

Over Wallop Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan

Habitat Regulations Assessment

Over Wallop Parish Council

January 2023

Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
0	January 2023	Initial draft HRA for client comment	JR	Dr James Riley	Technical Director
1	February 2023	Updated following District Council comments and group comments	JR	Dr James Riley	Technical Director

Distribution List

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1. Introduction

Background to the Project

- 1.1 AECOM was appointed by Locality to assist Over Wallop Parish Council in undertaking a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Over Wallop Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (OWNDP). This is to inform the planning group and Test Valley Borough Council, the Competent Authority in this instance, of the potential effects of the OWNDP on European sites and how they are being or should be addressed in the draft Plan. Test Valley Borough Council will then be able to utilise this report to inform their formal HRA decision-making regarding the Plan.
- 1.2 The objective of this HRA is to identify whether any policies and / or site allocations in the OWNDP have the potential to cause Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) and, where identified, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites, either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects, and to determine whether site-specific or policy mitigation measures are required. Undertaking an HRA is a statutory requirement under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Legislative Context

- 1.3 The UK left the EU on 31 January 2019 under the terms set out in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 ("the Withdrawal Act"). This established a transition period, which ended on 31 December 2020. The Withdrawal Act retains the body of existing EU-derived law within our domestic law. The most recent amendments to the Habitats Regulations – the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – make it clear that the need for HRA continues after the end of the Transition Period.
- 1.4 The HRA process applies the 'Precautionary Principle'¹ to European sites. Plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the European site(s) in question. Plans and projects with predicted adverse impacts on European sites may still be permitted if there are no alternatives to them and there are Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest (IROPI) as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation would be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.
- 1.5 Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended, see Figure 1), an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required, where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect upon an international site, either individually or in combination with other projects.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (As Amended)

With specific reference to Neighbourhood Plans, Regulation 106(1) states that:

"A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority [the Local Planning Authority] may reasonably require for the purpose of the assessment under regulation 105... [which sets out the formal process for determination of 'likely significant effects' and the appropriate assessment]."

Figure 1: The legislative basis for Appropriate Assessment.

- 1.6 Therefore, it is important to note that this report has two purposes:
 - To assist the Qualifying Body (Over Wallop Parish Council) in preparing their NDP by recommending (where necessary) any adjustments required to protect European sites, thus

¹ The Precautionary Principle, which is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: *"When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis".*

making it more likely their plan will be deemed compliant with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); and

- On behalf of the Qualifying Body, to assist the Local Planning Authority (Test Valley Borough Council in Hampshire) to discharge their duty under Regulation 105 (in their role as 'plan-making authority' within the meaning of that regulation) and Regulation 106 (in their role as 'competent authority').
- 1.7 As Competent Authority, the legal responsibility for ensuring that the screening of LSEs is undertaken, for ensuring an AA (where required) is undertaken, and for ensuring Natural England are consulted, falls on the Local Planning Authority and the Neighbourhood Plan examiner. However, they are entitled to request from the Qualifying Body the necessary information on which to base their judgment and that is the key purpose of this report.
- 1.8 Over the years the term 'HRA' has come into wide currency to describe the overall process set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) from LSEs screening through to IROPI. This has arisen in order to distinguish the process from the individual stage described in the law as an AA. Throughout this report we use HRA for the overall process.

