimed at supporting biodiversity within South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas, the SPD ensures that development that will not have a significant negative effect on designated sites and Qualifying features.

The table below provides assessment of the draft SPD including Biodiversity issues with categories of likely effect assigned as set out in Table 5.

Table 4: Assessment of potential impacts on Habitats Sites from the SPD

Nature of potential impact	How the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Land take by development	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD does not identify any land for development but is proposed to ensure that biodiversity is appropriately considered in any development in South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas. It is considered that there is no mechanism by which the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD could result in a negative effect on any Habitats site.	N/A
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD covers land in South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas which is within the 10km IRZ for Eversden and Wimpole	The draft Bat Protocol for Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC identifies that any development within 10km will be screened for impacts on the SAC, with particular reference to the severance of bat flight lines. This

Nature of potential impact	How the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
	Woods SAC. However, it is considered that there is no mechanism by which the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD could result in a negative effect on any Habitats site.	will ensure that the SPD results in a positive effect on Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC. However, negative effects on biodiversity resulting from the SPD can be ruled out and only positive outcomes can be assumed from the purpose of the SPD. Therefore, adverse impacts on protected species outside of the sites arising from this SPD are <u>screened out</u>.
Recreational pressure and disturbance	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD covers land in South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas which lie within the ZOIs for Devils Dyke SAC. Although there is currently no formal Zone of Influence identified for Wicken Fen within which recreational impacts are considered, this may be subject to a separate detailed study in the near future. However, it is considered that there is no mechanism by which the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD could result in a negative effect on any Habitats site.	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD does not allocate any land for development. However, the SPD highlights the need for avoiding and mitigating for recreational pressure on sensitive SSSIs including Devil's Dyke SAC. Biodiversity Issue 10 identifies that any development within the IRZs shown on MAGIC maps will be screened for impacts on the Habitats Sites, under a project level HRA. The SPD makes particular reference to the provision of alternative greenspace. This will ensure that the SPD results in a positive effect on Devil's Dyke SAC. However, negative effects on biodiversity resulting from the SPD can be ruled out and only positive outcomes can be assumed from the purpose of the SPD. Therefore, adverse impacts from recreational pressure arising from this SPD

Nature of potential impact	How the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		are <u>screened out</u> .
Water quantity and quality	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD covers land in South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas which lie within the 5km IRZ for Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen Ramsar sites and Fenland SAC. Although water quality is an issue of concern for Wicken Fen Ramsar site (and thereby Fenland SAC), it is considered that there is no pathway for water quantity or quality impacts. Additionally, there is no substantial hydrological connection with the plan area. However, it is considered that there is no mechanism by which the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD could result in a negative effect on any Habitats site.	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD does not allocate any land for development. However, the SPD highlights the need for project level HRA in Biodiversity Issue 10 which identifies that any development within the IRZs shown on MAGIC maps will be screened for impacts on the Habitats Sites However, negative effects on biodiversity resulting from the SPD can be ruled out and only positive outcomes can be assumed from the purpose of the SPD. Therefore, adverse impacts from water quality and quantity arising from this SPD are <u>screened out</u>.
Changes in pollution levels	The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD covers land in South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City areas which is within the 5km IRZ for Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen Ramsar site, and Fenland SAC. However, it is considered that there is no mechanism by which the Greater Cambridge	The SPD highlights the need for project level HRA in Biodiversity Issue 8 which identifies that any development within the IRZs shown on MAGIC maps will be screened for impacts on the Habitats Sites. However, negative effects on biodiversity resulting from the SPD can be ruled out and only positive outcomes can be

Nature of potential impact	How the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
	Biodiversity SPD could result in a negative effect on any Habitats site.	assumed from the purpose of the SPD. Therefore, adverse impacts from changes in pollution levels arising from this SPD are <u>screened out</u> .

4.5 Results from the HRA Screening of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD

Each of the Biodiversity Issues identified in the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document was screened to identify whether they would have any impact on a Habitats Site.

