

Shropshire Council

Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036

Issues and Strategic Options

**Habitats Regulation Assessment
Initial Screening Report
Summary**

January 2017

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Habitats Regulations Assessment: Initial Screening Report Summary

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 2010 (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.

2. Habitats Regulation Assessment – Initial Screening Report

- 2.1. This Initial Screening Report is the first phase of the HRA of the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review (LPR) 2016-2036.
- 2.2. It should be noted that the LPR is at an early stage of preparation. The Issues and Strategic Options document is published for public consultation between 23rd January and 20th March 2017. This sets out options for the level and general distribution of housing growth and for economic growth, but does not provide sufficient details on location and policy wording to clearly identify impacts on European Sites. This more specific information is likely to be available later in the plan making process and will form the basis for subsequent HRA reports.
- 2.3. The purposes of the Initial Screening Report are to:
 - identify which international sites could possibly be affected by the proposals in the LPR
 - the potential pathways by which the sites may be affected and,
 - where possible, to give an idea of any potential avoidance or mitigation measures to be considered when choosing the locations of allocated sites and drafting the wording of any policies for later LPR documents

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

- 3.1. 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 Initial Screening Report are listed below. Those sites within Shropshire are shown in bold:
 1. Berwyn SPA
 2. Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountain SAC
 3. **Brown Moss SAC**

4. Cannock Chase SAC
5. Downton Gorge SAC
6. Elenydd SAC Rhos Goch SAC
- 7. Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses SAC**
8. Fens Pools SAC
9. Granllyn SAC
10. Johnstown newt sites SAC
11. Motte Meadows SAC
- 12. Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar Phase 1**
- 13. Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar Phase 2**
14. Montgomery Canal SAC
15. Rhos Goch SAC
- 16. River Clun SAC**
17. River Dee & Bala Lake SAC
18. River Severn SPA/Ramsar
19. River Wye SAC
20. Tanat & Vrynwy Bat Sites SAC
- 21. The Stiperstones & the Hollies SAC**
- 22. West Midlands Mosses SAC (Clarepool Moss SSSI)**

- 3.2. Two sites have been screened out at this stage, as it is considered the LPR will not have an effect on their Conservation Objectives. These sites are Motte Meadows SAC and Fens Pools SAC. The remaining 20 sites will all be carried forward for consideration in the HRA of the next stages of the LPR.

4. Possible mechanisms for significant effects (effect pathways)

- 4.1. Some broad mechanisms by which the options proposed for the LPR might affect international sites include, but are not limited to:
- Air pollution
 - Hydrological impacts and water pollution
 - Recreational impacts
 - Biosecurity (introduction of damaging organisms, usually non-native)
 - Light pollution

Further details of these effect pathways and the international sites that could be affected by them are given in the full Initial Screening Report.

5. In-Combination Effects

- 5.1. 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. The absence of detailed policies and site allocations at the Issues and Strategic Options stage of the LPR means that in-combination effects have not been considered in the Initial Screening Report. However, this exercise will be carried out as the LPR progresses and more specific information becomes available.
- 5.2. At later stages, once potential site allocations and policies have been screened for adverse effects individually, those with insignificant effects will be screened again in combination with each other.
- 5.3. The LPR will also be screened against other Shropshire plans and the plans 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.

6. Summary of Findings

- 6.1. A total of 22 international sites have been identified for consideration in the HRA Initial Screening Report. Two international sites have been screened out at this stage, as it is considered that the LPR will not have an effect on their designated features or Conservation Objectives. The remaining 20 sites will form the basis for the HRA of subsequent LPR documents. These documents will set out the housing requirement, propose more detailed policies and establish potential locations for housing and employment land.
- 6.2. All the housing requirement, strategic distribution of growth and economic growth options in the LPR Issues and Strategic Options consultation document have been considered in the HRA Initial Screening Report and recommendations made.
- 6.3. Key points for consideration in the next stages of LPR preparation are:
- The ability of existing infrastructure and available resources to support the increase in resident and working populations should be investigated e.g. an updated water cycle study and recreational impact study for key international sites open to the public are likely to be needed. Dependant on the outcome of these studies, policies may be needed to ensure development will only start if sufficient resources and infrastructure are in place.
 - The location of residential and employment allocation sites and the wording of policies must avoid any likely significant adverse effects on international sites, either alone or in-combination.
 - If a change of use is proposed for existing allocated employment sites then these must be re-screened for potential adverse effects on international sites.
 - 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. If these settlements continue to be identified as suitable for development in the LPR, these avoidance or mitigation measures must be carried forward. Any new Community Hubs or Clusters proposed by the LPR will also need to be screened through the HRA process.