Scope of the HRA

- 1.9 There are no standard criteria for determining the ultimate physical scope of an HRA of a Plan document. Therefore, in considering the physical scope of the assessment, we were guided primarily by the identified impact pathways (called the source-pathway-receptor model) rather than by arbitrary 'zones'. Current guidance suggests that the following European sites should be included in the scope of the assessment:
- All sites within the boundary of Over Wallop Parish; and,
 - Other sites shown to be linked to development within the Parish boundary through a known impact 'pathway' (discussed below).
- 1.10 Briefly defined, impact pathways are routes by which the implementation of a policy within a Neighbourhood Plan document can lead to an effect upon a European site. An example of this would be new residential development resulting in an increased population and thus increased recreational pressure, which could then affect European sites by, for example, disturbance of wintering or breeding birds.
- 1.11 Guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) states that the HRA should be 'proportionate to the geographical scope of the [plan policy]' and that 'an AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose' (MHCLG, 2006, p.6). More recently, the Court of Appeal ruled that providing the Council (competent authority) was duly satisfied that proposed mitigation could be 'achieved in practice' to satisfy that the proposed development would have no adverse effect, then this would suffice. In this case the High Court ruled that for 'a multistage process, so long as there is sufficient information at any particular stage to enable the authority to be satisfied that the proposed mitigation can be achieved in practice it is not necessary for all matters concerning mitigation to be fully resolved before a decision maker is able to conclude that a development will satisfy the requirements of Reg 61 of the Habitats Regulations'.

The Layout of this Report

- 1.1 **Chapter 2** of this report explains the methodology by which this HRA has been carried out, including the three essential tasks that form part of HRA. **Chapter 3** provides details of the relevant European sites, including Conservation Objectives and current pressures and threats. **Chapter 4** provides background on relevant impact pathways and undertakes the screening assessment of LSEs of the Plan policies. The conclusions arising from the HRA process are provided in **Chapter 5**.

Quality Assurance

- 1.2 This report was undertaken in line with AECOM's Integrated Management System (IMS). Our IMS places great emphasis on professionalism, technical excellence, quality, environmental and Health and Safety management. All staff members are committed to establishing and maintaining our certification to the international standards BS EN ISO 9001:2015 and 14001:2015, ISO 44001:2017 and ISO 45001:2018. In

addition, our IMS requires careful selection and monitoring of the performance of all sub-consultants and contractors.

- 1.3 All AECOM Ecologists working on this project are members (at the appropriate level) of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and follow their code of professional conduct (CIEEM, 2017).

2. Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 The HRA has been carried out with reference to the general EC guidance on HRA (European Commission, 2001) and general guidance on HRA published by the UK government in 2021 (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2021).

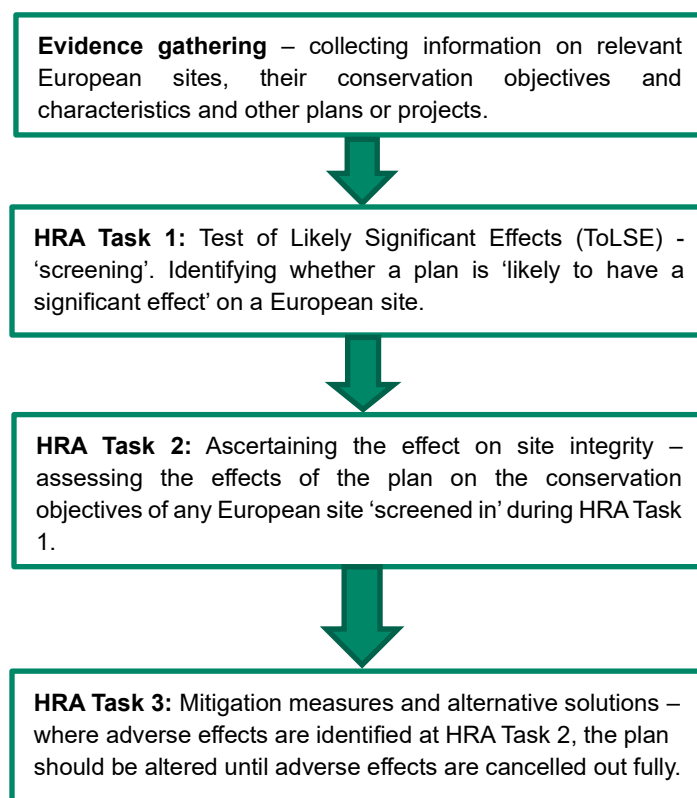


Figure 2: Four Stage Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment. Source EC, 2011.

- 2.2 Figure 2 above outlines the stages of HRA according to current Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities guidance. The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information, recommendations, and any relevant changes to the Plan until no significant adverse effects remain. It is to be noted that only HRA Task 1 is described in detail below, given that all policies have been screened out and no AA is required.

