

Southampton City Council

Core Strategy

Draft Appropriate Assessment Screening

Non-technical summary

November 2008

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Non-technical Summary

The aim of this AA screening report was to analyse Southampton's Core Strategy Development Plan Document for Southampton City Council and attempt to ascertain any potential significant effects on European protected sites of nature conservation interest, referred to as 'Natura 2000' or 'International' sites. The screening is carried out in accordance with the 'Habitats Regulations', which transpose the requirements of the European 'Habitats Directive' into domestic legislation. The methodology of the screening was devised using draft guidance produced for Natural England by David Tyldesley and Associates. In accordance with this guidance and initial consultations with Natural England in April 2008, and with the agreement of Southampton City Council, a ten kilometer 'buffer' zone was drawn around the city to ascertain which sites would be included in the assessment. The International sites that fell within this buffer were:

- Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar
- Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- River Itchen SAC
- New Forest SAC
- New Forest SPA
- New Forest Ramsar
- Emer Bog SAC

In addition, the following secondary sites were considered because they are ecologically interdependent with the Solent and Southampton Water and Solent Maritime sites:

- Portsmouth Harbour SPA
- Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar
- Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA
- Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar

Initial consultation with Natural England established that the principal guidance document for the AA screening should be the draft guidance produced for Natural England listed above. Natural England also recommended that the screening matrices and report contents should use a format similar to that used for the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the New Forest District Council Core Strategy. The basic methodology followed in this report was as follows:

- Listing all International Sites within the 10km buffer and reviewing the qualifying interest features and conservation objectives of each site.
- Determining whether the plan was directly connected with or necessary to the management of the International Sites.
- Identifying and discounting all policies that will have no significant impact on the International Sites.
- Identifying Core Strategy policies that could cause a 'likely significant effect', either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, on an International Site.

Where the conclusions on likely significant effects were classified as 'uncertain' in the report, this was regarded as a 'likely significant effect', as a significant effect could not be ruled out. The key findings of the screening report were that:

- Coastal squeeze is likely to significantly impact on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site and Solent Maritime SAC; this will be addressed in the forthcoming North Solent Shoreline Management Plan, which will attempt to mitigate the impacts of coastal squeeze (see section 7.3).
- Recreation disturbance caused by a growth in visitor numbers could potentially cause significant impacts on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site, Solent Maritime SAC and the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site. Recent research published by Footprint Ecology partly addresses the dearth of information on the negative impacts of this recreation on International Sites. For example, it indicates that visitors to the New Forest generally come from within 20km of the National Park and suggests mitigation measures should be directed at them. The Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Study will also address the lack of research

into this impact. It will therefore help to mitigate the negative impacts of recreation by allowing a better understanding of the impact which can be used to inform future Habitats Regulations Assessments and devise appropriate mitigation measures.

- Air pollution could potentially cause significant impacts on all International Sites, particularly the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site and Solent Maritime SAC and the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site, which were also all considered to be at risk from adverse effects on integrity in the AA of the Draft South East Plan. The cumulative impacts of Southampton's Core Strategy policies combined with other projects and plans in the region, including the growth of Southampton Airport, may cause significant impacts even on sites where air pollution is not suspected to be the principal threat to site integrity, such as Emer Bog SAC. However, there is a data gap for research into the effects of air pollution on the interest features of the International Sites.
- The effects of tall buildings and flight/view lines for qualifying interest bird species at Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar is not possible to assess due to insufficient research in this area and lack of site-level detail in the Core Strategy.
- Increased effluent discharge from development could potentially cause likely significant effects on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site, Solent Maritime SAC, the New Forest SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar site and the River Itchen SAC, which were also all considered to be at risk from adverse effects on integrity in the AA of the Draft South East Plan.
- Increased water demand could potentially cause likely significant effects on Solent and Southampton Water SPA/ Ramsar site, Solent Maritime SAC, the New Forest SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar site and the River Itchen SAC, which were also all considered to be at risk from adverse effects on integrity in the Appropriate Assessment of the Draft South East Plan.
- Noise and light pollution may result in uncertain impacts on all of the International Sites.

Although screening for likely significant impacts does not always include details of mitigation measures, Natural England advised that mitigation should be considered

in this case. Therefore, various avoidance or potential mitigation measures are proposed for the key impacts described above. The screening concludes that mitigation is essential for all impacts with a likely significant effect or 'uncertain' impacts in order to avoid future adverse effects on the integrity of the International Sites. It also provides recommendations for modifications to the Core Strategy document and future assessments under the Habitats Regulations.

Table 1 shows the summarised results of the screening assessment. It should be noted that only key impacts that are relevant to the conservation objectives of the specific International Site are shown in this table.

Table 1: Summary of Impacts and Likely Significant Effects (alone and in-combination with other plans) for International Sites

International Site	Nature of impact	Likely significant effects?	Mitigation needed?
Solent and Southampton Water SPA	Recreation disturbance	Uncertain	Yes
	Coastal squeeze	Uncertain	Yes
	Water quality impacts	No	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Water resource availability	No	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Disturbed flight lines/ ecological connectivity	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Pollution (chemical, noise, light, air and dust)	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar	Recreation disturbance	Uncertain	Yes
	Coastal squeeze	Uncertain	Yes
	Water quality impacts	No	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Water resource availability	No	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Disturbed flight lines/ ecological connectivity	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Pollution (chemical, noise, light, air and dust)	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
Solent Maritime SAC	Recreation disturbance	Uncertain	Yes
	Coastal squeeze	Uncertain	Yes
	Water quality impacts	No	Precautionary mitigation advised

	Water resource availability	No	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Pollution (noise, light, air and dust)	Uncertain	Yes
River Itchen SAC	Water resource availability (flow levels)	Uncertain	Yes
	Water quality impacts	Uncertain	Yes
	Pollution (noise, light, air and dust)	Uncertain	Yes
New Forest SAC	Recreation disturbance	Uncertain	Yes
	Air pollution	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
New Forest SPA	Recreation disturbance	Uncertain	Yes
	Air pollution	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
New Forest Ramsar	Recreation disturbance	Uncertain	Yes
	Air pollution	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
Emer Bog SAC	Recreation	No	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Air pollution	Uncertain	Precautionary mitigation advised
	Hydrology	No	No