



Watton Neighbourhood Plan
Habitat Regulation Assessment
Screening Report
May 2022

Habitat Regulation Assessment including Appropriate Assessment

Contents

1. Introduction and Legislative Background	3
2. Identification of Designations	6
3. Screening Assessment	8
4. Conclusions	16
Appendix 1: Details of relevant European Sites	17
Appendix 2: Response from Natural England	20

1. Introduction and Legislative Background

1.1 This Habitat Regulations Assessment Report has been undertaken in order to support the Watton Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) which is being produced by the Watton Town Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

1.2 The aim of this Report is to assess whether there are likely to be any significant effects on European Sites as a result of the emerging policies set out in the pre-submission draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) that would need the production of a full Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA), also known as an Appropriate Assessment.

1.3 This report assesses, as far as practical, whether any likely significant effects (LSE) may occur in relation to the qualifying features of European Designated Sites within or relatively proximate to the approved Neighbourhood Plan area, which comprises the civil parish of Watton (Stage 1 of the HRA process).

1.4 A response from Natural England has been taken into consideration regarding the conclusions of this screening assessment. A copy of which can be found in Appendix 2.

1.5 This assessment has been undertaken by officers from Capita on behalf of Breckland District Council.

Legislative background

1.6 Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive states that:

Any plan or project not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

1.7 The purpose of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is therefore to ensure the protection of European Designated Sites (Natura 2000) wherever practicable. European Designated Sites are designed to form an ecologically coherent network of designated spaces across Europe.

1.8 European Designated Sites, (Natura 2000) include **Special Protection Areas** (SPAs) and **Special Areas for Conservation** (SAC). As a matter of policy the government also

expects authorities to treat **Ramsar sites**, **candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)** and **proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPA)** as if they are European Designated Sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.

Definitions (taken from the DEFRA - Joint Nature Conservation Committee)

- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive, which came into force in April 1979. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds and for regularly occurring migratory species.
- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** are strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of the Habitats Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species. The listed habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds).
- **Ramsar sites** are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

1.9 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the ‘basic conditions’ set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which include the need to undertake a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

1.10 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further basic condition for a NP. This requires that the neighbourhood plan should not be likely to have a significant effect on a European Site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

1.11 Recent government guidance¹ indicates that an appropriate assessment for a more strategic plan, such as the local plan, can consider the impacts on sites and confirm the suitability or likely success of mitigation measures for associated non-strategic policies and projects. An individual assessment of non-strategic policies and projects may not be necessary in some limited cases where the strategic appropriate assessment is sufficiently robust. This would need to contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt on the impacts of the non-strategic policies (e.g. neighbourhood plans) and/or project(s). As long as these measures have been properly considered in a recent plan, and the development will not create additional risks of

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

a significant effect on a habitats site, they may not need further assessment at the non-strategic level.

1.12. Currently Breckland District Council have an adopted Local Plan. The Local Plan has been subjected to a Habitat Regulation Assessment. The current version of this is the *Breckland Local Plan Habitats Regulation Assessment at Publication Stage; Footprint Ecology, 2017*².

² Liley, D. & Hoskin, R. (2017). Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Breckland Local Plan Part 1 Publication Stage. Footprint Ecology, unpublished report for Breckland Council

2. Identification of Designations

2.1 The first step in producing this Habitat Regulation Assessment Report involves the identification of European Designated Sites (referred to as ‘Habitat Sites’ in the NPPF) within the NP area itself or in close proximity to it. European Designation Sites were identified using open-source software provided by DEFRA (Magic). The relevant European Designated Sites identified are as follows: The nearby European Designated Sites are as follows

- (Part of) The Breckland Special Protection Area (site reference UK9009201)
- (Part of) The Breckland Special Area of Conservation (UK0019865)
- (Part of) The Norfolk Valley Fens (UK0012892)

2.2 In considering potential effects of this plan regard has been given to whether the implementation of the policies will ensure the conservation objectives for the European Sites are achieved and whether any significant effects are likely. In considering which sites may require consideration as part of this screening assessment, the following sites have been identified:

Designated site	Approx. Distance from NP boundary	Include in screening assessment
Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation	2km	Yes
Breckland SPA	1km	Yes
Breckland SAC	2.5km	Yes

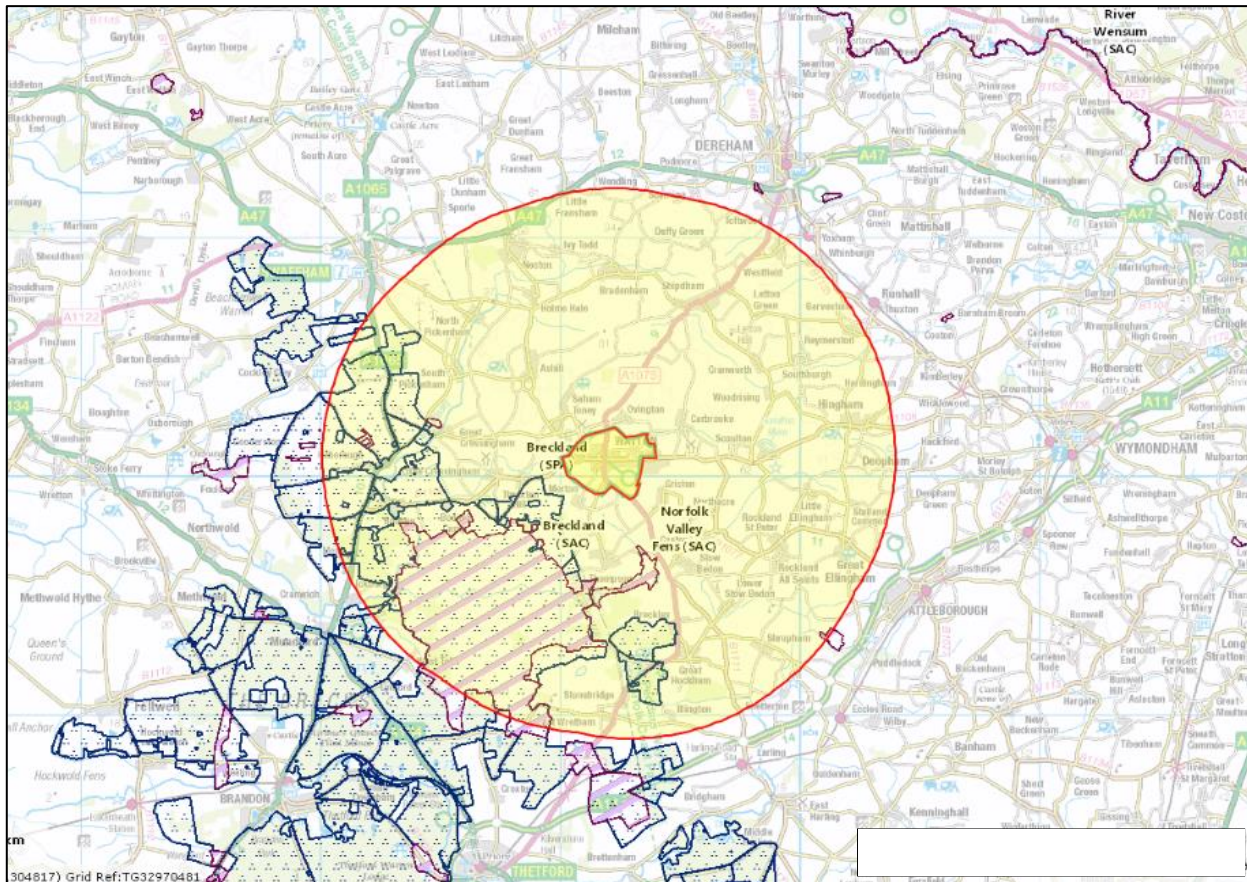
2.3 No other European Protected Sites have been considered in this assessment, as the nearest component units of which are considered sufficiently distant that no likely significant effects are likely to occur from the policies of the WNP.

2.4 Below is a map showing the locations of the European designated sites in relation to the parish area (Figure 1). The features for which the sites are designated, and their conservation objectives are appended at Appendix 1.