HRA Task 1 – Screening for Likely Significant Effects (LSEs)

- 2.3 Following evidence gathering, the first stage of any HRA is a LSEs screening - essentially a brief, high-level assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as AA is required. The essential question is:

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

- 2.4 The objective is to 'screen out' those plans and projects that can, without any detailed appraisal, be concluded to be unlikely to result in significant effects upon European sites, usually because there is no mechanism for an adverse interaction.

- 2.5 The LSEs screening is based on identification of the impact source, its pathway to receptors and an appraisal of the specific European site receptors. These are normally designated features but also include habitats and species fundamental for designated features to achieve favourable conservation status (notably functionally linked habitats outside the European site boundary).
- 2.6 In the Waddenzee case², the European Court of Justice ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, including that:
- An effect should be considered 'likely', "if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on the site" (para 44);
 - An effect should be considered 'significant', "if it undermines the conservation objectives" (para 48); and
 - Where a plan or project has an effect on a site "but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned" (para 47).
- 2.7 The LSEs screening consists of two parts: Firstly, it should determine whether there are any policies that could result in negative impact pathways and secondly it establishes whether there are any European sites that might be affected. It identifies European sites that are most likely to be impacted by the Plan and the impact pathways that are most likely to require consideration. It is important to note that LSEs screening must generally follow the precautionary principle as its main purpose is to determine whether the subsequent stage of AA (i.e. a more detailed investigation) is required.

Identifying Plans and Projects That May Act In-Combination

- 2.8 It is a requirement of the Regulations that the impacts of any land use plan being assessed are not only considered in isolation, but also in-combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the European site(s) in question. For example, when considering the potential for combined regional housing development to impact European sites, the primary consideration is the impact of overall visitor numbers – i.e. recreational pressure and urbanisation.
- 2.9 When undertaking this part of the assessment it is essential to bear in mind the principal intention behind the legislation i.e. to ensure that those projects or plans (which in themselves may have minor impacts) are not simply dismissed on that basis but are evaluated for any cumulative contribution they may make to an overall significant effect. In practice, in combination assessment is therefore of greatest relevance when the plan or policy would otherwise be screened out because its individual contribution is inconsequential.
- 2.10 The following plans are considered to have the potential to act in-combination with the OWNP:
- Test Valley Local Development Framework
 - Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (2016)
 - Neighbourhood Plans of adjoining parishes (e.g. Grateley, Nether Wallop, Monxston, Abbots Ann)
 - Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2013)
 - Wiltshire Local Plan (in preparation)
- 2.11 It should be noted that, while the broad potential impacts of these other projects and plans have been considered, this assessment does not undertake full HRA on each of these plans. Instead, existing HRAs that have been carried out for surrounding authorities and plans are drawn upon.

² Case C-127/02

3. Relevant European Sites

Salisbury Plain SAC

Introduction

- 3.1 The Salisbury Plain SAC is a 21,465.94ha large site that encompasses dry grassland / steppes (94.7%), heath / scrub (1.9%), humid grassland (0.9%), improved grassland (0.9%), broad-leaved deciduous woodland (0.4%), coniferous woodland (0.4%) and mixed woodland (0.4%). The SAC is an extensive and open rolling chalk plateau with alkaline and free-draining soils. Its defining habitat type is chalk grassland, secondary / ancient woodland and juniper scrub.
- 3.2 There are two qualifying habitats within the site, namely *Juniperus communis* assemblages and semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland facies. Juniper scrub occurs at the southern edge of its habitat range and is the best remaining UK example of this habitat on chalk. Characteristic plant species in the juniper scrub include roses *Rosa* spp., wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana*. The semi-natural dry grassland in the SAC is the largest remaining example of such habitat in the EU and is a priority habitat for orchids.

Qualifying Features³

- 3.3 Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:
- *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands
 - Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites)
- 3.4 Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:
- Marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*)

Conservation Objectives⁴

- 3.5 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated... and subject to natural change;
- 3.6 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.

