

Habitats Regulations Assessment Winkfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report is a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) undertaken by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC), as the local planning authority and competent body, in respect of the Winkfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (WPNP) (2020-2037).⁽¹⁾ The objective of this assessment is to identify any aspects of the WPNP that have the potential to cause a likely significant effect on habitats sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites), either alone and in combination with other plans and projects, and to establish an appropriate avoidance and mitigation strategy where such effects are identified.

1.2 A HRA Screening Determination was published in August 2016.⁽²⁾ Since then the WPNP has evolved and HRA requirements have changed. A decision by the European Court of Justice⁽³⁾ in 2018 concluded that measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a proposed project on a habitats site may not be taken into account by competent authorities at the Likely Significant Effects or 'screening' stage of HRA.

1.3 In order to address this issue the [Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning \(Various Amendments\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2018](#) amend legislation to allow that where a likely significant effect on the environment is identified, a competent authority may undertake an appropriate assessment to consider impacts and any mitigation measures, and then make a decision whether or not to approve the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 In a letter to Winkfield Parish Council (WPC) on 30 March 2022, Natural England (NE) advised that an Appropriate Assessment of the WPNP was required due to the potential for the policies to lead to likely significant effects on Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) .

1.5 It should be noted that the competent body (in this case BFC) can only adopt a plan once it has ascertained that this will not adversely affect the integrity of habitats sites (see section 1.3 for further information).

1.6 This HRA has been prepared on the basis of information currently available on the nature of the plan in relation to the habitats sites. Professional judgement has been applied to interpret this information within the context of current guidance. Also BFC has sought advice and guidance on this HRA from Natural England (NE) where necessary.

1.7 Further HRA may also be required at later stages in the planning process, for example, at the planning application stage. This will ensure that any potential effects on the habitats sites that cannot be assessed in detail at plan level can be taken into account more fully.

1.2 Consultation

1.8 This document forms part of the consultation on the Submission WPNP to seek views on the Parish Council's updated approach on planning proposals at the local level. The WPNP, this HRA and other documents are available on the Bracknell Forest Council website⁽⁴⁾ for

1 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/winkfield-neighbourhood-area>

2 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/winkfieldnp-screening-decision.pdf>

3 [People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta \(C-323/17\)](#)

4 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/winkfield-neighbourhood-area>

anyone to view and make comments. It follows consultation on the Winkfield Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Determination (August 2016).

1.3 Legislation

1.9 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended), referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations' aim to protect a network of sites in the UK (habitats sites) that have rare or important habitats and species in order to safeguard biodiversity.

1.10 In 2019 the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Welsh Ministers made changes to parts of the 2017 Regulations so that they operate effectively after the UK left the European Union (The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019). These came into effect on 1st January 2021. Most of these changes involved transferring functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales. All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant. Importantly for this report, the obligations of a competent authority in the 2017 Regulations for the protection of sites or species do not change.

1.11 Habitats sites are any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and include Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

1.12 According to Regulation 105 (4), the plan making authority must give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site. This is an extract from the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended):

Assessment of implications for European sites and European offshore marine sites Regulation 105

(1). Where a land use plan—

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, the plan-making authority for that plan must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

(2) The plan-making authority must for the purposes of the assessment consult the appropriate nature conservation body and have regard to any representations made by that body within such reasonable time as the authority specify.

(3) They must also, if they consider it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if they do so, they must take such steps for that purpose as they consider appropriate.

(4) In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 107 (considerations of overriding public interest), the plan-making authority or, in the case of a regional strategy, the Secretary of State must give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or the European offshore marine site (as the case may be).

1.13 The HRA process is characterised by the precautionary principle. This is described by the European Commission as follows:

“If a preliminary scientific evaluation shows that there are reasonable grounds for concern that a particular activity might lead to damaging effects on the environment, or on human, animal or plant health, which would be inconsistent with protection normally afforded to these within the European Community, the Precautionary Principle is triggered.”

1.4 HRA Process

1.14 The HRA process consists of five steps as outlined below. 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.

Table 1 Steps in the HRA process

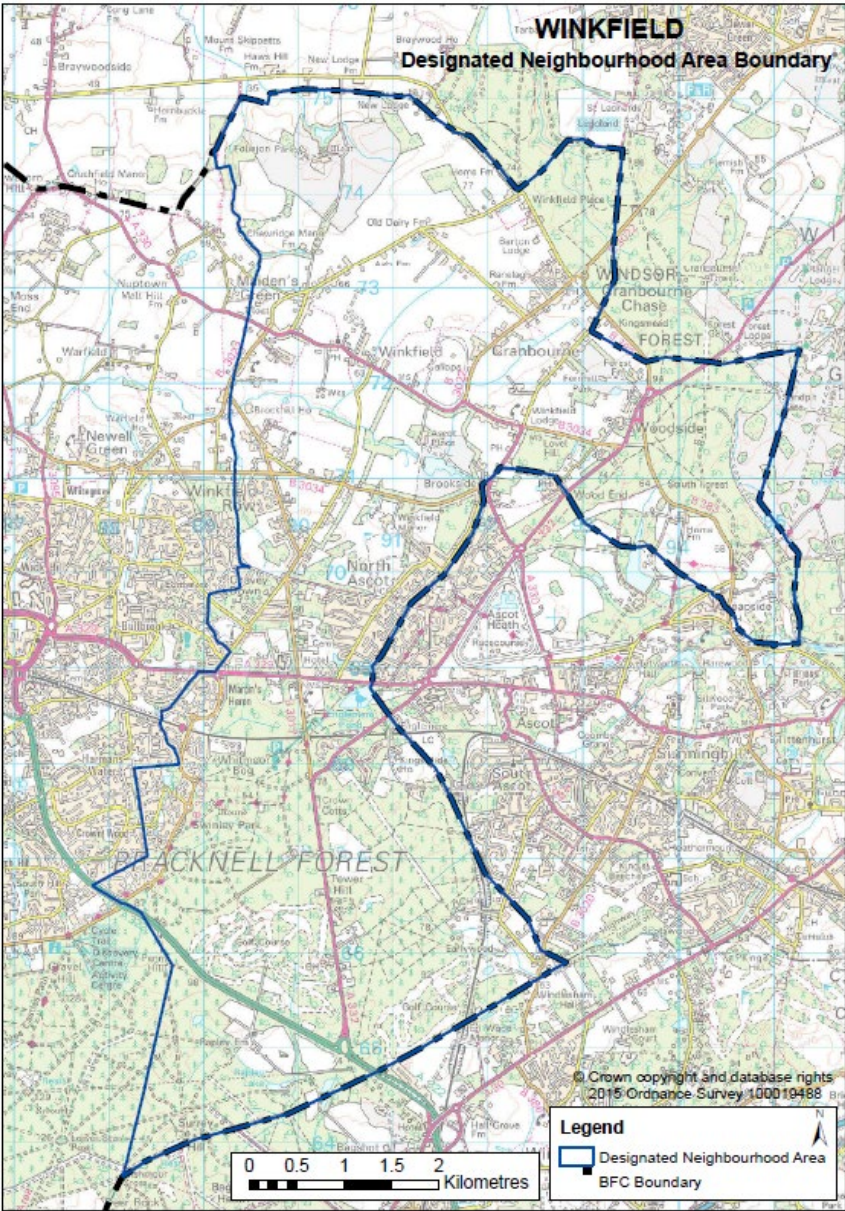
Steps	Task
1	Collect adequate information to complete the assessment – to include a description of the plan and the baseline conditions of the habitats site(s) that could be affected by the plan.
2	Predict the likely effects of the plan on the habitats site(s), alone and in combination with other plans and projects (screening).
3	Assess whether the predicted effects will have adverse effects on the integrity of the habitats site(s), as defined by the conservation objectives (Appropriate Assessment).
4	Propose and assess impact avoidance measures to cancel or minimise the potential adverse effects, including a timescale and mechanisms through which the measures will be secured, implemented and monitored.
5	Consult the relevant nature conservation bodies and the public.

2 Information to Complete the Assessment

2.1 Winkfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 WPC is preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the neighbourhood area designated by BFC on 24 December 2015. The designated area shares a common boundary with the Parish boundary as shown below.

Map 1 Winkfield Neighbourhood Area



2.2 The purpose of the WPNP is to make planning policies that can be used to determine planning applications in the area. Its policies will aim to protect the special character of the Parish and to encourage development proposals for the benefit of the local community. Once approved at a referendum, the NDP becomes a statutory part of the Development Plan for the area and will carry significant weight in how planning applications are decided by BFC. BFC's Development Plan documents are available to view on the Bracknell Forest website.⁽⁵⁾

2.3 The WPNP does not allocate development but Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing could lead to a net increase in dwellings. Policies W6 Community Facilities and W7 Employment and Retail could lead to an increase in community, employment and retail facilities and an increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA). The table below lists the policies contained in the Submission WPNP.

Table 2 Policies in the Warfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Policy Ref.	Policy Name
W1	A Spatial Plan for the Parish
W2	Promoting High Quality Design in the Character Areas
W3	Design of Parking, Garaging, Ancillary Buildings & EV charging points
W4	Housing type, size and choice
W5	Rural Exception Sites and Entry-Level Exception Housing
W6	Community Facilities
W7	Employment & Retail
W8	Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors
W9	Local Gaps
W10	Dark Skies
W11	Local Green Spaces
W12	Pedestrian/Cycle Network
W13	Martins Heron Station

5 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan>

2.2 In-Combination Effects

2.4 The HRA must consider the WPNP both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects because a series of individually modest impacts may in-combination result in a significant impact. The intention of this in-combination provision is to take account of cumulative impacts, and these will often only occur over time.

2.5 Relevant plans with the potential to affect habitats sites include those in Bracknell Forest and neighbouring local authorities which, over the lifetime of the WPNP lead to an increase in housing and commercial development.

2.6 The Bracknell Forest Local Plan is currently at Examination in Public and is subject to a separate HRA process⁽⁶⁾

2.7 Another neighbourhood plan currently under preparation in the Borough includes a proposed site allocation. This is the Warfield Neighbourhood Plan⁽⁷⁾ which is currently at Examination. The site proposed for allocation is Land at Hayley Green (235 dwellings). BFC supports the principle of development on this site. The in-combination effects of the Warfield Neighbourhood Plan are therefore also considered in this HRA.

2.8 Spatial planning policies for local authorities surrounding Bracknell Forest are at various stages of production. These will be accompanied by HRAs identifying likely significant effects on habitats sites and, where necessary, avoidance and mitigation measures to address these effects.

2.3 Habitats Sites Considered

2.9 This section identifies the habitats sites that could be affected by the WPNP. Habitats sites within 10km of the boundary of the WPNP are listed in the table below. Consideration of sites within this distance is consistent with the approach in other HRAs for Plans within and in the vicinity of Bracknell Forest.