Table 5: Assessment of potential impacts from the SPD Biodiversity Issues

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
B1: Mitigation hierarchy	To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/4 Item 3 and Policy 70), submitted ecological reports are expected to explain how the hierarchy of mitigation measures (Avoid, Mitigate, Compensate) has been embedded into the design of the development. Where impacts on habitats and species cannot be avoided, a clear explanation of why alternative sites are not feasible and what proposed mitigation and compensation measures are necessary to	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	address all likely significant adverse effects is needed.		
B2: Protection of irreplaceable habitats	Developers will be expected to avoid direct and indirect impacts on irreplaceable habitats and embed measures to achieve this within the design of any development proposal. To meet policy requirements (NH/4 item 6, NH/7 and Policy 71), the Councils will refuse applications that would result in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats unless the need for, and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss, and a suitable compensation strategy exists. In these situations, biodiversity net gain is not achievable. As per NPPF 2021, there would have to be wholly exceptional reasons for this to be the case with the burden of proof for these falling to developers to provide irrefutable evidence of these exceptional reasons	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
B3: Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing	To meet policy requirements (NH/4 and Policy 70) and support development which is likely to impact on Great Crested Newt, if a developer is accepted to join the Natural England Cambridgeshire Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing scheme, they do not	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	need to carry out their own surveys for this European Protected Species or plan and carry out mitigation work. If a consent for development is issued, developers do not need to meet the Government's Standing Advice for Great Crested Newt. However, the Councils will still require survey and assessment for other protected and Priority species likely to be present and affected by development, together with delivery of any mitigation needing to be secured by a condition of any consent.		
B4: Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity	To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/4, NH/5, NH/6, Policy 69 and Policy 70), development should: 1. Secure the conservation management and enhancement of natural and semi-natural habitats in the landscape together with the biodiversity that they contain and seek to restore and/or create new wildlife habitats. 2. Secure the provision of appropriate public access to natural green spaces, particularly within or close to the villages. Habitats will be considered important for biodiversity where	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	they: 1. Are part of the UK national network of sites (Habitats sites) or are proposed for designation 2. Are nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves or Local Nature Reserves) or are proposed for designation 3. Are non-statutory designated sites of at least County or City importance or are proposed for designation 4. Are likely to support the presence of a Priority species or habitat, or significant populations of a national or local Red list species 5. Have the potential to assist in the delivery of National, County or District Nature Recovery Networks and clearly act as a stepping-stone, wildlife corridor or refuge area 6. Provide for the quiet enjoyment of biodiversity within semi-natural areas or act as an educational resource, such as Local Nature Reserves		
B5: Biodiversity provision in the	To meet policy requirements (HQ/1, NH/4, Policy 57 and Policy	No,	No specific

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
design of new buildings & open spaces	59), the councils will expect: 1. That development proposals will have regard to the biodiversity already present within a development site and to identify opportunities to maximise the provision for biodiversity within new development sites with strategic nature conservation priorities. 2. That on all residential housing developments, there should be an equal number of integrated bird box features such as dwellings for building-dependent birds (breeding Swifts, House Sparrows, Starlings and House Martins) provided individually or clustered in appropriate locations within the development. 3. That all suitable commercial and community building applications will include integrated bird box features for building dependent birds (breeding Swifts, House Sparrows, Starlings and House Martins) in keeping with the scale of development, i.e. minimum of 10 boxes for the first 1000 sqm footprint and one additional box for every 100 sqm. 4. That on all residential housing developments 25% of the dwellings / units will have	Category A	recommendations

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	integrated bat box features, provision to be clustered next to appropriate foraging habitats. 5. That new wildlife habitats and features, including predominantly native trees and shrubs and durable tree mounted nest boxes, bat boxes and insect boxes, will be incorporated into landscaping schemes and the general layout of the built environment. All fencing will be expected to be hedgehog friendly and hedgehog highways should be incorporated throughout the development. Incorporating Hedgehog Highway gaps into boundary fences ensures connectivity between gardens for Hedgehogs and other wildlife, increasing the extent of habitat available in a secure way		
B6: Provision of biodiverse and living roofs	To meet policy requirements (HQ/1, NH/4 and Policy 31), the provision of biodiverse roofs and walls will be encouraged as a means to maximise biodiversity, particularly where the opportunities for ecological enhancement on a site area are limited, and where such measures will deliver enhancement at a landscape scale where appropriate, as part of a wider strategy of biodiversity enhancements.	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
B7: Biodiversity Net Gain	This SPD is underpinned by national and Local Planning Policies. In keeping with these, and the SPD, development proposals will be required to demonstrate measurable net gain for biodiversity (NH/4, NH/6, Policy 69, Policy 70). Biodiversity Net Gain should be achieved on site where possible.	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
B8: Habitats Regulations Assessment	To support the councils in meeting policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and their legal duties as Competent Authorities under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) – known as the Habitats Regulations - where development is likely to result in a significant effect on a Habitats site, proposals need to be supported by information to support the preparation of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) by the Local Planning Authority. This needs to include the results of any necessary surveys and details of any mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the site(s) embedded into design of the development. All the Councils' Habitats Regulations Assessment Appropriate Assessments will be sent to Natural England for their	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Biodiversity Issue Wording	Will Biodiversity Issue have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	formal consultation response on their conclusions before any decision can be issued.		
B9: Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation bat protocol	To support the Councils in meeting policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and their legal duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), appropriate levels of survey, assessment and mitigation will be expected for any development that could have an impact on the population of Barbastelle Bats within and around the Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation.	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
B10: Recreational pressure on sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest	To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) for protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value, applications will not normally be permitted where there is likely to be an adverse impact on land within or adjoining such sites. With specific reference to sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest, advice issued by Natural England suggests developers of residential schemes of 50 or more units should seek to provide sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, (SANG) to avoid and mitigate recreational pressure within and around the SSSI. SSSIs currently known to be at risk from	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