³ Available at: <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012683> [Accessed on the 22/12/2022]

⁴ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4786217489006592> [Accessed on the 22/12/2022]

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity⁵

3.7 The Natural England Site Improvement Plan (SIP) for the Salisbury Plain SAC identifies the following threats and pressures to the integrity of the Salisbury Plain SAC:

- Changes in species distribution
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.

Porton Down SPA

Introduction

3.8 The Porton Down SPA is located north-east of Salisbury and lies within the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs National Character Area. It is also a constituent part of the Salisbury Plain SAC. It consists of a substantial area of chalk grassland, heath, scrub and (ancient) woodland. The site contains one of the largest areas of uninterrupted chalk grassland in the UK. The SPA habitats support diverse assemblages of flowering plants, butterflies, invertebrates and breeding birds (including the qualifying stone curlew).

3.9 When classified, the SPA supported 11 breeding pairs of stone curlew, which comprised 10.6% of the GB breeding population. In 2015 the number of breeding pairs stood at seven. Stone curlews are very sensitive to disturbance and predation because they nest in a scrape on bare, stony ground. Furthermore, this species is migratory, meaning that energy reserves in the breeding period will naturally be limited.

Qualifying Features⁶

3.10 The site is designated under Article 4.1 of the Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) for the following Annex I species:

- Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oediconemus*)

Conservation Objectives⁷

3.11 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified and subject to natural change;

3.12 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.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity⁸

3.13 The Natural England SIP identifies the following threats and pressures to the integrity of the Porton Down SPA:

⁵ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5384236060114944> [Accessed on the 23/12/2023]

⁶ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4590526095425536> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

⁷ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4590526095425536> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

⁸ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5384236060114944> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

- Changes in species distribution
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.

Mottisfont Bats SAC

Introduction

- 3.14 The Mottisfont Bats SAC is a 196.55ha large site that consists primarily of broad-leaved deciduous woodland (80%) and coniferous woodland (20%). The SAC lies on the western side of the River Test amidst a landscape of mixed farmland, woodland, river channels and wetland habitats. Woodlands in the SAC comprise a mix of woodland types, including hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice, that the bats use for breeding, roosting, commuting and feeding.
- 3.15 A colony of barbastelle bats is the reason for designation of the SAC. Trees in the woodland are used as summer maternity roosts, with bats preferentially roosting in deciduous hardwood trees (oak, beech and sweet chestnut). There are various known navigation routes through the woodland to riverine areas and other foraging habitats. This bat species is particularly sensitive to disturbance, loss of roosting sites and disappearance of foraging areas. Barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*) are present at the site.

Qualifying Features⁹

- 3.16 Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*)

Conservation Objectives¹⁰

- 3.17 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated and subject to natural change;
- 3.18 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.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹¹

- 3.19 The Natural England SIP identifies the following threats and pressures to the integrity of the Mottisfont Bats SAC:
- Unknown distribution of feature
 - Forestry and woodland management.
 - Offsite habitat availability / management.

⁹ Available at: <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0030334> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

¹⁰ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4606237169680384> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

¹¹ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4592740763435008> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

Salisbury Plain SPA

Introduction

- 3.20 The Salisbury Plain SPA lies in central Wiltshire within the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs NCA. It comprises an extensive chalk plateau interspersed by several rivers. The main broad habitat type is chalk grassland with some plantation and ancient woodland, and juniper scrub. Much of the SPA is subject to existing disturbance from military training.
- 3.21 The site is of particular note for its breeding population of stone curlew, which depend on the extensive areas of open grassland, overwintering hen harrier, breeding hobby and breeding quail. The main breeding habitat for stone curlew in the SPA encompasses lowland calcareous grassland, semi-improved and improved grassland, and arable fields. Hen harrier within the SPA tend to forage over a wide area, including adjacent winter stubble that attracts flocks of small birds. Hobby mainly feed on insects and small birds usually caught on the wing and nest in small woods and isolated copses (particularly Scots pine and Douglas fir).