Table 3 Habitats sites within 10km of Winkfield Neighbourhood Area

Habitats site	Distance from boundary of neighbourhood area
Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA)	Partly within the neighbourhood area
Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Partly within the neighbourhood area
Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	2.3km
South West London Water Bodies (SPA) and Ramsar	5.5km

2.10 Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Burnham Beeches SAC lie just over 10km from the boundary of the neighbourhood area and are not considered in this assessment.

⁶ <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/emerging-bracknell-forest-local-plan/examination>

⁷ <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/warfield-neighbourhood-area>

2.11 The South West London Water Bodies SPA and Ramsar is also not considered in this assessment. This is because there is no pathway of impact identified between the Winkfield Neighbourhood Plan and the South West London Water Bodies SPA and Ramsar site.

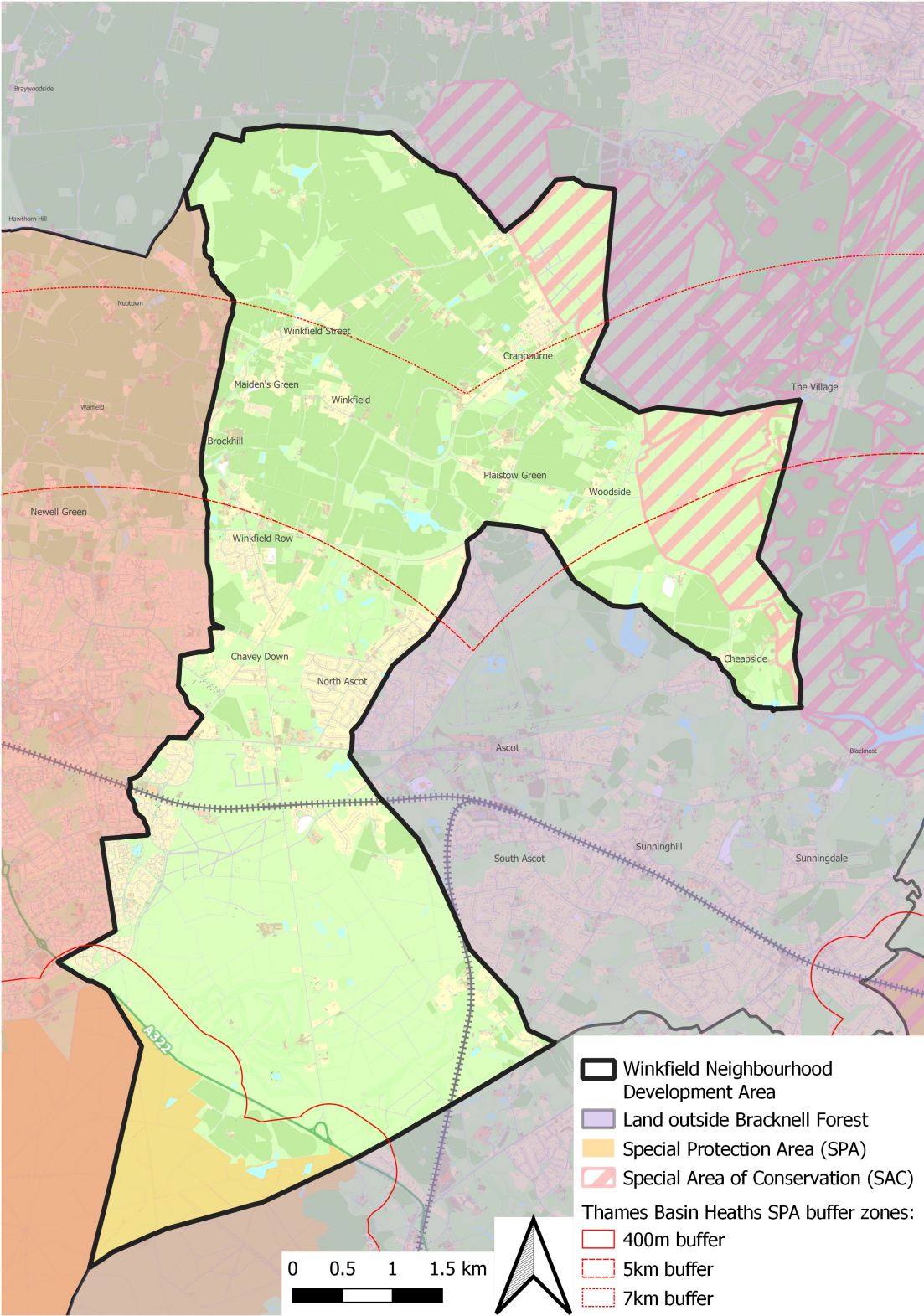
2.12 Habitats sites considered within the HRA are therefore as follows:

- TBH SPA
- Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC (which sits largely within the TBH SPA)

2.13 The scope of this HRA was confirmed and agreed with NE. More detailed information on the habitats sites considered in this assessment and a description of potential adverse effects on site integrity⁽⁸⁾ is set out in appendices 2 - 4 and these are addressed in the following sections. The relevant habitats sites and their location in relation to the Winkfield Neighbourhood Area are also shown on Map 2 below.

8 The 'integrity of a site' relates to the site's conservation objectives. If none of the habitat types or species for which the site has been designated is significantly affected then the site's integrity cannot be considered to be adversely affected.

Map 2 Winkfield Neighbourhood Area, Habitats Sites and the TBH SPA Buffer Zones



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3 Pathways of Impact

3.1 Land use plans can have an impact on habitats sites by following the pathways along which development can be connected with them. Pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a habitats site. Additional development within the proximity of the habitats sites will lead to an increase in the population living and working in the vicinity of the sites, which could in turn lead to an increase in traffic movements.

3.2 The following pathways of impact are considered relevant to the WPNP:

- Loss of functionally linked land
- Urbanisation
- Recreational pressure
- Hydrology
- Air pollution

3.3 It should be noted that the presence of a conceivable pathway linking the WPNP to a habitats site does not mean that likely significant effects will be present.

3.1 Loss of Functionally Linked Land

3.4 Some qualifying species including birds, bats and amphibians are not confined to the boundary of designated sites. For example, the highly mobile nature of heathland birds implies that areas of habitat of crucial importance to the maintenance of their populations are outside the physical limits of habitats sites. Despite not being designated, this area is still integral to the maintenance of the structure and function of the interest feature on the designated site and, therefore, land use plans that may affect such areas should be subject to further assessment.

3.5 The TBH SPA is the only habitats site within 10km of the boundary of Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Area that supports mobile species, namely nightjar, Dartford warbler and woodlark. The main habitat requirements of these Annex 1 bird species⁽⁹⁾ are as follows:

- Nightjar prefer bare patches or areas of very short or sparse vegetation with widely scattered trees where they are able to see predators approaching. These patches may be on open heath, in patchy scrub and in the interface between heath and woodland, as well as in clearings in woodland or plantations.
- Woodlark are strongly associated with bare ground, especially where this is adjacent to structurally diverse vegetation and short heather. They use scattered trees and large bushes as song-posts. Woodlark use a variety of habitats adjacent to heathland for foraging, including short grassland, stubble fields or margins of arable fields, golf courses and bare areas in quarry sites.
- Dartford warbler favour large areas of open terrain, largely free of obstructions, in and around nesting, roosting and feeding areas in lowland heathland with gorse and heather. They benefit from availability of an unobstructed line of sight within nesting, feeding or roosting to enable birds to detect approaching predators, or to ensure visibility of displaying

⁹ Annex I of the Wild Birds Directive lists 193 species and sub-species which are in danger of extinction, vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat, considered rare because of small populations or restricted local distribution and/or require particular attention for reasons of the specific nature of habitat.

behaviour. However, they will utilise enclosed features such as clearings in conifer plantations.

3.6 Most of these qualifying species forage in a range of different habitats, including common and widespread ones, and the focus of assessment should therefore be on nesting habitat for which they have much more specific requirements.

3.7 Generally, the long-term substantial loss, degradation and fragmentation of lowland heathland habitats has been the major factor associated with the decline of nightjar and woodlark. Whilst a large portion of woodland and heathland in the area is located within the TBH SPA, there are various parcels of such habitats outside the designated site boundary which could provide functionally linked supporting habitat to SPA bird species.

3.8 The most suitable habitats for nesting nightjar and woodlark are heathland, acid grassland and rotationally-managed plantation woodland. Woodland that is maintained as continuous-cover forestry is generally unsuitable for nesting nightjar and woodlark, unless they incorporate a sufficient number of large, sparsely vegetated, clearings. Development that would affect areas of rotationally-managed plantation woodland, heathland or acid grassland (irrespective of whether they are part of the habitats sites) could potentially affect nightjar and woodlark. **The TBH SPA will therefore be considered further in the HRA in relation to loss of functionally linked land.**

3.2 Urbanisation

3.9 Urbanisation impacts could result from an increase in population within close proximity to the TBH SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC and is distinct from the trampling, disturbance and dog-fouling that results specifically from recreational activity. The main impacts are:

- Increased fly-tipping - garden waste can lead to the introduction of invasive alien species. Alien species may also be introduced deliberately or may be sown by birds from local gardens.
- Cat predation - a large proportion of domestic cats are found in the urban environment, and increasing urbanisation is likely to lead to increased cat predation. Of particular concern is predation of the chicks of ground-nesting birds by domestic cats.
- Uncontrolled fires – a high frequency of wildfires is associated with urban areas, where nature conservation sites have densely developed areas near to their boundaries.

3.10 One area of the TBH SPA lies within Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Area - the Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI. **The TBH SPA will therefore be considered further in the HRA in relation to urbanisation.**

3.11 The Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC lies 2.3km from the boundary of Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Area therefore this habitats site will not be considered further in the HRA in relation to urbanisation.

3.3 Recreational Pressure

3.12 As outlined in appendix 2 recreational pressure has been identified as a threat or pressure for qualifying features of the TBH SPA. Also, supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features prepared by NE (see Appendix 3) indicates that features within Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC may be sensitive to public access and disturbance threats, in particular, due to soil compaction around ancient trees from recreation related footfall.

3.13 Recreational pressure can have a significant adverse effect on the bird species for which the TBH SPA is designated in various ways. Increased nest predation by natural predators as a result of adults being flushed from the nest and deterred from returning to it by the presence of people and dogs is likely to be a particular problem. Recreational pressure can also lead to reduced breeding success as a consequence of disturbance. The main reasons given for the reduction in breeding success tend to be nest abandonment and increased predation of eggs or young.

3.14 Several studies have shown that birds are affected more by dogs and people with dogs than by people alone, with birds flushing more readily, more frequently, at greater distances and for longer. Also, dogs, rather than people, tend to be the cause of many management difficulties, for example by worrying grazing animals, and can cause eutrophication near paths. Nutrient-poor habitats such as heathland are particularly sensitive to the fertilising effect of inputs of phosphates, nitrogen and potassium from dog faeces.

3.15 The WPNP has the potential to lead to development within all the TBH SPA recreational buffers zones (400m, 400m - 5km and 5 - 7km of the TBH SPA boundary - see Map 2 and section 5.3). **Recreational pressure on the TBH SPA has the potential to lead to the following impacts and will therefore be addressed further in this HRA:**

- Cause disturbance to the ground-nesting birds;
- Prevent appropriate management or exacerbate existing management difficulties;
- Cause damage through erosion; and
- Cause eutrophication as a result of dog fouling.