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)

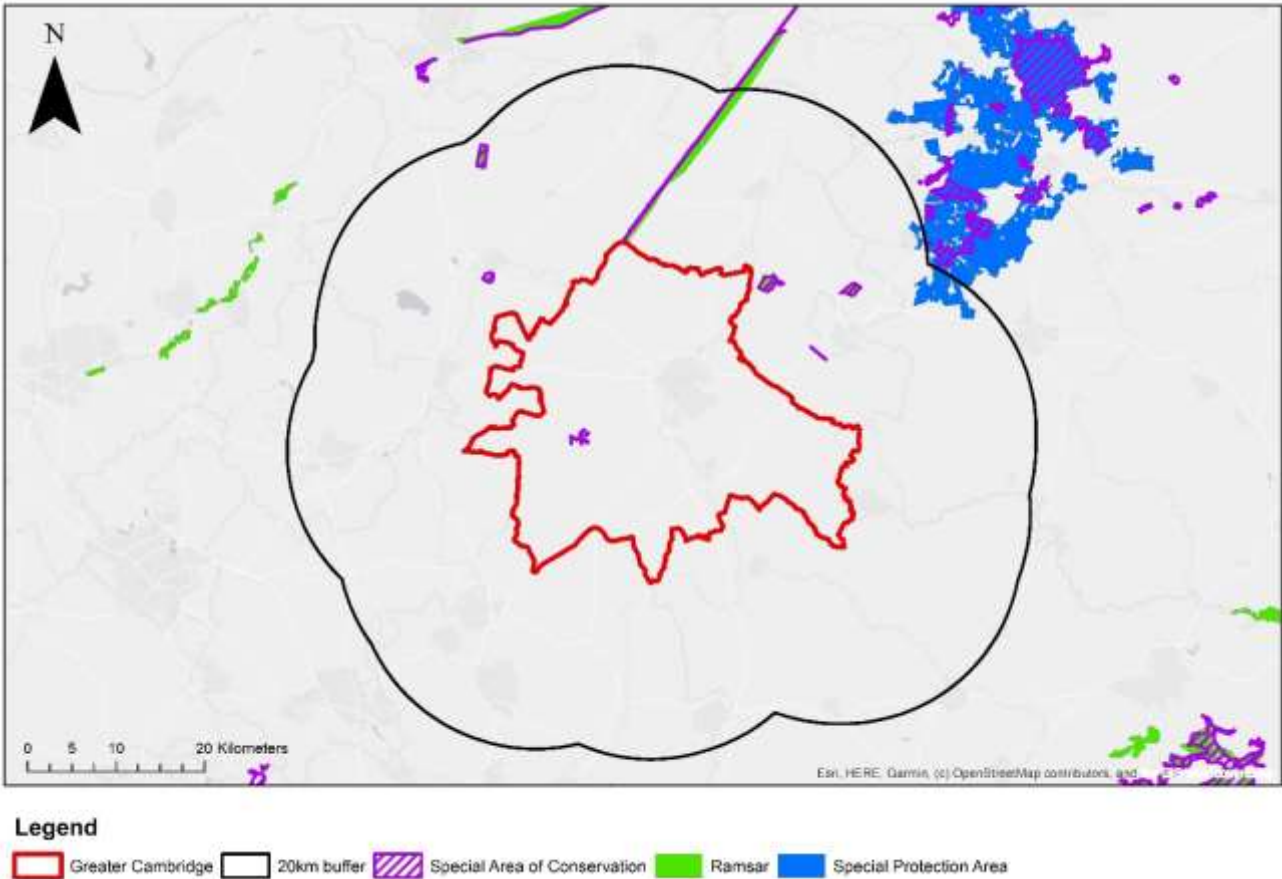
North East Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA Report (July 2020)

Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website

Tydesley, 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



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
			species; - The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; - The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; - The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely; - The populations of qualifying species; and - The distribution of qualifying species within the site.	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. Potential future threats - 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
			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.	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). Water Pollution: 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.