Qualifying Features¹²

- 3.22 The site is designated under Article 4.1 of the Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) for the following Annex I species:
- Stone curlew (*Burhinus oedichnemus*, breeding)
 - Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*, overwintering)
- 3.23 The site is designated under Article 4.2 of the Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) for the following Annex I species:
- Hobby (*Falco Subbuteo*, breeding)
 - Common quail (*Coturnix coturnix*, breeding)

Conservation Objectives¹³

- 3.24 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified and subject to natural change;
- 3.25 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.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁴

- 3.26 The Natural England SIP identifies the following threats and pressures to the integrity of the Salisbury Plain SPA:

¹² Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5745803545018368> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

¹³ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5745803545018368> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

¹⁴ Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5384236060114944> [Accessed on the 23/12/2022]

- Changes in species distribution
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition.

Solent Maritime SAC

Conservation Objectives¹⁵

- 3.27 With regard to the SAC 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.
- 3.28 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contribute 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 Features¹⁶

- 3.29 The following features are reasons for designation as an SAC:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Estuaries
- Spartina swards (*Spartinion maritimae*)
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- Coastal lagoons * Priority feature
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks
- Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand
- "Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")"

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*)

Environmental Vulnerabilities¹⁷

- 3.30 The threats and pressures likely to affect the SAC are listed below:

¹⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5336347464433664> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

¹⁶ [Solent Maritime - Special Areas of Conservation \(jncc.gov.uk\)](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5319610920337408) (Assessed 14/03/2022)

¹⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5319610920337408> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

- Public Access/Disturbance
- Coastal squeeze
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Water Pollution
- Changes in species distributions
- Climate change
- Change to site conditions
- Invasive species
- Direct land take from development
- Biological Resource Use
- Change in land management
- Inappropriate pest Threat control
- Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Hydrological changes
- Direct impact from 3rd Threat party
- Extraction: non-living resources

Solent & Southampton Water SPA

Conservation Objectives¹⁸

- 3.31 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.
- 3.32 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 Features¹⁹

- 3.33 The following features are reasons for designation as an SPA:
- Dark-bellied brent goose (Non-breeding) *Branta bernicla bernicla*;
 - Eurasian teal (Non-breeding) *Anas crecca*;
 - Ringed plover (Non-breeding) *Charadrius hiaticula*;
 - Black-tailed godwit (Non-breeding) *Limosa limosa islandica*;
 - Mediterranean gull (Breeding) *Larus melanocephalus*;
 - Sandwich tern (Breeding) *Sterna sandvicensis*;
 - Roseate tern (Breeding) *Sterna dougallii*;

¹⁸ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5932771361161216> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

¹⁹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5932771361161216> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

- Common tern (Breeding) *Sterna hirundo*;
- Little tern (Breeding) *Sterna albifrons*;

Environmental Vulnerabilities²⁰

3.34 The threats and pressures likely to affect the SPA are listed below:

- Public Access/Disturbance
- Coastal squeeze
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Water Pollution
- Changes in species distributions
- Climate change
- Change to site conditions
- Invasive species
- Direct land take from development
- Biological Resource Use
- Change in land management
- Inappropriate pest Threat control
- Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Hydrological changes
- Direct impact from 3rd Threat party
- Extraction: non-living resources

Solent and Dorset Coast SPA

Conservation Objectives²¹

3.35 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.

3.36 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 Features²²

3.37 The following features are reasons for designation as an SPA:

- Sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) Breeding

²⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5319610920337408> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

²¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6374193567629312> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

²² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6374193567629312> (Assessed 14/03/2022)

- Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) Breeding
- Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*) Breeding

Environmental Vulnerabilities²³

3.38 The threats and pressures likely to affect the marine SPA are listed below:

- Maintaining breeding population for sandwich turn at above 441 pairs, little turn above 63 pairs, and common turn at above 492 pairs
- Maintaining safe passage for birds moving between nesting and feeding areas
- Recreational pressure on roosting, nesting foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds
- Air quality
- Maintaining suitable habitat within the European site
- Maintain functionally linked land
- Maintain abundance of key food and prey items
- Water quality