3.16 The Supplementary Advice for Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC includes a target to 'Maintain the soil structure within and around the root zones of the mature and ancient tree cohort in an un-compacted condition'. The explanatory notes state that '*Unless carefully managed, activities such as... trampling by grazing livestock and human feet during recreational activity may all contribute to excessive soil compaction around ancient trees*'. NE has however advised that there is currently no evidence of likely significant effect due to recreational disturbance at Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC. Therefore Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC will not be considered further in the HRA in relation to recreational pressure.

3.4 Hydrology

3.17 In addition to water quality, both the water level and flow are important determinants of the ecological status of habitats sites. Hydrological processes are critical in influencing habitat characteristics, including current velocity, water depth, dissolved oxygen levels and water temperature in rivers and lakes. In turn these habitat features determine the short and long-term viability of plant and animal species, as well as overall ecosystem composition.

3.18 As noted in appendix 4, hydrology has been identified as a threat for the qualifying features of Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) although the SIP highlights that the main concern regarding the SAC is the presence of drainage ditches that may change the water level within the site. Furthermore, a review of supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features prepared by NE indicates that features within Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC are also sensitive to changes in hydrology, in particular, water quality and quantity (see Appendix 3).

3.19 To summarise therefore, **the following habitats sites within 10km of Winkfield Neighbourhood Area that are sensitive to changes in the water quantity, level, flow or overall hydrological regime and will be discussed further in the HRA are as follows:**

- **Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC**
- **Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC**

3.5 Air Pollution

3.20 Air pollution can affect habitats sites if it has an adverse effect on their features of qualifying interest. The main mechanisms through which air pollution can have an adverse effect is through eutrophication (nitrogen), acidification (nitrogen and sulphur) and direct toxicity (ozone, ammonia and nitrogen oxides).⁽¹⁰⁾ Deposition of air pollutants can alter the soil and plant composition and species which depend upon these.

3.21 In March 2021 air quality modelling was published for the Pre-Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP)⁽¹¹⁾ in order to assess the likely significant effect of changes in air quality on habitats sites. This considered the impact of changes in nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and ammonia (NH₃) concentrations and Nitrogen (N) Deposition due to changes in traffic associated with the implementation of the Pre-Submission BFLP both 'alone' and 'in-combination' with other plans and projects.

3.22 The BFLP Air Quality Report identifies the habitats sites that fall within approximately 10km of Bracknell Forests administrative area which were agreed during discussions with NE as requiring consideration. For the BFLP this included all the habitats sites assessed in this HRA as well as the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. However, it has already been established in section 2.3 that Chilterns Beechwoods SAC lies beyond 10km of the Winkfield Neighbourhood Area so is not considered in this assessment. **Consideration of the following habitats sites which are discussed within the BFLP Air Quality Report are considered further in this HRA process:**

- **TBH SPA;**
- **Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC;**
- **Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC.**

3.6 Summary

3.23 In summary, the next section (screening) will focus upon the following:

- **Loss of functionally linked land (TBH SPA)**

¹⁰ <http://www.apis.ac.uk/ecosystem-services-and-air-pollution-impacts>

¹¹ An assessment of the air quality effects of the BFLP has been undertaken by WSP <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/draft-bracknell-forest-local-plan/evidence-base> (document LP/Ev/8f)

- Urbanisation (TBH SPA)
- Recreational pressure (TBH SPA)
- Hydrology (Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC and Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC)
- Air pollution (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC)

4 Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

4.1 This section identifies WPNP policies that, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, (prior to considering the role of mitigation)⁽¹²⁾ have the potential to result in significant effects on habitats sites. Where elements of the plan will not result in a likely significant effect on a habitats site these have been screened out and not considered in further detail in the HRA process.

4.2 Recent evidence gathered for the Bracknell Forest Local Plan process is used in this assessment.

4.1 Screening of WPNP Policies

4.3 In appendix 5 the WPNP policies have been screened to establish potential pathways of impact through which likely significant effects on habitats sites might arise, prior to the consideration of mitigation measures. In order to complete this screening, reference has been made to maps 1 and 2.

4.4 Many of the policies (indicated in green in appendix 5) require no further consideration in this assessment due to the absence of any mechanism for an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats sites. Some of these policies offer environmental protection and are likely to lead to positive effects on habitats sites. Others are policies that cannot lead to development or other change. These have been screened out for further assessment. However, unmitigated and depending on the location of development proposals, some of the policies (indicated in orange in appendix 5) could result in the following pathways of impact linking to the habitats sites and have been screened in for further assessment. These are discussed further in section 4:

- Loss of functionally linked land (TBH SPA) as a result of new residential, employment and retail development and community facilities
- Urbanisation from a net increase in dwellings within 400m of the TBH SPA
- Recreational pressure from a net increase in dwellings located between 400m to 5km of the TBH SPA and a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA from potential new employment and retail development and community facilities
- Air pollution from an increase in traffic (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC) as a result of new residential, employment and retail development and community facilities

4.2 In-Combination Screening

4.5 An in-combination assessment has been undertaken as part of the screening exercise (see Appendix 1). This provides a summary of the quantum of development proposed in other plans and projects and the findings of supporting HRA work that has been undertaken. It should be noted however that some of the plans and projects assessed are in their early stages of development and information is not currently available to allow a detailed assessment in this report.

¹² The Court of Justice of the European Union's (CJEU's) decision in the matter of People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17) concluded that mitigation measures could not be considered as part of the project, and thus that the screening stage of HRA should not take account of them.

4.6 The assessment of potential in-combination effects has not resulted in additional impact pathways being screened in, however, a number of links between other plans and projects and the WPNP have been identified.

- Development proposed in neighbouring authority local plans has the potential to act in-combination with the WPNP and therefore, increase recreational pressure, at habitats sites.
- Development proposed in neighbouring authority local plans has the potential to act in-combination with the WPNP and increase development related diffuse sources of pollution with adverse effects on water quality at habitats sites.
- Development proposed in neighbouring authority local plans has the potential to act in-combination with the WPNP and therefore, increase air pollution at habitats sites.

4.3 Loss of Functionally Linked Land

4.7 The TBH SPA is designated for its mobile breeding bird species, including nightjar, Dartford warbler and woodlark. These species routinely forage beyond the designated site boundary but can also nest in suitable locations (e.g. patches of heathland, acid grassland and plantation woodland) outside the TBH SPA. Winkfield Neighbourhood Area contains areas of the TBH SPA (Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI) and any of the qualifying species could use suitable habitats within the vicinity of this site.

4.8 Neither nightjar nor woodlark has highly specialised prey requirements and as a result they include many common and widespread habitats in their foraging resource. In contrast, they do have highly specialised nesting requirements; suitable habitat for nesting is therefore sparse and the loss of such habitat, even outside the SPA, could affect the overall SPA population.

4.9 There are no sites allocated for development in the WPNP however (as shown in Appendix 5), unmitigated and depending on the location of development, the following policies have the potential to lead to the loss of functionally linked land as a result of residential and employment / retail development (or other development such as community facilities).

- W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing
- W6 Community Facilities
- W7 Employment and Retail

4.10 Given that, unmitigated, there is potential for the WPNP sites and policies outlined above to lead to loss of functionally linked land in relation to the TBH SPA, likely significant effects cannot be excluded and this site has been screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

4.4 Urbanisation

4.11 Any net new residential development within 400m of the TBH SPA has the potential to result in increased urbanisation effects within the TBH SPA.⁽¹³⁾ The areas of the Neighbourhood Development Area which lie inside the TBH SPA 400m buffer distance designed to eliminate impacts caused by urbanisation effects are shown on Map 2. Proposals for a net increase in dwellings in these areas could therefore lead to urbanisation effects on the TBH SPA.

13 See retained South East Plan policy NRM6 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/south-east-plan-policy-nrm6.pdf>

4.12 The Screening of WPNP policies in Appendix 5 has shown that, unmitigated, the Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing could lead to residential development within 400m of the TBH SPA and has the potential to lead to urbanisation effects on the TBH SPA.

4.13 Given that, unmitigated, there is potential for the WPNP policies outlined above to lead to urbanisation effects on the TBH SPA, likely significant effects cannot be excluded and this site has been screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

4.5 Recreational Pressure

4.14 Any net new dwellings coming forward as a result of the policies in the WPNP will be accompanied by an increase in the local population as well as the demand for recreational resources. Being a local and attractive destination, the TBH SPA is likely to receive some of this additional recreational pressure. The SPA harbours breeding bird populations of nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. All these bird species are ground-nesting (or build their nests close to the ground in gorse) and are therefore highly susceptible to recreational disturbance, particularly from dog walkers. Natural England's Site Improvement Plan highlights that the SPA is already subject to high levels of recreational use, which is likely to affect the distribution and breeding success of its Annex I bird species.

4.15 The Screening of WPNP policies in Appendix 5 has shown that, unmitigated, the Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing could lead to a net increase in residential development within 400m - 5km and 5 - 7 km of the TBH SPA and therefore has the potential to lead to significant effects on the TBH SPA as a result of recreational pressure.⁽¹⁴⁾

4.16 In addition, the screening of WPNP policies in Appendix 5 has shown that, unmitigated and depending on the location of development proposals, the following policies (which could lead to residential, employment / retail development and community facilities) have the potential to lead to an increase in car parking spaces within 400m of the TBH SPA which are publicly accessible. Without appropriate mitigation this could also lead to an increased number of visitors accessing the TBH SPA:

- W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing
- W6 Community Facilities
- W7 Employment and Retail

4.17 Given that, unmitigated, there is potential for the WPNP sites and policies outlined above to lead to increased recreational pressure on the TBH SPA, likely significant effects cannot be excluded and this site has been screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

4.6 Hydrology

4.18 As noted above, there is no development allocated in the WPNP however there is potential for policies W5, W6 and W7 to lead to low level development in the form of housing, community facilities and employment / retail.

14 See retained South East Plan policy NRM6 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/south-east-plan-policy-nrm6.pdf>

4.19 The Phase 1 Water Cycle Study (WCS) for Bracknell Forest⁽¹⁵⁾ carried out an assessment of potential sources of additional pollution from developments proposed in the BFLP and their likely impact on designated sites. No impacts were identified on habitats sites and no additional assessments of impact upon designated sites were recommended for the Phase 2 WCS.

4.20 It is important to ensure that there are sufficient water resources in the area to cover the increase in demand without risk of shortages in the future or during periods of high demand, and without causing a negative impact on the waterbodies from which water is abstracted. It is therefore important to consider the Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs) and their HRAs to determine whether the company's proposed abstraction regimes might result in changes to the flow regimes of waterbodies supplying the habitat sites identified in section 3.4. The relevant water supply companies for Bracknell Forest are Affinity Water and South East Water.