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				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.
Ouse Washes SPA EU Code: UK9008041	2469.08	A037 <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> ; Bewick's swan (Non-breeding) A038 <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ; Whooper swan (Non-breeding) A050 <i>Anas penelope</i> ; Eurasian wigeon (Non-breeding) A051 <i>Anas strepera</i> ; Gadwall (Breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring; - The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features; - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features; - The supporting processes	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, drowning young and affecting habitat. Deep flooding during winter also impacts overwintering birds such as wigeon and impacts on the wetland fauna,

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		A052 <i>Anas crecca</i>; Eurasian teal (Non-breeding) A053 <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>; Mallard (Breeding) A054 <i>Anas acuta</i>; Northern pintail (Non-breeding) A055 <i>Anas querquedula</i>; Garganey (Breeding) A056 <i>Anas clypeata</i>; Northern shoveler (Non-breeding) A056 <i>Anas clypeata</i>; Northern shoveler (Breeding) A082 <i>Circus cyaneus</i>; Hen harrier (Non-breeding)	on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely; - The population of each of the qualifying features; and, - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.	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). Water Pollution: 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

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		A151 Philomachus pugnax; Ruff (Breeding) A156a Limosa limosa limosa; Black-tailed godwit (Breeding) Waterbird assemblage Breeding bird assemblage		breed at the site. Occasional incidences of low oxygen levels on River Delph and Counter Drain have potential to impact spined loach populations.
Ouse Washes Ramsar	2469.08	Ramsar criterion 1: The site is one of the most extensive areas of seasonally-flooding washland of its type in Britain. Ramsar criterion 2: The site supports several nationally scarce plants, including small water pepper Polygonum minus,	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 <i>Myriophyllum verticillatum</i> , greater water parsnip <i>Sium latifolium</i> , river waterdropwort <i>Oenanthe fluviatilis</i> , fringed water-lily <i>Nymphoides peltata</i> , long-stalked pondweed <i>Potamogeton praelongus</i> , hair-like pondweed <i>Potamogeton trichoides</i> , grass-wrack pondweed <i>Potamogeton compressus</i> , tasteless water-pepper <i>Polygonum mite</i> and marsh dock <i>Rumex palustris</i> . Invertebrate records indicate that the site holds relict fenland fauna, including the British Red Data Book species large darter dragonfly <i>Libellula fulva</i> and the rifle beetle		

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

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
Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC EU Code: UK0030331	66.48	S1308 Barbastelle bat <i>Barbastella barbastellus</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 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.	Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown: 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. Offsite habitat availability/ management: 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

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				maintain/improve its value, suitable long-term management secured. Forestry and Woodland Management: 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. Air Pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads.

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; - 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 *Silene 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; - 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		silt soil H7210 Calcareous fens with <i>C. mariscus</i> and species of <i>C. davallianae</i> S1149 Spined loach, <i>Cobitis taenia</i> S1166 Great crested newt, <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; - The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species; - The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; - The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; - The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely; - The populations of qualifying species; and - The distribution of qualifying	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

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			species within the site.	decline in many site features. 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 Hydrological changes: 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

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

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				Air Pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition. 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.
Wicken Fen Ramsar	254.39	Ramsar criterion 1: One of the most outstanding remnants of the East Anglian peat fens. The area is one of the few which has not been drained. Traditional management has created a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields.	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		Ramsar criterion 2: The site supports one species of British Red Data Book plant, fen violet <i>Viola persicifolia</i>, which survives at only two other sites in Britain. It also contains eight nationally scarce plants and 121 British Red Data Book invertebrates.		
Chippenham Fen Ramsar	112.13	Ramsar criterion 1: A spring-fed calcareous basin mire with a long history of management, which is partly reflected in the diversity of present-day vegetation. Ramsar criterion 2: The invertebrate fauna is very rich, partly due to	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		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. Ramsar criterion 3: The site supports diverse vegetation types, rare and scarce plants. The site is the stronghold of Cambridge milk parsley <i>Selinum carvifolia</i>.		
Woodwalton Fen Ramsar	208.13	Ramsar criterion 1: 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	N/A	N/A

Site name	Area (hectares)	Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives (only available for SACs and SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		developed where peat-digging took place in the 19th century. The site has several types of open fen and swamp communities. Ramsar criterion 2: 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.		





Place Services

County Hall, Essex CM1 1QH

T: +44 (0)3330 136 844

E: enquiries@placeservices.co.uk

www.placeservices.co.uk

[@PlaceServices](https://twitter.com/PlaceServices)



Essex County Council