The New Forest SAC

Conservation Objectives²⁴

- 3.39 With regard to the SAC 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.
- 3.40 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contribute 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 Features²⁵

3.41 The following features are reasons for designation as an SAC:

Annex I habitats that are primary reason for selection of this site:

- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*)
- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*

²³ [Southampton & Dorset Coast SPA Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/southampton-dorset-coast-spa-supplementary-advice-on-conservation-objectives) [Accessed 13/09/2022]

²⁴ [European Site Conservation Objectives for The New Forest SAC - UK0012557 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/european-site-conservation-objectives-for-the-new-forest-sac-uk0012557) (Assessed 23/02/2022)

²⁵ <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0012557> (Assessed 23/02/2022)

- European dry heaths
- Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)
- Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*
- Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (*Quercion roburi-petraeae* or *Ilici-Fagenion*)
- Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests
- Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains
- Bog woodland
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Transition mires and quaking bogs
- Alkaline fens

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*)
- Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*)

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*)

Environmental Vulnerabilities²⁶

3.42 The threats and pressures likely to affect the SAC are listed below:

- Drainage
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Fish stocking
- Deer
- Air pollution
- Public access/disturbance
- Change in land management
- Change in species distribution
- Water pollution
- Forestry and woodland management
- Inappropriate ditch management
- Invasive species
- Vehicles
- Inappropriate cutting/mowing
- Direct impact from 3rd party

²⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5174614971908096> (Assessed 23/02/2022)

New Forest SPA and Ramsar

Conservation Objectives²⁷

- 3.43 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;
- 3.44 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

3.45 The following features are reasons for designation as an SPA:

- European honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*)
- Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)
- Eurasian hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)
- European nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)
- Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)
- Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*)
- Wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

3.46 The following features are reasons for designation as a Ramsar²⁸:

Criterion 1

- Valley mires and wet heaths are found throughout the site and are of outstanding scientific interest. The mires and heaths are within catchments whose uncultivated and undeveloped state buffer the mires against adverse ecological change. This is the largest concentration of intact valley mires of their type in Britain.

Criterion 2

- The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals including several nationally rare species. Seven species of nationally rare plant are found on the site, as are at least 65 British Red Data Book species of invertebrate.

Criterion 3

- The mire habitats are of high ecological quality and diversity and have undisturbed transition zones. The invertebrate fauna of the site is important due to the concentration of rare and scarce wetland species. The whole site complex, with its examples of semi-natural habitats is essential to the genetic and ecological diversity of southern England.

Environmental Vulnerabilities

3.47 The threats and pressures likely to affect the SPA and Ramsar are listed below:

²⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4908493534658560> (Accessed 27/04/2022)

²⁸ [Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands - The New Forest \(jncc.gov.uk\)](https://www.jncc.gov.uk/information-sheet-on-ramsar-wetlands-the-new-forest) (Accessed 27/04/22)

- Drainage
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Fish stocking
- Deer
- Air pollution
- Public access/disturbance
- Change in land management
- Change in species distribution
- Water pollution
- Forestry and woodland management
- Inappropriate ditch management
- Invasive species
- Vehicles
- Inappropriate cutting/mowing
- Direct impact from 3rd party

4. Screening for Likely Significant Effects (LSEs)

Physical scope of the HRA

- 4.1 Based upon Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives, there are five impact pathways that require consideration regarding potentially increasing development within the NP area (see Table 1). The screening of all policies in the OWNP is undertaken in Table 2.

Impact Pathways

- 4.2 Based on available SIPs for the identified European sites, there are four pressures and threats potentially linking NP development to European sites. These are:

- Feature location / extent / condition unknown
- Forestry and woodland management.
- Offsite habitat availability / management.
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Table 1. Description of threats and pressures in European sites according to Natural England SIPs and whether development in the OWNP could exacerbate them.