2.4 For clarity it is confirmed here that the Watton Neighbourhood Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the conservation management of the European Sites.

2.5 The next step in the assessment is to undertake a screening as to whether the proposed policies could have a significant effect on the European Designated Sites. Specifically, the assessment considers potential effects that the policies may have on the ‘qualifying features’ of each European Designated Site. The ‘qualifying features’ for the identified European Designated Sites are provided at Appendix 1.

Figure 1: Watton Neighbourhood Plan Area (the Parish of Watton) in relation to relevant European Designated Sites



Screening Assessment

3.1 Stage 1 of the HRA process is a screening assessment. The table below provides an assessment of any likely significant effect of each NP policy on the European Designated Sites. For the purposes of this assessment the policies appraised are those in the WNP Plan Pre-submission (Reg. 14) version.

Assessment template

Key

- No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the internationally designated sites' qualifying features
- Likely significant effect (LSE) on the internationally designated sites' qualifying features
- Uncertain whether it is NSLE or LSE.

Comments	Likely effect in identified sites
	Name of site
The policy aims to	

Likely effect in identified sites
No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features
OR
The level of allocation is above that assessed in the HRA of the emerging Breckland Local Plan. As such, a LSE cannot be ruled out.
OR
Likely significant effect (LSE) on the internationally designated sites' qualifying features

Template to be used if two designations are assessed:			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Name of site	Name of site	
The policy encourages... It does (not) conflict with Breckland Local Plan.			
Template to be used if three designations are assessed:			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Name of site	Name of site	Name of site
The policy aims to..... It is does (not) conflict with Breckland Local Plan.			

Screening of draft NP policy

Table 1: Watton Neighbourhood Plan policies

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES			
Policy WTN1 - Managing Flood Risk			
<p>When assessing planning applications for flood risk, consideration will be given to the latest published Government Flood Map for fluvial and surface water flooding.</p> <p>In addition to meeting the policy requirements set out in Policy ENV 09 of the adopted Local Plan and having regard to paragraphs 159 to 168 of the NPPF (July 2021), proposals for major development will need to demonstrate, through a site-specific Surface Water Drainage Strategy, that the development will not increase flood risk on site or elsewhere by the installation of a site-specific sustainable drainage scheme.</p> <p>For minor development, applicants will be expected to provide, through proportionate information, details of its surface water drainage proposals.</p> <p>All schemes shall justify the appropriateness of the proposals which shall include an allowance for climate change, in accordance with the most up to date Environment Agency advice.</p> <p>Surface water run off mitigation measures shall address any identified risk of flooding, and based on the Lead local Flood Authority's order of priority; namely Assess, Avoid, Manage and Mitigate.</p> <p>Proposals for appropriate on-site storage and run off rates will be expected to meet the standards set in technical guidance issued by Norfolk County Council as LLFA and as set out in DEFRA's Non-Statutory Standards for Sustainable Drainage, the CIRIA SuDS Manual and other relevant codes of practice.</p> <p>Any additional run off, apart from in exceedance events, should include measures to protect the sensitivities of the receiving water bodies including protected aquifer or the Breckland Special Protection Area and the Breckland Special Area of Conservation.</p>			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	Breckland SAC	Breckland SPA
<i>The aim of the policy is to resist development in areas of flood risk</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>
Policy WTN2 – Infrastructure Provision			
<p>Proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that adequate capacity exists for relevant infrastructure or where that capacity can be made available by the time the development is brought into use.</p>			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	Breckland SAC	Breckland SPA