4.21 Affinity Water have published their Water Resources Management Plan 2020-2080 (April 2020) setting out how they plan to provide water over the period 2020 to 2080 whilst protecting the environment. A HRA has also been published.⁽¹⁶⁾ This has concluded that Affinity Water's options will have no adverse effects on the integrity of any habitats site during construction or operation, alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

4.22 South East Water have also published their Water Resources Management Plan 2020-2080.⁽¹⁷⁾ During the period from 2025 to 2045, South East Water will continue to implement demand management initiatives to achieve further leakage and water efficiency savings. The South East WRMP was subject to an HRA in 2018⁽¹⁸⁾ which concluded that all preferred options and alternative options were considered unlikely to result in a significant impact to habitats sites. These options have therefore been screened out because there are no pathways to habitats sites and/or the level of impact is not considered to be significant. It was recommended that the HRA process should not proceed beyond stage one screening and there is no requirement to undertake an appropriate assessment of the WRMP.

4.23 South East Water and Affinity Water are therefore able to demonstrate sufficient supply options to ensure no adverse effect at habitats site as a result of water quantity. Furthermore, the delivery of water and thus levels of abstraction required to service demand is determined by the Water Companies and their competent authority. In this case it is the Environment Agency that regulates abstraction licences so ultimately it is up to the Environment Agency to ensure that the required level of supply does not ultimately result in likely significant effects.

4.24 The potential for a direct impact to Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC from the WPNP policies has also been considered. However low level development coming forward in Winkfield Development Area is likely to drain to The Cut which flows away from the SAC.

4.25 It should also be noted that potential environmental opportunities will be delivered through the WPNP policies including the enhancement of blue infrastructure network and requirements for natural flood management techniques (Policy W8 Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors) leading to positive effects on hydrology.

15 Bracknell Forest Council Water Cycle Study Phase 1 Scoping Report (JBA Consulting, December 2017) <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/draft-bracknell-forest-local-plan/evidence-base> (document CLP/Ev/4c)

16 Technical Report 4.12 Habitats Regulations Assessment Water Resources Management Plan 2020 - 2080 (March 2020) <https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/corporate/plans/water-resources-plan>

17 <https://corporate.southeastwater.co.uk/news-info/publications/wrmp19-wrmp/>

18 South East Water Revised Water Resources Management Plan 2020 - 2080 Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report (August 2018)

4.26 It has therefore been demonstrated that likely significant effects on habitats sites arising from the WPNP in relation to hydrology can be excluded and no further assessment is required in this HRA.

4.7 Air Pollution

4.27 Unmitigated, increased traffic as a result of new development arising from the policies of the WPNP has the potential to lead to a significant effect on the integrity of the TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC, and Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC. As noted above, there is no development allocated in the WPNP however there is potential for policies W5, W6 and W7 to lead to low level development in the form of housing, community facilities and employment / retail.

4.28 Given the low level of any development coming forward as a result of the WPNP policies, the level of traffic movements generated is likely to be extremely low and NE has confirmed that no air quality assessment of the WPNP is necessary.

4.29 The in combination assessment in appendix 1 shows that for all of the plans and projects in the table, air pollution effects on habitats sites have been screened in for further consideration. These plans do however allocate development. Some of this work is still ongoing (in Wokingham, Surrey Heath and Buckinghamshire). In the case of the Pre-Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan, Warfield Neighbourhood Plan, the Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan and Hart Local Plan, the conclusions were that these plans would have no adverse effect on the integrity of habitats sites either alone or in combination.

4.30 It has therefore been demonstrated that likely significant effects on habitats sites arising from the WPNP in relation to air quality can be excluded and no further assessment is required in this HRA.

4.8 Summary of Screening Results

4.31 The screening exercise was unable to rule out likely significant effects at the following habitats site:

- TBH SPA (loss of functionally linked land, urbanisation and recreational pressure)

4.32 Therefore, in line Regulation 105 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Council must therefore '*make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives*'. This assessment must consider the effects of the WPNP both alone and in-combination with other plans and projects.

5 Appropriate Assessment

5.1 The Appropriate Assessment assesses whether the predicted effects will have adverse effects on the integrity of the habitats site(s), as defined by the conservation objectives.

5.1 Loss of Functionally Linked Land

5.2 The loss, deterioration, or compromise of habitat outside a habitats site boundary that serves a supporting role for the habitats site can have impacts for the qualifying features of habitats sites, particularly mobile species such as birds.

5.3 The loss of functionally linked land has the potential to lead to significant effects on the integrity of the TBH SPA as there is potential for ground nesting birds to be present in some areas. In the screening assessment the following policies were identified as potentially leading to the loss of functionally linked land as a result of residential and employment / retail development (or other development such as community facilities).

- W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing
- W6 Community Facilities
- W7 Employment and Retail

Relevant Development Plan Policies

5.4 Development arising as a result of the WPNP policies above (depending on location) may be subject to HRA at the planning application stage and such proposals must be in accordance with the Development Plan policies. These are the retained South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008) Policy CS14: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area⁽¹⁹⁾ See Appendices 6 and 7. Development proposals must also follow relevant guidance. The following table sets out the sections of the relevant policies:

Table 4 Relevant TBH SPA Development Plan policies

Plan	Policies
Retained South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (see Appendix 6)	<p>NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area</p> <p>New residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Such measures must be agreed with Natural England.</p> <p>Priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures...</p>

¹⁹ At the time of writing the Bracknell Forest Local Plan is at Examination in Public and will form part of the Development Plan if adopted.

See <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/emerging-bracknell-forest-local-plan/examination>

Plan	Policies
Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008) (see Appendix 7)	<p>CS 14 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area</p> <p>165 The Council will carry out an assessment of the effects of a development proposal on the conservation objectives of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) where there is a risk of the proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the site, either alone or in combination with other proposals... The Council will not permit development which, either alone or in combination with other development, has an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SPA...</p> <p>167 The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development.</p>

5.5 Where a development proposal appears to be located on functionally linked land, a detailed ecological impact assessment may be required at the planning application stage to identify and assess potential impacts on the habitats and species present at the site. Depending on the results of the detailed ecological assessment, development will need to be carefully planned to ensure no disturbance to the bird interest of the TBH SPA. Mitigation measures that could be used to protect the integrity of the TBH SPA could also include a safeguarded wildlife refuge which is not accessible to the public. These various mitigation measures will need to be resolved through site design and project level HRA, in particular ensuring that the wildlife refuge is secured and effective in-perpetuity. This will need to be agreed with the Council and NE at the planning application stage.

5.6 It is recommended that additional text be added to WPNP Policies W5, W6 and W7 as set out in section 5.4.

5.7 Taking into account the mitigation measures which may need to be put in place in accordance with the policies above, and the additional recommended text in the WPNP, it is concluded that the Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the TBH SPA as a result of the loss of functionally linked land, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

5.2 Urbanisation

5.8 Urbanisation effects (particularly predation of the chicks of ground-nesting birds by domestic cats) have been recognised as a threat to the qualifying features on the TBH SPA. This could arise as a result of a net increase in dwellings within 400m of the TBH SPA due to Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing.

Relevant Development Plan Policies and Guidance

5.9 Development arising as a result of the WPNP Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing (depending on location) may be subject to HRA at the planning application stage and such proposals must be in accordance with the Development Plan policies - the retained South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

and the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008) Policy CS14: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.⁽²⁰⁾ See Appendices 6 and 7. Development proposals must also follow relevant guidance. The following table sets out the sections of the relevant policies and guidance:

Table 5 Relevant TBH SPA Development Plan policies and guidance

Plan / Guidance	Policies / Guidance
Retained South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area ⁽¹⁾	<p>NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area</p> <p>New residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Such measures must be agreed with Natural England.</p> <p>Priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures. Where mitigation measures are required, local planning authorities, as Competent Authorities, should work in partnership to set out clearly and deliver a consistent approach to mitigation, based on the following principles:</p> <p>i. a zone of influence set at 5km linear distance from the SPA boundary will be established where measures must be taken to ensure that the integrity of the SPA is protected</p> <p>ii. within this zone of influence, there will be a 400m “exclusion zone” where mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA.</p>
Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008) ⁽²⁾	<p>CS 14 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area</p> <p>165 The Council will carry out an assessment of the effects of a development proposal on the conservation objectives of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) where there is a risk of the proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the site, either alone or in combination with other proposals. Proposals leading to a net increase in residential dwellings, within a straight-line distance of 5 kilometres from the SPA boundary, are likely to have a significant effect. The Council will not permit development which, either alone or in combination with other development, has an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SPA.</p> <p>166 Development outside the 400-metre zone will be permitted where it can demonstrate that it can remove any adverse effect by contributing towards avoidance and mitigation measures in line with the SPA Technical Background Document.⁽³⁾</p>

20 At the time of writing the Bracknell Forest Local Plan is at Examination in Public and will form part of the Development Plan if adopted.

See <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/emerging-bracknell-forest-local-plan/examination>

Plan / Guidance	Policies / Guidance
	167 The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development.
Bracknell Forest Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (2018) ⁽⁴⁾	<p>3.2.2 There is a presumption against residential development within 400m of the SPA boundary. This is measured as the crow flies from the SPA perimeter to the point of access on the curtilage of the dwellings as recommended by the Joint Strategic Partnership Board and set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework (12 February 2009). Within Zone A (the exclusion zone) the effect of new net increases in residential development on the SPA is likely to be such that it is not possible to conclude no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA. There is therefore a presumption against any net increase in residential development within this zone. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will be needed, and agreed with NE, to demonstrate that any development within this zone will not have an adverse effect on the SPA and/or the acceptability of any avoidance and mitigation measures provided.</p> <p>3.2.3 Applications for non-residential development in Zone A will be assessed on a case by case basis, in agreement with NE.</p>
The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework (2009) ⁽⁵⁾	4.5 Within 400m of the SPA (measured as the crow flies from the SPA perimeter to the point of access on the curtilage of the dwellings) the impact of net new residential development on the SPA is likely to be such that it is not possible to conclude no adverse effect on the SPA. There should therefore be a presumption against development within this zone – an Appropriate Assessment will be needed to demonstrate that any development will not have an adverse effect on the SPA and/or the acceptability of any avoidance measures provided...

- <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/south-east-plan>
- <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/core-strategy>
- This has been superseded by the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document.
- <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/thames-basin-heaths-spa-supplementary-planning-document.pdf>
- <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/thames-basin-heaths-spa-delivery-framework.pdf>

5.10 It is recommended that additional text be added to WPNP Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry-Level Exception Sites as set out in section 5.4.

5.11 Taking into account the mitigation measures above, and the recommended additional text in the WPNP, it is concluded that the WPNP will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the TBH SPA as a result of urbanisation, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

5.3 Recreational Pressure

5.12 The following pathways of impact linking to the TBH SPA have been screened in for further assessment:

- A net increase in dwellings within 400m - 5km of the TBH SPA
- A net increase in publicly accessible car parking spaces within 400m of the TBH SPA

5.13 In appendix 2 recreational pressure has been recognised as a threat to the qualifying features of the TBH SPA.

5.14 The Screening of WPNP policies in Appendix 5 has shown that, unmitigated, the Policy W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing could lead to a net increase in residential development within 400m - 5km and therefore has the potential to lead to significant effects on the TBH SPA as a result of recreational pressure.

