

Shropshire Council

Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036

Consultation on Preferred Sites

**Habitats Regulation Assessment
Screening Report
Summary**

November 2018

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Summary of Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Consultation on Preferred Sites Screening Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is a legal requirement for Local Authorities to prepare a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for plans and projects that have the potential to impact on habitats of European importance. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations), the purpose of a HRA is to ensure that the proposals from any plan or project, or the cumulative effect of a number of plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any International site.
- 1.2. Habitats Regulations Assessment plays an important role in protecting the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 network of sites. These sites, often referred to as 'European Sites', include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Candidate SACs (cSACs). Following UK government policy, potential SPAs (pSPAs), possible SACs (pSACs) and proposed and listed Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) designated under the Ramsar Convention are also treated as though covered by the HRA regulations. The term 'international sites' includes all the above designations and is used throughout HRA reports.

HRA Screening Report for the Consultation on Preferred Sites

- 1.3. This Screening Report is the third phase of the HRA of the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review (LPR) 2016-2036.
- 1.4. It should be noted that the LPR is in the process of preparation. The Issues and Strategic Options document was published for public consultation between 23rd January and 20th March 2017. This set out options for the level and general distribution of housing growth and for economic growth.
- 1.5. The Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development consultation document was published in October 2017. It set out the preferred scale and distribution of housing and employment development in Shropshire 2016-36, identifying a settlement hierarchy including Community Hubs and Community Clusters. It also proposed draft policies for the management of development within Community Hubs and Community Clusters.
- 1.6. The current LPR Preferred Sites consultation document provides the locations of housing and employment allocations. It includes the numbers of dwellings and the amount of employment land (in hectares) for each site. A review of policies in the adopted Local Plan has not yet been undertaken: this will be published for consultation later in the plan making process and will form the basis for subsequent HRA reports.

- 1.7. The purposes of this HRA Screening Report are to:
- identify which international sites could possibly be affected by the proposals in the Preferred Sites consultation document and which can be screened out at this stage.
 - determine potential pathways by which the international sites may be affected and, where possible, to give recommendations for any avoidance or mitigation measures to be considered when drafting planning policies for later LPR documents. Comments on requirements for further information gathering are also provided.

Identifying international sites which could be affected by the Local Plan Review

- 1.8. All international sites within a precautionary buffer of 15km of the county boundary have been screened in for consideration. Additional sites at a greater distance have been added to this list due to possible effect pathways over greater distances, such as river connections or recreational impacts, or through recommendations by statutory agencies. The international sites considered in the Consultation on Preferred Sites HRA Screening Report are listed below. Those sites within Shropshire are shown in bold:

- Berwyn SPA
- Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountain SAC
- **Brown Moss SAC**
- Cannock Chase SAC
- Downton Gorge SAC
- Elenydd SAC
- **Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses SAC**
- Fens Pools SAC
- Granllyn SAC
- Johnstown newt sites SAC
- **Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar Phase 1:**
 - **Berrington Pool**
 - Betley Mere
 - **Bomere and Shomere Pools**
 - **Brown Moss**
 - **Clarepool Moss**
 - **Fenemere**
 - **Marton Pool (Chirbury)**
 - Quoisley Mere
 - **White Mere**
 - Wybunbury Moss
- **Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar Phase 2:**
 - Aqualate Mere
 - Black Firs and Cranberry Bog
 - **Brownheath Moss**
 - Chapel Mere
 - **Cole Mere**

- Cop Mere
 - **Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses**
 - Hanmer Mere
 - **Hencott Pool**
 - Llyn Bedydd
 - **Morton Pool and Pasture**
 - Oakhanger Moss
 - **Oss Mere**
 - **Sweat Mere and Crose Mere**
 - Vicarage Moss
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- Montgomery Canal SAC
 - Motte Meadows SAC
 - Rhos Goch SAC
 - **River Clun SAC**
 - River Dee & Bala Lake SAC
 - River Severn SPA/SAC/Ramsar
 - River Wye SAC
 - Tanat & Vrynwy Bat Sites SAC
 - **The Stiperstones & the Hollies SAC**
 - **West Midlands Mosses SAC:**
 - **Clarepool Moss**
 - Wybunbury Moss
- 1.9. Two of these sites were screened out in the Initial Screening Report, as it was considered the LPR will not have an effect on their Conservation Objectives. These sites are Motte Meadows SAC and Fens Pools SAC. The remaining sites have been considered in this HRA.