<i>The aim of the policy is to resist development without appropriate infrastructure</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>
Development Design			
Policy WTN 3 – Design Considerations			
<p>Proposals for new development must reflect the local characteristics and circumstances in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, including those identified in the Watton Character Appraisal, and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment. They should also demonstrate regard to the National Model Design Code (July 2021). In addition, proposals will only be supported where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. recognise and address the key features, characteristics, landscape/building character, local distinctiveness and special qualities of the area and, where necessary, prepare a landscape character appraisal to demonstrate this; ii. maintain the town's sense of place and/or local character and respect the character, scale and density of the locality; iii. do not involve the loss or partial loss of gardens, important open, green or landscaped areas, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of that part of the town; iv. taking mitigation measures into account, do not affect adversely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. any historic, architectural or archaeological heritage assets of the site and its surroundings; and b. important landscape characteristics including trees and ancient hedgerows and other prominent topographic features; and c. important views into, out of, or within the town; v. do not locate sensitive development where its users and nearby residents would be significantly and adversely affected by noise, smell, vibration, or other forms of pollution from existing sources, unless adequate and appropriate mitigation can be implemented; vi. produce designs, in accordance with standards, that maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network and seeking to ensure permeability through new housing areas, taking opportunities to connect new development into the heart of the existing settlement by sustainable modes of travel; vii. where appropriate, make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and dedicated cycle storage; viii. include suitable ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable superfast broadband; and ix. provide one electric vehicle charging point per new off-street parking place created. 			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	Breckland SAC	Breckland SPA
<i>This policy seeks to protect the character of Watton and the amenity of current residents. Whilst the policy does in some respects repeat National Policy and the Local Plan it does add extra</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>

<i>detail to what characteristics are particularly important in Watton.</i>	<i>qualifying features</i>	<i>qualifying features</i>	<i>qualifying features</i>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

Policy WTN 4 – Residential Amenity Space

Proposals that include shared amenity space and / or landscaping will only be supported where they:

- i. utilise and enhance existing planting and topography, and contribute to local biodiversity through new planting;
- are integrated into the overall design in order to create natural boundaries, variety, colour and texture;
- ii. are of a useable size and configuration relative to the needs of the building’s occupants;
- iii. contribute to an attractive and functional development; and v. are properly maintained with arrangements in place for the maintenance of communal garden space or landscaped areas.

All new residential units will be expected to have direct access to an area of private amenity space. The form of private amenity space will be dependent on the form of housing and could include a private garden, balcony, or ground-level patio with defensible space from any shared amenity areas. In providing amenity space, development should:

- a. consider the location and context of the development, including the character of the surrounding area;
- b. take into account the orientation of the amenity space in relation to the sun at different times of year;
- c. address issues of overlooking and enclosure, which may otherwise impact detrimentally on the proposed dwelling and any neighbouring dwellings; and
- d. design the amenity space to be of a shape, size and location to allow effective and practical use of the space by residents.

Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	<i>Norfolk Valley Fens SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SPA</i>
<i>The policy aims to ensure sufficient private amenity space is included within new development.</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites’ qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites’ qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites’ qualifying features</i>

Housing

Policy WTN 5 - Housing Mix

In all housing developments in excess of ten dwellings there shall be an emphasis on providing a mix of dwellings in accordance with the needs identified in the Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2017) unless it can be demonstrated that:

- i. the particular circumstances relating to the tenure of the housing dictate otherwise; or
- ii. the latest publicly available housing needs for the Neighbourhood Plan Area identify a need for a different mix.

Comments	Likely effect in identified sites
-----------------	------------------------------------------

	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	Breckland SAC	Breckland SPA
<i>The aim of the policy is to encourage an appropriate housing mix for the area. It largely reflects existing national and local policy on housing types.</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>
Policy WTN 6 - Housing in Multiple Occupation			
Proposals for large houses in multiple occupation (sui generis) as defined The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), will be supported, where the proposal:			
i. does not create an over-concentration of such a use in the local area, or cause harm to residential amenity or the surrounding area; and			
ii. the building or site (including any outbuildings) is suitable for use as housing in multiple occupation, with provision made, for example, for appropriate refuse and recycling storage, cycle and car parking and drying areas; and			
iii. will be accessible to sustainable modes of transport, shops and other local services.			
Appropriate management arrangements should be put in place in order to monitor and minimise antisocial behaviour and adverse impact on local residents. A condition to this effect may be applied to any planning consent			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	Breckland SAC	Breckland SPA
<i>The policy aims to ensure proposals for housing of multiple occupancy are appropriate and to avoid over concentrations of uses in certain areas.</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>
Natural Environment			
Policy WTN 7 - Country Park			
Proposals for a new country park to serve Watton and the wider area will be supported where:			
i. it can be accessed by safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes from Watton;			
ii. it provides enhanced dog walking measures including circular dog walks and dedicated "dogs' off lead" areas; and			
ii. satisfactory vehicular access can be achieved without creating a detrimental impact on the local highways network.			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	Norfolk Valley Fens SAC	Breckland SAC	Breckland SPA
<i>The policy supports the creation of a new park to serve Watton.</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE)</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE)</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE)</i>