5.15 In addition, the screening of WPNP policies in Appendix 5 has shown that, unmitigated and depending on the location of development proposals, the following policies (which could lead to residential, employment / retail development and community facilities) have the potential to lead to an increase in car parking spaces within 400m of the TBH SPA which are publicly accessible. Without appropriate mitigation this could also lead to an increased number of visitors accessing the TBH SPA:

- W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry Level Exception Housing
- W6 Community Facilities
- W7 Employment and Retail

5.16 Residential development proposed in the Warfield Neighbourhood Plan (235 dwellings at Hayley Green) and in neighbouring authorities Local Plans which lie within 5km of the components of the TBH SPA closest to the Bracknell Forest boundary (as well as any residential developments of over 50 dwellings within 5 - 7km of the TBH SPA) have the potential to result in an in-combination effect. These are likely to include development set out in the Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan, Wokingham Local Plan, Hart Local Plan and Surrey Heath Local Plan – see Appendix 1 for more information.

5.17 BFC and neighbouring local authorities are involved in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA strategic mitigation project which was established over 10 years ago. This was set up to address recreational pressure on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, it is well established and has been used as an example of best practice across the country. The project is overseen by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) and a Councillor from each of the affected local authorities (11 in total) sits on this board. The JSPB works closely with a number of partners and advisors such as NE, wildlife trusts and the RSPB.

5.18 In 2009 the South East Plan was adopted and Policy NRM6 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area formed part of this plan. Although the South East Plan has now been revoked, South East Plan Policy NRM6 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area was retained.⁽²¹⁾ Policy NRM6 forms part of the Bracknell Forest Council's Development Plan⁽²²⁾ and is now largely reflected in the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (2008).

21 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/south-east-plan>

22 The Bracknell Forest Local Plan is currently at Examination in Public and is subject to a separate HRA process. This includes BFLP Policy LP 17 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/emerging-bracknell-forest-local-plan/examination>

5.19 To provide further guidance on Policy NRM6 the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework⁽²³⁾ was published by the JSPB in 2009. BFC (and other local authorities affected by the Thames Basin Heaths SPA) has also provided guidance on this matter. The Bracknell Forest Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document⁽²⁴⁾ was first published in 2012 and was updated in 2018.

5.20 The TBH SPA buffer zones were first set out in South East Plan Policy NRM6⁽²⁵⁾ Guidance is provided in the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework (2009)⁽²⁶⁾ and describes the likely areas within which urbanisation and public pressure impacts can be experienced. They are an important consideration for proposals coming forward as a result of WPNP policies. These buffer zones dictate some of the avoidance and mitigation measures that are required to protect the integrity of the TBH SPA and are shown on Map 2 and described as follows:

- a 400m exclusion zone around the boundary of the TBH SPA where no net increase in dwellings is permitted
- 400m - 5km from the boundary of the TBH SPA where additional residential development must be mitigated through a combination of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)
- 5 - 7km from the boundary of the TBH SPA⁽²⁷⁾ where residential development over 50 dwellings must be mitigated as above, on a case-by-case basis.

As stated in Appendix 5, it is not considered that WPNP Policy W5 will lead to such a large increase in dwellings in a single development within 5 - 7km of the TBH SPA so this will not be considered further in the AA.

Net increase in dwellings within 400m - 5km

5.21 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework (2009) recommends buffer zones within which varying constraints are placed upon development. As shown in Map 2 one zone extends 400m to 5km from the TBH SPA as this was determined from visitor surveys to be the principal recreational catchment for the TBH SPA.

5.22 Where increased recreational use is predicted to cause adverse effects on the TBH SPA, avoidance and mitigation measures should be provided. Retained Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan and the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (2008) set out these measures for the TBH SPA.

23 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/thames-basin-heaths-spa-delivery-framework.pdf>

24 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/thames-basin-heaths-spa-supplementary-planning-document.pdf>

25 South East Plan (May 2009) was partially revoked on 25 March 2013. Policy NRM6 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area remains in place. See <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/south-east-plan>

26 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework (Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board 2009). See <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/thames-basin-heaths-spa-delivery-framework.pdf>

27 The Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework (2009) states in section 4.4 that 'Applications for large scale development proposals beyond the zone of influence should be assessed on an individual basis. Where appropriate a full appropriate assessment may be required to ascertain whether the proposal could have an adverse effect on the SPA'. Footnote 6 goes on to say that 'This is in line with the general requirements of the Habitats Regulations and reflects the approach proposed by the Assessor, who recommended that between 5 and 7km from the edge of the SPA residential developments of over 50 houses should be assessed and may be required to provide appropriate mitigation. It is recommended that such cases be considered on a case by case basis.'

5.23 Well established mitigation measures for residential developments within 400m - 5km of the SPA involve a combination of provision of alternative recreational space (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace - SANG) and access management provided through the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project as follows. Applications for non-residential development will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Provision of SANG

5.24 SANG can help to attract recreational visitors away from the TBH SPA and therefore reduce pressure on it. SANG can be provided in several ways. Strategic SANG (provided by the Council) is funded by developer contributions,⁽²⁸⁾ third party SANG is purchased from private landowners and bespoke SANG is provided by developers for individual developments. To meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, SANG must be provided and managed in perpetuity. Sufficient SANG should be provided in advance of occupation of a dwelling to ensure there is no likely significant effect on the TBH SPA.

5.25 For residential developments located within 400m of 5km of the SPA SANG must be provided at a minimum of 8ha per 1,000 new residents as set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework (2009). It should be noted that mitigation proposals require the provision and management of public open space at a level above and beyond that which is normally sought by developer contributions⁽²⁹⁾ in order that the Council can have certainty that the avoidance and mitigation strategy will prevent an adverse impact on the integrity of the TBH SPA.

5.26 Where a SANG is provided on existing public open space, these areas will have a level of existing visitor use that will need to be discounted to protect current access. When new land or existing public open space is proposed as SANG, any existing nature conservation interests must be taken into account and potentially discounted.

5.27 Where there is sufficient strategic SANG capacity available, for developments that have a net increase of less than 109 dwellings the Council will normally accept a payment contribution towards strategic SANGs in line with its adopted SPA avoidance and mitigation strategy. This is likely to apply to development coming forward as a result of WPNP Policy W5.

Financial contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

5.28 On-site access management (on the TBH SPA) aims to avoid the impacts of current and predicted future users of the TBH SPA. South East Plan policy NRM6 states that access management measures will be provided strategically to ensure that adverse impacts on the TBH SPA are avoided and that SANG functions effectively.

5.29 The TBH SPA comprises multiple SSSI sites, owned and managed by many different organisations and some private individuals. In order to ensure that access management implemented in one area does not simply displace visitors onto another part of the TBH SPA, it is necessary to take a strategic approach to visitor access management.

5.30 On 17 July 2011, BFC, NE and 11 other local authorities in the sub-region affected by TBH SPA issues, signed the SAMM agreement. The SAMM Project aims to:

28 See Thames Basin Heaths SPA SPD (2018) <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/thames-basin-heaths-spa-supplementary-planning-document.pdf>

29 See Thames Basin Heaths SPA SPD (March 2018) Appendix 7 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/thames-basin-heaths-spa-supplementary-planning-document.pdf>

- Promote SANGS as new recreational opportunities for local people and particularly encourage their use during the breeding bird season.
- Provide on-the-ground wardening service to supplement existing wardening efforts.
- Provide an TBH SPA-wide education programme.
- Create new volunteering opportunities.
- Demonstrate best practice for strategic access management of visitors and visitor infrastructure where the supply of greenspace is heavily dependent on protected areas.
- Monitor visitor usage of SANGs and TBH SPA.
- Monitor Annex 1 birds⁽³⁰⁾ on TBH SPA sites.

5.31 The SAMM Tariff Guidance⁽³¹⁾ provides background information and a SAMM contribution will be required from developers for each net additional dwelling on new residential development sites. The contributions are calculated on a 'per bedroom' basis and are set out in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA SPD (March 2018) and on the Council's website⁽³²⁾ The level of these contributions may change over time.

Publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA

5.32 An increase in car parking spaces within 400m of the TBH SPA which are publicly accessible could also lead to an increased number of visitors accessing the TBH SPA. This could arise as a result of a net increase in residential development, employment and retail development and community facilities. Public access to any increase in car parking should therefore be restricted in these areas.

Relevant Development Plan Policies

5.33 Development arising as a result of the WPNP policies W5, W6 and W7 (depending on location) may be subject to HRA at the planning application stage and such proposals must be in accordance with the Development Plan policies - the retained South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and the Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008) Policy CS14: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area⁽³³⁾ See Appendices 6 and 7. Development proposals must also follow relevant guidance. The following table sets out the sections of the relevant policies and guidance:

Table 6 Relevant TBH SPA Development Plan policies and guidance

Plan / Guidance	Description and Exerts of Policies / Guidance
Retained South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area ⁽¹⁾	NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

30 EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Council Directive 2009/147/EC)

31 Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Management and Monitoring Project Tariff Guidance (March 2011) <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/strategic-access-management-and-monitoring-project-tariff-guidance.pdf>

32 <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/thames-basin-heaths-special-protection-area-supplementary-planning-document>

33 At the time of writing the Bracknell Forest Local Plan is at Examination in Public and will form part of the Development Plan if adopted <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/emerging-bracknell-forest-local-plan/examination>

Plan / Guidance	Description and Exerts of Policies / Guidance
	<p>New residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Such measures must be agreed with Natural England.</p> <p>Priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures. Where mitigation measures are required, local planning authorities, as Competent Authorities, should work in partnership to set out clearly and deliver a consistent approach to mitigation, based on the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a zone of influence set at 5km linear distance from the SPA boundary will be established where measures must be taken to ensure that the integrity of the SPA is protected ii. within this zone of influence, there will be a 400m “exclusion zone” where mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. In exceptional circumstances, this may vary with the provision of evidence that demonstrates the extent of the area within which it is considered that mitigation measures will be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. These small locally determined zones will be set out in local development frameworks (LDFs) and SPA avoidance strategies and agreed with Natural England iii. where development is proposed outside the exclusion zone but within the zone of influence, mitigation measures will be delivered prior to occupation and in perpetuity. <p>Measures will be based on a combination of access management, and the provision of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG)...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ix. local authorities will collect developer contributions towards mitigation measures, including the provision of SANG land and joint contributions to the funding of access management and monitoring the effects of mitigation measures across the SPA...
<p>Bracknell Forest Core Strategy Development Plan Document (February 2008)⁽²⁾</p>	<p>CS 14 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area</p> <p>165 The Council will carry out an assessment of the effects of a development proposal on the conservation objectives of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) where there is a risk of the proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the site, either alone or in combination with other proposals. Proposals leading to a net increase in residential dwellings, within a straight-line distance of 5 kilometres from the SPA boundary, are likely to have a significant</p>

Plan / Guidance	Description and Exerts of Policies / Guidance
	<p>effect. The Council will not permit development which, either alone or in combination with other development, has an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SPA.</p> <p>166 Development outside the 400-metre zone will be permitted where it can demonstrate that it can remove any adverse effect by contributing towards avoidance and mitigation measures in line with the SPA Technical Background Document.</p> <p>167 The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development.</p>
Bracknell Forest Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (2018) ⁽³⁾	This guidance sets the level of SANG and SAMM contributions and provides detailed guidance as well as requirements for measures to control publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA.
The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework (2009) ⁽⁴⁾	This guidance provides detailed guidance on SANG and SAMM.

1. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/south-east-plan>
2. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/development-plan/core-strategy>
3. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/thames-basin-heaths-spa-supplementary-planning-document.pdf>
4. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/thames-basin-heaths-spa-delivery-framework.pdf>

5.34 It is recommended that additional text be added to WPNP Policies W5, W6 and W7 as set out in section 5.4.

5.35 Taking into account the mitigation measures above, and the additional text in the WPNP, it is concluded that the WPNP will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the TBH SPA as a result of recreational pressure, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

5.4 Recommendations

5.36 It is recommended that additional text be added to the WPNP as follows:

Table 7 Recommended additional text for WPNP

WPNP Policy	Recommended additional text
W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry-Level Exception Sites	<p>Addition to policy wording:</p> <p><i>Development proposals shall include measures to mitigate the impact of a net increase in residential development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) in agreement with the Council and Natural England. This will include a financial contribution towards Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and any other measures that are required to satisfy Habitats Regulations, the Bracknell Forest Council Thames Basin Heaths SPA avoidance and mitigation strategy and relevant guidance.</i></p> <p>Addition to supporting text:</p> <p><i>Winkfield Neighbourhood Development Area lies within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Buffer Zones and therefore a net increase in residential development within the 400m - 5km SPA buffer zone, may create additional recreational pressure. The policy therefore seeks financial contributions towards SANG and SAMM, and other measures that are required to ensure proper mitigation. This could also include measures to ensure that proposals resulting in a net increase car parking within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area cannot be made available to the general public wishing to access the SPA.</i></p>
W6 Community Facilities	<p>Addition to supporting text:</p> <p><i>Development proposals arising from this policy are required to mitigate effects on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area in agreement with Bracknell Forest Council and Natural England. Measures may include a requirement to ensure that proposals resulting in a net increase car parking related to new or upgraded community facilities within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area cannot be made available to the general public wishing to access the SPA.</i></p>
W7 Employment and Retail	<p>Addition to supporting text:</p> <p><i>Development proposals arising from this policy are required to mitigate effects on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area in agreement with Bracknell Forest Council and Natural England. Measures may include a requirement to ensure that proposals resulting in a net increase car parking related to employment and retail development within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area cannot be made available to the general public wishing to access the SPA.</i></p>

6 Conclusions

6.1 This HRA was undertaken by BFC, as the local planning authority and competent body, in respect of the WPNP. The objective of this assessment was to identify any aspects of the WPNP that have the potential to cause a likely significant effect on habitats sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and to identify an appropriate avoidance and mitigation strategy where such effects are identified.

6.2 The habitats sites considered in this HRA (see section 2.3) were:

- TBH SPA
- Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC
- Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC

6.3 The pathways of impact considered (see section 3) were

- loss of functionally linked land
- urbanisation
- recreational pressure
- hydrology
- air pollution

6.4 The screening exercise (section 4) ruled out likely significant effects at Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC but was unable to rule out likely significant effects at the following habitats site:

- TBH SPA (loss of functionally linked land, urbanisation and recreational pressure)

6.5 The appropriate assessment (section 5) considered Development Plan policies and guidance and subsequent mitigation measures and recommended that additional text be added to policies and / or supporting text of WPNP policies W5, W6 and W7. It has concluded that **there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of habitats sites as a result of the WPNP, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.**

6.6 For development coming forward as a result of the policies in the WPNP further HRA may need to be carried out at the planning application stage which may lead to the requirement for further avoidance and mitigation measures.

7 Glossary

Table 8 Glossary

Term / Acronym	Definition
Annex 1 birds	Annex I of the Wild Birds Directive lists 193 species and sub-species which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in danger of extinction; • vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat; • considered rare because of small populations or restricted local distribution; • requiring particular attention for reasons of the specific nature of habitat.
Appropriate Assessment (AA)	An assessment, required under the Habitats Regulations, if a plan or project is judged as likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site.
Biodiversity	The variety and abundance of all life.
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	A nature conservation area, as defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), predominantly comprising a very extensive tract of ancient semi-natural beech forests in the centre of the habitat's UK range. Chilterns Beechwoods is subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Regulations.
Competent Authority	The decision maker under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended): often the local authority, but could be a planning inspector or other body responsible for assessing a plan or project.
Critical level	Concentrations of pollutants in the atmosphere above which direct adverse effects on receptors, such as human beings, plants, ecosystems or materials, may occur according to present knowledge.
Critical load	A quantitative estimate of exposure to one or more pollutants below which significant harmful effects on specified sensitive elements of the environment do not occur according to present knowledge.
Habitats Regulations	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The 2017 Regulations are one of the pieces of domestic law that transposed the land and marine aspects of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and certain elements of the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) (known as the Nature Directives). The main points and processes of the 2019 Regulations is to make them operable from 1 January 2021.

Term / Acronym	Definition
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	An assessment to identify any aspects of a Plan or Project that would have the potential to cause a likely significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects) and to identify appropriate avoidance and mitigation strategies where such effects were identified. The need for HRA is set out in the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
Habitats sites	Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
LSE	Likely significant effect
Natural England (NE)	The government's adviser for the natural environment in England helping to protect and restore the natural world.
N	Nitrogen
NH ₃	Ammonia
NOx	Nitrogen oxides
Pathways of Impact	Land use plans can have an impact on habitats sites, by following the pathways along which development can be connected with habitats sites. Pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a habitats site.
Ramsar site	Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention
Significant effect	Any reasonably predictable effect of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of the designated site features but excluding de minimis or inconsequential effects.
Site Improvement Plan (SIP)	These have been developed for each habitats site in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS) and are based on Natural England's current evidence and knowledge.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	These are sites of international importance, as defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Within Bracknell Forest there is one SAC - the Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC. SACs are subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Regulations.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	A nature conservation area, as defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) designated in order to protect internationally important

Term / Acronym	Definition
	species of birds which live within them. Within Bracknell Forest there is one SPA - the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. SPAs are subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Regulations.
Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project	A project overseen by Natural England which implements standard messages, additional wardening, education and monitoring across the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	A document which adds further detail to the policies in the development plan. SPDs can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. They are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.
Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)	Open space, meeting guidelines on quantity and quality, for the purpose of providing recreational alternatives to divert dogwalkers and others from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). SANGs are provided by residential developments lying within a certain distance from the SPA to avoid those developments creating additional recreational pressure on it.
Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA)	A nature conservation area in Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey, as defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), comprising a group of heathland sites designated in order to protect internationally important species of birds which live within them. The TBH SPA is subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Regulations.
Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC	A nature conservation area, as defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), predominantly comprising heathland which is a series of large fragments of previously more continuous areas and is principally dominated by heather – dwarf gorse dry heathland. This sits largely within the TBH SPA. Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC is subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Regulations.
Wild Birds Directive	EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Council Directive 2009/147/EC)
Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	A nature conservation area, as defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), predominantly comprising mixed woodland designated for its beech forests, oak woods and the violet click beetle (and subject to the assessment procedure set out in the Habitats Regulations), in order to protect these internationally important habitats and species.

Appendix 1 In-Combination Assessment

Table 9 In-Combination Assessment

Plans and Policies	Plan Status	Summary of proposed development that could lead to in-combination effects.	Summary of HRA findings
Warfield Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) ⁽¹⁾	The WNP was submitted to Bracknell Forest Council on 24 January 2019. A six week consultation was held from 5th March to 16th April 2019. The Plan is currently at Examination stage. An Air Quality Assessment and updated Habitats Regulations Assessment was submitted to the Examiner in February 2021.	Policy WNP2: Hayley Green Allocation - The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land at Hayley Green for a comprehensive mixed-use allocation of approximately 235 dwellings.	<p>The habitats sites that were considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thames Basin Heaths SPA Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham Common SAC Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC <p>The conclusions are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the adequate policy framework included in the WNP (i.e. appropriate recognition of the need to mitigate recreational effects in the SPA using SANG and SAMM), there will be no adverse effects of the plan on the site integrity of the TBH SPA regarding the impact pathway recreational pressure. The plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the TBH SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham Common SAC and Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC regarding atmospheric pollution, even 'in combination' with other plans and projects.
Pre-Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan (March 2021)	The BFLP is at Examination in Public (from May 2022).	<p>Provision will be made in Bracknell Forest for the period 2020/21 to 2036/37 for sufficient land to accommodate at least 10,438 homes to meet the Borough's Local Housing Need, and an additional supply of land for 1,044 homes (amounting to a buffer of 10%) to allow for flexibility.</p> <p>An area of 91,524 sqm is allocated for economic development/mixed use.</p>	<p>The habitats sites considered in this HRA were: TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC and Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. The screening exercise ruled out likely significant effects at Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC but was unable to rule out likely significant effects at the following habitats sites: TBH SPA (loss of functionally linked land, urbanisation, recreational pressure and air pollution) Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC (air pollution) Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (air pollution).</p>

Plans and Policies	Plan Status	Summary of proposed development that could lead to in-combination effects.	Summary of HRA findings
			<p>The appropriate assessment considered mitigation set out in both the BFLP and within other plans and projects. It concluded that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of habitats sites as a result of the BFLP, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects</p>
Wokingham Local Plan Update (2) (WLPU)	Wokingham Borough Council is currently preparing a WLPU. A consultation on a Revised Growth Strategy was carried out between 22 November 2021 and 17 January 2022.	The WLPU identifies requirements for development and growth including where and how much development in the Local Plan period (to 2038) will be delivered. The Plan proposes 5,700 new homes in addition to the current local plan and new employment space to serve the growing population.	<p>The HRA assessed the potential impacts of residential and employment growth on the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thames Basin Heaths SPA Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC Chilterns Beechwoods SAC <p>The impact pathways considered included recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution. It was considered that LSE of the WLPU could not be excluded regarding recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution.</p> <p>The HRA concluded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the provision of adequate SANG and SAMM there will be no adverse effects of the WLPU on the site integrity of the TBH SPA regarding the impact pathway recreational pressure. The full evidence base for the HRA will include an Air Quality Impact Assessment but that report is not yet available. The HRA will therefore be updated once the outputs of the air quality modelling are available.
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Local Plan 8th February 2022 ⁽³⁾	The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Local Plan was adopted on 8th February 2022.	Sets out a vision and strategy, together with strategic policies to guide development (including over 14,240 homes) in Windsor and Maidenhead until 2033.	<p>The appropriate assessment identified potential adverse effects on site integrity at a number of European sites as a result of the BLPSV-PC alone and/or in-combination with other plans and programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burnham Beeches SAC in relation to public access and disturbance pressures and threats Chilterns Beechwoods SAC in relation to air quality and public access and disturbance pressures and threats. South West London Waterbodies SPA in relation to air quality, hydrology pressures and threats.