Impact pathway	Discussion
Feature location / extent / condition unknown	This highlights a lack of full mapping of the Barbastelle population found in the Mottisfont Bats SAC. Therefore, there remains uncertainty over the presence of bats in some areas (including Over Wallop Parish) and so due consideration must be given when assessing the threats posed by other impact pathways.
Forestry and woodland management	The Neighbourhood Plan does not impact the forestry management in any European site. Therefore, this impact pathway is not considered further in this HRA.
Offsite habitat availability / management.	This impact pathway is relevant to the Salisbury Plain SPA, Porton Down SPA and Mottisfont Bats SAC. While two of the three European sites lie relatively far from Over Wallop Parish, potential impacts of the OWNP on offsite habitats require further consideration.
Air pollution	Increased residential or employment development within Over Wallop Parish would lead to a greater number of vehicles within and commuter journeys associated with the parish. As such, increased air pollution could arise due to the implementation of the OWNP if it resulted in additional development. Pollutants in vehicle emissions may be carried directly by wind currents and deposited to European sites or become soluble and taken up during evaporation and deposited to said sites during precipitation. Guidance from the Institute of Air Quality Management and Highways England both set an impact zone of 200m from the roadside for potential significant air quality effects on vegetation arising from road traffic.

- 4.3 Recreational pressure is not considered an impact pathway associated with Over Wallop Neighbourhood Plan as Porton Down SPA is not open to the general public and the nearest publicly accessible part of Salisbury Plain SAC (since much of it is not open to the general public due to its military use) is over 10km from Over Wallop. Over Wallop parish partly lies within the surface water catchment of the Solent European sites. However, since the Neighbourhood Plan allocates no housing sites, nutrient impacts on the Solent European sites are not expected to arise from the Neighbourhood Plan. Over Wallop village abuts the 15km outer recreational pressure zone for The New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site as identified in Test Valley

Council guidance²⁹. However, since the Neighbourhood Plan allocates no housing sites, recreational impacts on The New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site will not arise from the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 4.4 Individual planning applications, as they come forward, may impact the Solent European sites through nutrient neutrality, and the New Forest European sites through recreational pressure if they extend development south from the existing southern edge of Over Wallop village. However, such applications would be required to comply with the guidance regarding development within those zones as published by Test Valley Council (<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/guidance/solent-southampton-water-special-protection-area>).

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<https://democracy.testvalley.gov.uk/documents/s18073/Draft%20New%20Forest%20International%20Nature%20Conservation%20Designations%20-%20Annex%203.pdf>

Table 2. Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) screening assessment of policies included in the OWNP.

Policy	European Sites and Proximity to Policy Area	Brief Summary	Screening Outcome
Policy EL P1: Conservation Areas	N/A	Policy states that only development proposals that have a positive effect on Over Wallop and Middle Wallop Conservation Areas will be supported.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P2: Listed Buildings and Locally Important Heritage Assets	N/A	Policy states that development proposals that contribute to the preservation of listed buildings will be supported and that support will be given for positively designed extensions and renovations to non-listed, locally important properties.	No likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P3: Archaeology and Scheduled Ancient Monuments	N/A	Policy states that a Heritage Impact Assessment will be required for any works that may interfere with archaeological features or Scheduled Ancient Monuments.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P4: Important Views	N/A	Policy states that development with an adverse impact on an identified important views will not be supported and that developments should support the local character.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P5: Public Rights of Way	N/A	Policy states that improvements to and creation of new Public Rights of Ways will be supported, while developments that impact or impede Public Rights of Ways must include suitable mitigation.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P6: Trees and Hedgerows	N/A	Policy states that proposals which harm or remove healthy ancient and veteran trees will not be supported except under exceptional circumstances. Policy also outlines steps to be taken where a development impacts trees/woodland.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P7: Settlement Character and Coalescence	N/A	Policy describes proposals that will and won't be supported to maintain separation between the settlements within and adjacent to the parish.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P8: Local Green Spaces	N/A	Policy states that development at local green spaces as listed in the policy will be	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out.