	<i>on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>on the European sites' qualifying features</i>
Policy WTN 8 - Local Green Spaces			
<p>The following Local Green Spaces are designated in this Plan and identified on the maps in Appendix 2.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. George Trollope Road 2. South of South Road 3. Merton Road crescent 4. Memorial Green, Memorial Way 5. Open space at Ventura House 6. Langmere Road 7. Stokes Avenue 8. Bridle Road 9. Heron Way 10. Youth and Community Centre 11. Between Queensway and Edinburgh Close 12. Jubilee Road 13. Allotment Gardens off Thetford Road 14. Play area, Bowes Close 15. Open Spaces, Bowes Close/Byfords Way 16. Balancing pond, Byfords Way 17. Vicarage Walk / Chestnut Road 18. Whitebeam Crescent 19. Dye Road 20. Lovell Gardens Play Area 21. Lovell Gardens Open Space 22. Lovell Gardens Amenity Spaces 23. Akrotiri Square Amenity Space 24. Shire Horse Way / Horse Shoe Close Amenity Spaces 25. Harvest Road / Blenheim Way Open Space 26. Badger Drive Open Space 27. Wheatcroft Drive Open Space 28. Cemetery 29. Allotments 30. Loch Neaton 31. Field Maple Road 32. Church Walk 			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	<i>Norfolk Valley Fens SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SPA</i>
<i>The policy identifies a series of local green spaces in Watton which will be protected through national and local policy.</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites'</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites'</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites'</i>

	<i>qualifying features</i>	<i>qualifying features</i>	<i>qualifying features</i>
Town Centre and the Economy			
Policy WTN 9 – Watton Town Centre			
<p>Proposals in the Town Centre, as defined on the Local Plan Policies Map, should have regard to and demonstrate how they accord with the design guidance for the area set out in the Watton Town Centre Design Code (May 2020). Proposals which depart from the guidance should justify why such a departure is appropriate to the development.</p> <p>Proposals to alter an existing shop front or create a new shop front, including the installation of external security measures, advertisements or canopies, or advertisements, must preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the building or location of which it forms a part, and the street scene in which the proposal is located, and must not adversely affect amenity and/or public safety.</p>			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	<i>Norfolk Valley Fens SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SPA</i>
<i>The policy aims to protect and enhance Watton Town Centre</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>
Built Heritage			
Policy WTN 10 – Buildings of Local Significance			
<p>The retention and protection of local heritage assets and buildings of local significance, including buildings, structures, features and gardens of local interest, must be appropriately secured.</p> <p>Proposals for any works that would lead to the loss of, or substantial harm to, a building of local significance should be supported by an appropriate analysis of the significance of the asset to enable a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.</p> <p>Appendix 3 describes the significance of the Buildings of Local Significance and their locations.</p>			
Comments	Likely effect in identified sites		
	<i>Norfolk Valley Fens SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SAC</i>	<i>Breckland SPA</i>
<i>The policy aims to protect and enhance heritage assets in Watton, linking to an appendix which provides extra detail.</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>	<i>No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the European sites' qualifying features</i>

4. Conclusion

4.1 The screening assessment suggests that there are likely to be no significant negative effects on the European Designated Sites resulting from the Policies detailed within the SNP. Therefore, based on the submitted draft, a full Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulations Assessment) is not required.

4.3 Natural England have responded to the Screening Opinion request and their responses are contained in Appendix 1. Natural England agrees that it is not likely there will be significant environmental effects arising from the policies in the plan, which have not already been accounted for within the adopted local plan. Therefore, the Watton Neighbourhood Plan does not require a SEA to be undertaken.