Plans and Policies	Plan Status	Summary of proposed development that could lead to in-combination effects.	Summary of HRA findings
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South West London Waterbodies Ramsar in relation to air quality, hydrology pressures and threats. Thames Basin Heaths SPA in relation to air quality, public access and disturbance and hydrology pressures and threats. Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC in relation to air quality and hydrology pressures and threats. Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC in relation to air quality, public access and disturbance and hydrology pressures and threats. <p>The appropriate assessment considered mitigation set out in both the BLPSV-PC (Borough Local Plan Submission Version – Proposed Changes) and within other plans and projects. It has concluded that, following the application of this mitigation, the BLPSV-PC would have no AIOI at any European site either alone or in-combination.</p>
Hart Local Plan ⁽⁴⁾	Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 adopted 30 April 2020.	Sets out a vision and strategy, together with strategic policies to guide development (including over 7,000 homes) in Hart until 2032.	Atmospheric pollution effects on the TBH SPA was screened in for further assessment. The conclusion was that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the TBH SPA alone or in combination,
Surrey Heath Draft Local Plan Preferred Options 2019 - 2038 ⁽⁵⁾	A Preferred Options version of the Draft Local Plan was subject to consultation from 14 March - 9 May 2022.	Over the period 2019 to 2038, the Council will make provision for the delivery of approx. 6,213 new homes in the Borough.	<p>Outcome:</p> <p>While several European sites were considered initially, Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) screening resulted in only three sites being taken forward to Appropriate Assessment: Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC – regarding recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution; and Thursley and Ockley Bog Ramsar – regarding water quantity, level and flow.</p> <p>Conclusions:</p> <p>As air quality assessment data are not yet available, adverse effects on the integrity of Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC cannot be excluded. This section of the HRA will be updated upon completion of the modelling exercises.</p>

Plans and Policies	Plan Status	Summary of proposed development that could lead to in-combination effects.	Summary of HRA findings
			<p>The SHLP will not result in adverse effects on the Thursley and Ockley Bog Ramsar regarding water quantity, level and flow.</p> <p>Given that SHBC is working on identifying sufficient SANG capacity in collaboration with Natural England, SAMM monies are being secured and adequate reference to the Avoidance Strategy is made in the Plan, there will be no adverse effects of the SHLP on the Thames Basin Heaths and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC regarding recreational pressure, both alone and in-combination.</p>
Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan ⁽⁶⁾	The Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036 was withdrawn on 21 October 2020. On 1 April 2020 Buckinghamshire Council was created and became the local planning authority for the area previously covered by four local planning authorities, namely Aylesbury Vale District Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council, as well as Buckinghamshire County Council which was responsible for Minerals and Waste Planning.	Over the plan period (to 2036) the Councils identified the need to provide for approx. 15,260 new homes and proposed to accommodate over 11,000 homes within the Local Plan area.	<p>The Appropriate Assessment identified potential adverse effects on site integrity at two habitats sites as a result of the Local Plan alone and in-combination with other plans and programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Burnham Beeches SAC in relation to air quality, public access and disturbance and hydrology pressures and threats; and ● Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (Tring Woods and Bisham Woods SSSI component) in relation to air quality pressures and threats. <p>The appropriate assessment considered mitigation set out in both the Local Plan and within other plans and projects. It concluded that, following the application of this mitigation, the Local Plan would have no adverse impact on the integrity of a habitats site either alone or in combination.</p>

1. See Warfield Neighbourhood Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Warfield Parish Council (February 2021)
2. See Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Wokingham Local Plan Update (2020)
3. See Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan (March 2020)
4. See Hart Local Plan: Proposed Submission Version 2016 - 2032 Habitats Regulations Assessment Hart District Council (February 2018)
5. See Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 (May 2018) Habitats Regulations Assessment Surrey Heath Borough Council (February 2022)
6. See Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan (June 2019)

Appendix 2 Thames Basin Heaths SPA

The TBH SPA was proposed in October 2000, and full SPA status was approved on 9 March 2005. It is an example of a heathland landscape based within a highly active economy. It consists of a composite site covering an area of some 8,274 hectares, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Hampshire in the west, to Berkshire in the north, through to Surrey.

The habitat consists of both dry and wet heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation. Further information can be found in the following:⁽³⁴⁾

- EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA): Thames Basin Heaths UK9012141 (Natural England)
- European Site Conservation Objectives for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area UK9012141 (Natural England)
- European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) UK9012141 9 May 2016 (Natural England)
- Natura 2000 Standard Data Form Thames Basin Heaths UK9012141 (JNCC)
- Site Improvement Plan: Thames Basin 3 November 2014 (Natural England)

Qualifying Features

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Wild Birds Directive⁽³⁵⁾ as it is used by 1% or more of the Great Britain population of species of European Importance listed in Annex I of the Directive. During the breeding season this includes:

- Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*)
- Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)
- Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)

The TBH SPA supports the second largest concentration of Dartford warbler in Great Britain, the third largest number of woodlark, and the fourth largest population of breeding nightjars.

Seasonality

The breeding season of the protected bird species occurs predominantly in April, May, June and July, but an extended season can occur between February and August, therefore this is when the ground-nesting species are most vulnerable to disturbance. The breeding season for nightjar occurs from mid-May through to August, with a peak in June; woodlark nest from March until July, but commence territorial activity from early February; the Dartford warbler generally breeds between April and August. Territorial activity may begin as early as February and, as yet, there is no indication of how climate change might affect the breeding season.

Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives for the TBH SPA are as follows (reference should be made to the qualifying features above):

34 <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4952859267301376> <https://jncc.gov.uk/jncc-assets/SPA-N2K/UK9012141.pdf>
35 EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Council Directive 2009/147/EC)

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.

SSSI Condition

The two areas of the TBH SPA that lie within Bracknell Borough are the Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI and the Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths (also known as Wildmoor Heath) SSSI. The condition of these SSSIs is shown below.

Table 10 Condition of Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	75.63%
Unfavourable recovering	23.83%
Unfavourable no change	0.55%
Unfavourable declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Table 11 Condition of Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	0%
Unfavourable recovering	100%
Unfavourable no change	0%
Unfavourable declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Ecological Requirements of the Qualifying Species

- Dartford warbler - large unbroken dwarf-shrub layer of heather with scattered gorse; abundance of shrub layer invertebrates; mix of heather trees and gorse amongst heathland vegetation; reduction in displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

- Nightjar - abundance of night flying insects; open ground with predominantly low vegetation bare patches and sparse woodland/scrub cover; reduction in displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.
- Woodlark - abundance of ground surface invertebrates; mix of shrub/tree cover, short-medium vegetation and bare ground; reduction in displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

Description of Potential Adverse Effects on Site Integrity

The Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for the TBH SPA (updated 22 December 2015) identifies the following threats and pressures which may have a negative impact on the site as:

- Air pollution, air-borne pollutants (from inside and outside the SPA)
- Other human intrusions and disturbances (from inside the SPA)
- Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities (from inside the SPA)
- Biocenotic evolution, succession (from inside the SPA)
- Forest and plantation management & use (from inside the SPA)

With reference to the Standard Data Form, it can be concluded that the first three pressures and threats above (air pollution, human disturbance and recreational activities) have the potential to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the TBH SPA as a result of the WPNP. The other pressures and threats listed are not relevant to this assessment.

Furthermore, the NE Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features (9 May 2016) states that the air quality target for all the qualifying features is to restore as necessary the concentrations and deposition of air pollutants to at or below the site-relevant Critical Load or Level values given for these features of the site on the Air Pollution Information System. It also recognises that achieving this target may be subject to the development, availability and effectiveness of abatement technology and measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales.

Appendix 3 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC

Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is a large area of continuous woodland. The SAC covers a total area of 1,687.26 hectares. The predominant habitat is mixed woodland (95%). There are also areas of dry grasslands (4.5%) and inland water bodies (0.5%). The soil and geology is a mix of acidic, clay, neutral and sand. The geomorphology and landscape is classified as lowland. The SAC represents old acidophilous oak woods in the south-eastern part of its UK range. It has the largest number of veteran oaks *Quercus spp.* in Britain (and possibly in Europe), a consequence of its long continuity of management. Windsor Forest is listed as the most important site in the UK for fauna associated with decaying timber on ancient trees (oak spp, beech, and other species of tree). It is of importance for its range and diversity of saproxylic invertebrates, including many rare species (e.g. the beetle *Lacon querceus*). The SAC is thought to support the largest of the known populations in the UK of European important Violet click beetle *Limoniscus violaceus*. It is also recognised as having rich fungal assemblages. Atlantic acidophilous beech forest habitat is present at the site and supports many of the important invertebrate and fungi assemblage. Further information can be found in the following:⁽³⁶⁾

- EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC: UK0012586 (Natural England)
- European Site Conservation Objectives for Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation UK0012586 (Natural England)
- European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC) UK0012586 12 January 2019 (Natural England)
- Natura 2000 Standard Data Form Windsor Forest and Great Park UK0012586 (JNCC)
- Site Improvement Plan Windsor Forest and Great Park UK0012586 4 November 2014 (Natural England)

Qualifying Features

- Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrublayer (*Quercion roburi-petraeae* or *Illici-Fagenion*); Beech forests on acid soils
- Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains; Dry oak-dominated woodland
- *Limoniscus violaceus*; Violet click beetle

Conservation Objectives

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

36 <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5175000009015296>
<https://jncc.gov.uk/jncc-assets/SAC-N2K/UK0030370.pdf>

- 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.

SSSI Condition

The table below provides information on the condition of the SSSI making up the SAC.

Table 12 Condition of Windsor Forest and Great Park SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	100%
Unfavourable recovering	0%
Unfavourable no change	0%
Unfavourable declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Description of Potential Adverse Effects on Site Integrity

The Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for the Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC (dated 25 January 2016) identifies the following negative threats, pressures which may have a negative impact on the site as:

- Air pollution, air-borne pollutants (from inside and outside the SAC)
- Invasive non-native species (from inside and outside the SAC)
- Forest and plantation management and use (inside the SAC)
- Interspecific floral relations (inside the SAC)

With reference to the Standard Data Form, it can be concluded that air pollution has the potential to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA as a result of the WPNP. The other pressures and threats listed are not relevant to this assessment.

Furthermore, the NE Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features (12 January 2019) states that:

- the air quality target is '*to restore as necessary the concentrations and deposition of air pollutants to at or below the site-relevant Critical Load or Level values given for these features of the site on the Air Pollution Information System*'. It also recognises that achieving this target may be subject to the development, availability and effectiveness of abatement technology and measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales.
- the hydrology target is '*at a site, unit and/or catchment level as necessary, maintain natural hydrological processes to provide the conditions necessary to sustain the semi-natural woodland feature within the site.*'
- the target in relation to root zones of ancient trees is to '*Maintain the soil structure within and around the root zones of the mature and ancient tree cohort in an un-compacted condition*'.