Possible mechanisms for significant effects (effect pathways)

- 1.10. The potential effect pathways identified have been combined under four main headings for the current screening exercise, namely
- Air pollution,
 - Water pathways
 - Recreation
 - Light pollution.
- Biosecurity effects as a result of development are likely to be related to access by people or their pets and have been included under Recreation.
- 1.11. Further details of these effect pathways and the international sites that could be affected by them are given in the full HRA Screening Report for the LPR Consultation on Preferred Sites document.

In-Combination Effects

- 1.12. The Habitats Directive requires Local Authorities to assess 'in-combination' effects alongside direct effects. 'In-combination' effects occur when otherwise non-significant proposals combine and cumulatively lead to a significant effect. This interaction can occur from proposals within the LPR or between the LPR and other plans or projects.
- 1.13. The Preferred Sites have been screened for effects alone and in-combination with each other. For some international sites, the HRA's for Local Plans of neighbouring planning authorities have been consulted during screening. However, no policy wording is available at this stage for the Shropshire LPR and a systematic in-combination assessment will be carried out as the LPR progresses and more specific information becomes available. The LPR will be screened against other Shropshire plans and projects, and those of surrounding local authorities for adverse in-combination effects. Any significant in-combination effects must be avoided or sufficiently mitigated for in the final LPR document.

Summary of Findings

- 1.14. Of the 20 international sites which have been identified for consideration in this HRA Screening Report the following have been screened out, as they will not be affected, or there will be no significant effects alone or in combination, as a result of Preferred Sites in the LPR, without recourse to mitigation measures:
- Downton Gorge SAC
 - Elenydd SAC
 - Granlyn SAC
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Betley Mere
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Aqualate Mere
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Brownheath Moss
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Chapel Mere
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Cop Mere
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Llyn Bedydd
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Oss Mere
 - Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Vicarage Moss
 - Rhos Goch SAC
- 1.15. Taking a precautionary approach, the remaining international sites will form the basis for the HRA of subsequent LPR documents. These documents will incorporate revisions based on comments from this consultation and establish the proposed planning policy wording.
- 1.16. All the allocated sites in the LPR Preferred Sites consultation document have been considered in the HRA Screening Report and recommendations made. However, none of the preferred sites have been screened out at this stage as final reports for key areas of investigation have yet to be submitted. Recommendations have been made for further information gathering and potential avoidance/mitigation measures for preferred sites where possible

significant effects on international sites have been identified. The majority of these recommendations are for policy wording to be considered whilst drafting policies for the next stage of the LPR.

- 1.17. Key areas for consideration in the next stages of LPR preparation are:
- Taking into account the final results of an updated water cycle study, road traffic investigations and recreational impact study for key international sites open to the public. Dependant on the outcome of these studies, policy wording and avoidance of certain locations for site allocations may be needed to ensure development will only start if sufficient resources, mitigation measures and infrastructure are in place.
 - Policy wording must avoid any likely significant adverse effects, or adverse effects on international site integrity, either alone or in-combination.
 - The SAMDev Plan HRA identified a number of Community Hubs and Clusters for which likely significant effects of development were avoided through specific policy wording. Where these settlements have continued to be identified as suitable for development in the LPR, the avoidance or mitigation measures must be carried forward.
 - HRA Screening of proposed policy wording.
 - Screening for in-combination effects with other plans or projects.