4.4 In light of this, Breckland Council has concluded that the emerging WNP is not likely to have any significant environmental effect and accordingly will not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The main reasons for this conclusion are:

- The Watton NP does not seek to increase dwelling numbers, and subsequently the population of the area.
- The Watton policies add detail to strategic policies within the Breckland Local Plan. These strategic policies have been subjected to a HRA screening and subsequent Appropriate Assessment.

4.5 This report is based on the Screening Opinion request on the Regulation 14 version of the WNP. Should the contents of the plan subsequently differ from this version, there may be a requirement to revisit this Screening Opinion.

4.6 A copy of this report will be available online on the Breckland Council Neighbourhood Plan website and for inspection at Breckland Council Offices, Elizabeth House, Wolpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Details of relevant European Sites

European Site Conservation Objectives for Breckland Special Protection Area (UK9009201)

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Qualifying Features:

- A133 *Burhinus oedicanus*; Stone-curlew (Breeding)
- A224 *Caprimulgus europaeus*; European nightjar (Breeding)
- A246 *Lullula arborea*; Woodlark (Breeding)

Publication date: 21 February 2019 (version 3). This updates and replaces an earlier version dated 30 June 2014 to reflect the consolidation of the Habitats Regulations in 2017.

European Site Conservation Objectives for Breckland Special Area of Conservation (UK0019865)

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

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 species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Qualifying Features:

- H2330. Inland dunes with open *Corynephorus* and *Agrostis* grasslands; Open grassland with grey-hair grass and common bent grass of inland dunes
- H3150. Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*-type vegetation; Naturally nutrient-rich lakes or lochs which are often dominated by pondweed
- H4030. European dry heaths
- H6210. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*); Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone
- H91E0. Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*); Alder woodland on floodplains
- S1166. *Triturus cristatus*; Great crested newt

Publication date: 27 November 2018 (version 3). This updates and replaces an earlier version dated 30 June 2014 to reflect the consolidation of the Habitats Regulations in 2017.

European Site Conservation Objectives for Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation (UK0012892)

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

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 species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Qualifying Features:

- H4010. Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
- H4030. European dry heaths
- H6210. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*); Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone
- H6410. *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*); Purple moor-grass meadows
- H7210. Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*; Calcium-rich fen dominated by great fen sedge (saw sedge)
- H7230. Alkaline fens; Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens
- H91E0. Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*); Alder woodland on floodplains
- S1014. *Vertigo angustior*; Narrow-mouthed whorl snail
- S1016. *Vertigo moulinsiana*; Desmoulin's whorl snail

Publication date: 27 November 2018 (version 3). This updates and replaces an earlier version dated 30 June 2014 to reflect the consolidation of the Habitats Regulations in 2017.

Appendix 2: Response from Natural England

Natural England

Hornbeam House

Crewe Business Park

Electra Way

Crewe

Cheshire

CW1 6GJ

Dear Mr D'Arcy

Watton Neighbourhood Plan – SEA and HRA screening report consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 11 April 2022 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the planning practice guidance.

Planning practice guidance also outlines that if an appropriate assessment is required for your neighbourhood plan this will also engage the need for a SEA. One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European obligations, including those under the SEA Directive. Where a SEA is required it should be prepared in accordance with regulation 12 of the SEA Regulations.

Where a neighbourhood plan could potentially affect a 'habitats site', it will be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Where likely significant effects are identified, it will be necessary to undertake an appropriate assessment of the neighbourhood plan and, if needed, identify and secure appropriate mitigation

measures to ensure the plan does not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats site.

Natural England welcomes the Screening Reports which assess the requirement for SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Watton Neighbourhood Plan. I can confirm that Natural England agrees with the conclusions of the reports that it is not likely there will be significant environmental effects arising from the policies in the plan, which have not already been accounted for within the adopted local plan. Therefore, the Watton Neighbourhood Plan does not require a SEA to be undertaken. Natural England also agrees that the Plan would be unlikely to result in any significant effect to European Sites, either alone or in combination, and therefore an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations is not required.

Aside from this, Natural England have no specific comments at this stage. We would be happy to comment further should the need arise. For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact..... For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to

consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Richard Hack

Richard Hack

Norfolk & Suffolk Team