

Shropshire Council

Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036

**Preferred Options: Scale and  
Distribution of Development**

**Habitats Regulation Assessment  
Screening Report  
Summary**

October 2017

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## **Summary of Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development 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 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. HRA Screening Report for the Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development**

- 2.1. This Screening Report is the second 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 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.
- 2.3. The Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development consultation document is the next stage in the LPR process. It responds to the comments made on the Issues and Strategic Options document and:
  - Sets out the preferred scale of housing and employment development in Shropshire 2016-36;
  - Sets out the preferred distribution of this growth;
  - Identifies housing and employment growth guidelines for the strategic centre and each principal and key centre;
  - Confirms the methodology which Shropshire Council has adopted to identify a settlement hierarchy in Shropshire and to facilitate the creation of new Community Clusters where communities choose to 'opt in';
  - Lists the settlements which form part of this hierarchy, including those that will, in future, be identified as Community Hubs and those that will be maintained as Community Clusters;
  - Proposes draft policies for the management of development within Community Hubs and Community Clusters; and
  - Identifies other development requirements which may need to be addressed as part of the Local Plan Review.

However, the consultation document does not provide sufficient details on location and policy wording to clearly identify impacts on European Sites. This more specific information will become available later in the plan making process and will form the basis for subsequent HRA reports.

- 2.4. The purposes of the HRA Screening Report are to:
- identify which international sites could possibly be affected by the proposals in the Preferred Options consultation document
  - 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. Comments on requirements for further information gathering are also provided.

### **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 were screened out in the Initial Screening Report, as it was considered the LPR would not have an effect on their Conservation Objectives. These sites are Motte Meadows SAC and Fens Pools SAC. The remaining 20 sites have been carried forward for consideration in the HRA of the next stages of the LPR.

#### **4. Possible mechanisms for significant effects (effect pathways)**

4.1. The potential effect pathways identified have been combined under three main headings for the current screening exercise, namely

- Air pollution,
- Water pathways
- Recreation.

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. Lighting effects can only be considered when the location of allocated sites is known.

4.2. 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 Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development.

#### **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 this Preferred Options stage of the LPR means that in-combination effects have not been considered in this 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 20 international sites have been identified for consideration in the HRA Screening Report for the Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development. Taking a precautionary approach, no further international sites have been screened out in this second HRA Screening Report and the 20 sites will form the basis for the HRA of subsequent LPR documents. These documents will establish potential locations for site allocations for housing and employment land and propose more detailed policies.

6.2. All the preferred options for the scale and distribution of housing and economic growth in the LPR Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development consultation document have been considered in the HRA Screening Report and recommendations made. At this early stage in the LPR, none of the preferred options can be stated as having no potential likely significant effect on international sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects

6.3. Key points for consideration in the next stages of LPR preparation are:

- Determining if sufficient existing infrastructure and resources are available to support the increase in resident and working populations e.g. an updated

water cycle study, road traffic investigations and a recreational impact study for key international sites open to the public are in progress. 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.

- 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. Where these settlements continue to be identified as suitable for development in the LPR, the avoidance or mitigation measures must be carried forward. New Hubs or Clusters proposed by the LPR will also need to be screened through the HRA process, when development boundaries are available. Reference to this has been made in the draft Management of Development in Community Hubs and Clusters policies.