Policy	European Sites and Proximity to Policy Area	Brief Summary	Screening Outcome
		managed in accordance with policies for Green Belt Developments.	This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P9: Biodiversity	N/A	Policy states that developments should achieve a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% and lists measures that will be supported in planning applications.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P10: Water Courses	N/A	Policy states that proposals along Wallop Brook, it's source and feeder streams, should evidence that they will not increase pollution, flooding or nutrient loading.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P11: Dark Night Skies	N/A	Policy states that development should consider the impacts of light pollution and describes what makes lighting appropriate.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P12: Air and Noise Pollution	N/A	Policy states that proposals with material impacts on air and noise pollution will not be supported.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy EL P13: Water Pollution	N/A	Policy states that developments which will lead to increased nitrogen reaching the Solent Region International sites must confirm the nitrogen budget and implement appropriate mitigation, where required. Developments should achieve nutrient neutrality from their operational phase.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy DD P1: New Housing Development	N/A	Policy describes the locations where new development will and won't be supported. It also specifies requirements and restrictions on developments in certain areas.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy DD P2: Affordable and Community-led Housing	N/A	Policy states that any affordable / community-led housing development should be sustainably located and of an appropriate scale based on local need.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy DD P3 a: Design Principles	N/A	Policy states that all new development should be of a high quality and consider the local area. Developments should show how they follow the Principles and Design Codes for their area.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.

Policy	European Sites and Proximity to Policy Area	Brief Summary	Screening Outcome
Policy DD P3 b-d: Design Principles – Over Wallop Village, Design Principles – Palestine, Design Principles - Kentsboro	N/A	Policies list the Design Codes and Character Areas for the settlements within the parish.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. These are development management policies and do not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy DD P4: Flood Management	N/A	Policy states that development will be supported outside of areas at risk of or liable to cause / worsen seasonal flooding from springs and groundwater.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy IC P1: Highways – Sustainable Travel	N/A	Policy states that proposals should seek to promote safety measures for highways and, where appropriate, provide assistance in fulfilling the Parish Roads Strategy and mitigate any effects on the road network.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy IC P2: Highways and Traffic	N/A	Policy states that new development will be supported where it complies with other policies and can be supported by the existing road network. Requires reporting of expected traffic impacts on certain junctions and roads.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy IC P3: Quiet Lanes	N/A	Policy states that proposals should preserve and enhance rural roads and lanes as appropriate.	No Likely Significant effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy IC P4: Community Infrastructure and Services	N/A	Policy states new developments must make appropriate contributions to infrastructure provision and that improvements to utility, communications and transport infrastructure should be sought where possible.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy IC P5: Renewable Energy	N/A	Policy acknowledges the importance of renewables but only offers support for renewable projects that do not detract from the rural character.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.

Policy	European Sites and Proximity to Policy Area	Brief Summary	Screening Outcome
Policy IC P6: Local Business	N/A	Policy states that business developments will be supported, which are consistent with the local character and provide growth for rural businesses that generate employment for local people.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.
Policy IC P7: Community Facilities	N/A	Policy states that community development proposals will be supported if they retain, improve or reuse existing facilities, or if they sustain or extend the viable use of existing recreation grounds / play areas.	No Likely Significant Effect. Screened out. This is a development management policy and does not specifically allocate sites for development. Therefore, no impact pathways exist to European Sites.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This HRA assessed the potential for the OOWNP to result in LSEs and, where relevant, adverse effects on European sites. A range of impact pathways in relation to the Salisbury Plain SPA / SAC, Porton Down SPA and Mottisfont Bats SAC were considered.
- 5.2 However, the screening for LSEs did not identify any policies in the Plan which provide for housing and employment development in Over Wallop Parish. Furthermore, the OOWNP also does not allocate any specific sites for development. Therefore, there is no mechanism for a negative interaction with the relevant European sites and AA is not required.
- 5.3 Since there is no mechanism for the Over Wallop Neighbourhood Plan to lead to effects on European sites, there is no mechanism for any effect in combination with the other plans or projects identified in this report.

Appendix A Maps

Figure 3: European sites within 10km of Over Wallop Parish.