Appendix 4 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC

Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC covers an area of 5,154.5 hectares in Surrey, East and West Sussex. It is comprised of Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI, Chobham Common SSSI, Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath SSSI and Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons SSSI. Further information can be found in the following:⁽³⁷⁾

- EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham UK0012793 (Natural England)
- European Site Conservation Objectives for Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation UK0012793 (Natural England)
- European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC) UK0012793 29 February 2016 (Natural England)
- Natura 2000 Standard Data Form Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham UK0012793 (JNCC)
- Site Improvement Plan: Thames Basin 3 November 2014 (Natural England)

The heathland is a series of large fragments of previously more continuous areas & is principally dominated by heather – dwarf gorse (*Calluna vulgaris* – *Ulex minor*) dry heathland. There are transitions to wet heath & valley mire, scrub, woodland & acid grassland, including types rich in annual plants. This habitat supports an important assemblage of animal species, including numerous rare & local invertebrate species, including the nationally rare white-faced darter *Leucorrhinia dubia*, as well as sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* & smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*.

This site supports the sole area of lowland northern Atlantic wet heath in south-east England. The wet heath at Thursley is mainly cross-leaved heath – bog-moss (*Erica tetralix* – *Sphagnum compactum*) & contains several rare plants, including great sundew *Drosera anglica*, bog hair-grass *Deschampsia setacea*, bog orchid *Hammarbya paludosa* & brown beak-sedge *Rhynchospora fusca*.

Depressions on peat substrates are widespread, both in bog pools, mires & in flushes where they occur as part of a mosaic associated with valley bog & wet heath. They show extensive representation of brown-beak sedge & are also important for great sundew and bog orchid *Hammarbya paludosa*.

Qualifying Features

- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
- European dry heaths
- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion

37 <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5141075941392384>
<https://jncc.gov.uk/jncc-assets/SAC-N2K/UK0012793.pdf>

Conservation Objectives

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 & distribution of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure & function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely

Condition

The condition of the SSSIs is shown below.

Table 13 Condition of Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	61.37%
Unfavourable - Recovering	37.65%
Unfavourable - No change	0.97%
Unfavourable - Declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Table 14 Condition of Chobham Common SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	43.05%
Unfavourable - Recovering	56.95%
Unfavourable - No change	0%
Unfavourable - Declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Table 15 Condition of Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	94.94%
Unfavourable - Recovering	4.39%
Unfavourable - No change	0%
Unfavourable - Declining	0.67%

Condition	% of Area
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Table 16 Condition of Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	82.10%
Unfavourable - Recovering	17.90%
Unfavourable - No change	0%
Unfavourable - Declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Description of Potential Adverse Effects on Site Integrity

The Natura 2000 Standard Data Form identifies the following key pressures and threats to the site's ecological integrity:

- Other human intrusions and disturbances (inside the SAC)
- Grazing (inside the SAC)
- Air pollution, air borne pollutants (from inside and outside the SAC)
- Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions (from inside and outside the SAC)
- Biocenotic evolution, succession (inside the SAC)

With reference to the Standard Data Form it can be concluded that changes arising from air pollution have the potential to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC as a result of the WPNP. The other pressures and threats listed are not relevant to this assessment.

Furthermore the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) Thames Basin (3rd November 2014) identifies hydrological changes as a threat to H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath and H7150 Depressions on peat substrates on part of Thursley, Ash Pirbright & Chobham SAC (Elstead Common) because there is evidence of damaging impacts due to drainage. The SIP proposes further research and the implementation of mire restoration plans.

In addition the NE Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features (29 February 2016) states that the air quality target for all the qualifying features is to restore as necessary the concentrations and deposition of air pollutants to at or below the site-relevant Critical Load or Level values given for these features of the site on the Air Pollution Information System. It also recognises that achieving this target may be subject to the development, availability and effectiveness of abatement technology and measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales.

Appendix 5 Screening of WPNP Policies

The table below presents a screening of WPNP policies in order to identify potential pathways of impact linking to the habitats sites.

The green shading in the second column indicates that the policy requires no further consideration in this assessment due to the absence of any mechanism for an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats sites (it has been screened out). The orange shading indicates that further discussion is required in this document since, unmitigated, a pathway of impact exists that cannot be immediately screened out at this stage.

Table 17 Screening assessment of Warfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Policy Reference / Name	Pathways of Impact
W1 A Spatial Plan for the Parish	No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W2 Promoting High Quality Design in the Character Areas	This policy is concerned with delivering a high quality of design reflecting the character of the surrounding area. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W3 Design of Parking, Garaging, Ancillary Buildings and EV charging points	This policy is concerned with the design and layout of parking, garaging, ancillary buildings and EV charging provision. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W4 Housing type, size and choice	This policy is concerned with housing type, size and choice. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W5 Rural Exception Sites and Entry-Level Exception Housing	<p>The aim of this policy is to enable small scale development to come forward. It reflects the community's aspiration for small scale development that will deliver affordable homes for first-time buyers. Although the policy does not allocate sites for development, it could lead to a net increase in dwellings in the Neighbourhood Development Area. These dwellings could come forward in all three SPA buffer zones. Unmitigated the policy could provide for the following impact pathways linking to the habitats sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loss of functionally linked land (TBH SPA) • Urbanisation from a net increase in dwellings within 400m of the TBH SPA • Recreational pressure from a net increase in dwellings located between 400m to 5km from the TBH SPA and a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA

Policy Reference / Name	Pathways of Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air pollution from an increase in traffic (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC) <p>It should be noted that only developments with a net increase of over 50 dwellings within 5 - 7 km of the TBH SPA have the potential to lead to significant effects on the TBH SPA as a result of recreational pressure. It is unlikely that this policy will lead to such a large increase in dwellings in a single development so this is not considered to represent an impact pathway linking to the habitats sites.</p>
W6 Community Facilities	<p>This policy supports proposals for the maintenance, extension or new community facilities and a new doctor and / or dentist surgery. Although the policy does not allocate sites for development, it could lead to new or extended community facilities and a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA. Unmitigated the policy could provide for the following impact pathways linking to the habitats sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss of functionally linked land (TBH SPA) Recreational pressure from a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA Air pollution from an increase in traffic (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC)
W7 Employment and Retail	<p>This policy supports small scale employment and retail development and development that may be required to support home working. Although the policy does not allocate sites for development, it could lead to small scale employment and retail development and a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA. Unmitigated the policy could provide for the following impact pathways linking to the habitats sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of functionally linked land (TBH SPA) Recreational pressure from a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA Air pollution from an increase in traffic (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC)
W8 Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors	<p>This policy encourages biodiversity net gain, wildlife corridors and drainage techniques which enhance biodiversity. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.</p>

Policy Reference / Name	Pathways of Impact
W9 Local Gaps	This policy seeks to avoid the coalescence of settlements. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W10 Dark Skies	This policy seeks to minimise light pollution. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W11 Local Green Spaces	This policy requires that development will only be permitted on local green spaces in very special circumstances. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W12 Pedestrian / Cycle Network	This policy promotes improvements for walking, cycling and mobility impaired users. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.
W13 Martins Heron Station	This policy seeks to deliver improvements at Martins Heron Station. It supports proposals to provide increased car parking however this is not within 400m of the TBH SPA. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.

Appendix 6 South East Plan Policy NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

NRM6: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

New residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Such measures must be agreed with Natural England.

Priority should be given to directing development to those areas where potential adverse effects can be avoided without the need for mitigation measures. Where mitigation measures are required, local planning authorities, as Competent Authorities, should work in partnership to set out clearly and deliver a consistent approach to mitigation, based on the following principles:

- i. a zone of influence set at 5km linear distance from the SPA boundary will be established where measures must be taken to ensure that the integrity of the SPA is protected
- ii. within this zone of influence, there will be a 400m “exclusion zone” where mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. In exceptional circumstances, this may vary with the provision of evidence that demonstrates the extent of the area within which it is considered that mitigation measures will be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. These small locally determined zones will be set out in local development frameworks (LDFs) and SPA avoidance strategies and agreed with Natural England
- iii. where development is proposed outside the exclusion zone but within the zone of influence, mitigation measures will be delivered prior to occupation and in perpetuity. Measures will be based on a combination of access management, and the provision of Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG). Where mitigation takes the form of provision of SANG the following standards and arrangements will apply:
 - iv. a minimum of 8 hectares of SANG land (after discounting to account for current access and capacity) should be provided per 1,000 new occupants
 - v. developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should not be required to be within a specified distance of SANG land provided it is ensured that a sufficient quantity of SANG land is in place to cater for the consequent increase in residents prior to occupation of the dwellings
 - vi. access management measures will be provided strategically to ensure that adverse impacts on the SPA are avoided and that SANG functions effectively
 - vii. authorities should co-operate and work jointly to implement mitigation measures. These may include, inter alia, assistance to those authorities with insufficient SANG land within their own boundaries, co-operation on access management and joint development plan documents
 - viii. relevant parties will co-operate with Natural England and landowners and stakeholders in monitoring the effectiveness of avoidance and mitigation measures and monitoring visitor pressure on the SPA and review/amend the approach set out in this policy, as necessary

ix. local authorities will collect developer contributions towards mitigation measures, including the provision of SANG land and joint contributions to the funding of access management and monitoring the effects of mitigation measures across the SPA

x. large developments may be expected to provide bespoke mitigation that provides a combination of benefits including SANG, biodiversity enhancement, green infrastructure and, potentially, new recreational facilities.

Where further evidence demonstrates that the integrity of the SPA can be protected using different linear thresholds or with alternative mitigation measures (including standards of SANG provision different to those set out in this policy) these must be agreed with Natural England. The mechanism for this policy is set out in the TBH Delivery Framework by the TBH Joint Strategic Partnership and partners and stakeholders, the principles of which should be incorporated into local authorities' LDFs.

Appendix 7 Core Strategy Policy CS14 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

CS 14 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

165 The Council will carry out an assessment of the effects of a development proposal on the conservation objectives of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) where there is a risk of the proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the site, either alone or in combination with other proposals. Proposals leading to a net increase in residential dwellings, within a straight-line distance of 5 kilometres from the SPA boundary, are likely to have a significant effect. The Council will not permit development which, either alone or in combination with other development, has an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SPA.

166 Development outside the 400-metre zone will be permitted where it can demonstrate that it can remove any adverse effect by contributing towards avoidance and mitigation measures in line with the SPA Technical Background Document.

167 The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development.

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Nepali

यस प्रचारको सक्षेपं वा सार निचोड चाहिं दिइने छ ठूलो अक्षरमा, ब्रेल वा क्यासेट सून्नको लागी । अरु भाषाको नक्कल पनि हासिल गर्न सकिने छ । कृपया सम्पर्क गर्नुहोला ०१३४४ ३५२००० ।

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