

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Application reference:	16/00400/FUL
Application address:	14 Cumberland Place Southampton
Application description:	Redevelopment of the site. Demolition of the existing building and erection of a 12-storey building to provide 141 flats for student occupation (198 bedrooms) with associated parking and other facilities
HRA completion date:	26/05/2016

HRA completed by:	
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Summary
<p>The project being assessed would lead to the provision student accommodation with a total of 198 bedspaces located approximately 1.4km from the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site and approximately 5.4km from the New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC)/SPA/Ramsar site.</p> <p>The site is currently an office building. It is located a significant distance from the European sites and as such construction stage impacts will not occur. Concern has been raised however, that the proposed development, in-combination with other residential developments across south Hampshire, could result in recreational disturbance to the features of interest of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site.</p> <p>The findings of the initial assessment concluded that a significant effect was possible. A detailed appropriate assessment was therefore conducted on the proposed development. Following consideration of a number of avoidance and mitigation measures designed to remove any risk of a significant effect on the identified European sites, it has been concluded that the significant effects which are likely in association with the proposed development can be overcome.</p>

Section 1 - details of the plan or project	
<p>European sites potentially impacted by plan or project:</p> <p>European Site descriptions are available in Appendix I of the City Centre Action Plan's Habitats Regulations Assessment Baseline Evidence Review Report, which is on the city council's website at</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The New Forest SAC ▪ New Forest SPA ▪ New Forest Ramsar site ▪ Solent and Southampton Water SPA ▪ Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar Site
<p>Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?</p>	<p>No – the development consists of new student accommodation which is neither connected to, nor necessary for, the management of any European site.</p>

Are there any other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?

- Southampton Core Strategy (amended 2015) (<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/policies/Amended-Core-Strategy-inc-CSPR-%20Final-13-03-2015.pdf>)
- City Centre Action Plan (<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/adopted-plans/city-centre-action-plan.aspx>)
- South Hampshire Strategy (http://www.push.gov.uk/work/housing-and-planning/south_hampshire_strategy.htm)

The South Hampshire Strategy plans for 55,200 new homes, 580,000m² of office development and 550,000m² of manufacturing or distribution floor space across the South Hampshire area between 2011 and 2026.

Southampton aims to provide a total of 16,300 net additional dwellings across the city between 2006 and 2026 as set out in the Amended Core Strategy.

Whilst the dates of the two plans do not align, it is clear that the proposed development at 14 Cumberland Place is part of a far wider reaching development strategy for the South Hampshire sub-region which will result in a sizeable increase in population and economic activity.

Regulation 68 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations) is clear that the assessment provisions, i.e. Regulation 61 of the same regulations, apply in relation to granting planning permission on an application under Part 3 of the TCPA 1990. The assessment below constitutes the city council's assessment of the implications of the development described above on the identified European sites, which is set out in Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations.

Section 2 - Assessment of implications for European sites

Test 1: the likelihood of a significant effect

- This test is to determine whether or not any possible effect could constitute a significant effect on a European site as set out in Regulation 61(1) (a) of the Habitats Regulations.

The proposed development is located 1.4km to the south-west of a section of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar Site whilst The New Forest SAC, New Forest SPA and New Forest Ramsar site are approximately 5.4km to the south.

A full list of the qualifying features for each site is provided at the end of this report. The development could have implications for these sites which could be permanent arising from the operational phase of the development.

In their response to the consultation on this planning application, dated 4th April 2016, Natural England raised concerns about insufficient information being provided about potential impacts on

the New Forest sites. In particular the response also highlighted the potential for ecological impacts during the operational phase of the development.

The following mitigation measures have been proposed as part of the development:

- Only 4 car parking spaces will be provided on site, with 1 allocated for disabled and the remaining three to be used by staff;
- A restrictive tenancy barring on students from bringing their cars whilst resident. A breach of this agreement will result in tenancy being terminated;
- A restrictive tenancy barring students from keeping dogs whilst resident. A breach of this agreement will result in tenancy being terminated;
- 102 secure cycle spaces;
- A leaflet showing local amenity parks close to the site (such as Watts and East Parks which are within 250m) and within the city (including Southampton Common which is less than a 20 minute walk from the site), plus key public transport links and cycle routes.
- A contribution of £3445 for the Solent Recreation Mitigation Project.

Conclusions regarding the likelihood of a significant effect

This is to summarise whether or not there is a likelihood of a significant effect on a European site as set out in Regulation 61(1)(a) of the Habitats Regulations.

The project being assessed would lead to the provision of a total of 198 bedspaces for students located approximately 1.4km from Solent and Southampton SPA/Ramsar site and 5.4km from the New Forest SPA/Ramsar site.

The site is currently a block of offices. It is located a significant distance from the European sites and as such construction stage impacts will not occur. Concern has been raised however, that the proposed development, in-combination with other residential developments across south Hampshire, could result in recreational disturbance to the features of interest of the New Forest SPA/Ramsar site.

The applicant has provided details of several avoidance and mitigation measures which are intended to reduce the identified impacts. However, without more detailed analysis, it is not possible to determine whether the proposed measures are sufficient to reduce the identified impacts to a level where they could be considered not to result in a significant effect on the identified European sites. Overall, there is the potential for permanent impacts which could be at a sufficient level to be considered significant. As such, a full appropriate assessment of the implications for the identified European sites is required before the scheme can be authorised.

Test 2: an appropriate assessment of the implications of the development for the identified European sites in view of those sites' conservation objectives

The analysis below constitutes the city council's assessment under Regulation 61(1) of the Habitats Regulations

The identified potential effects are examined below to determine the implications for the identified European sites in line with their conservation objectives and to assess whether the proposed avoidance and mitigation measures are sufficient to remove any potential impact.

In order to make a full and complete assessment it is necessary to consider the relevant conservation objectives. These are available on Natural England's web pages at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6528471664689152> .

The conservation objective for Special Protection Areas is to, "Avoid the deterioration of the

habitats of the qualifying features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of the Birds Directive."

Ramsar sites do not have a specific conservation objective however, under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), they are considered to have the same status as European sites.

TEMPORARY, CONSTRUCTION PHASE EFFECTS

The designated sites are all located a substantial distance away from the development site and are therefore outside the zone of influence of construction activities. As a consequence, there will be no temporary, construction phase effects.

PERMANENT, OPERATIONAL EFFECTS.

New Forest SPA/Ramsar site

The New Forest National Park attracts a high number of visitors (13.3 million annually), and is notable in terms of its catchment, attracting a far higher proportion of tourists and non-local visitors than similar areas such as the Thames Basin and Dorset Heaths. Research undertaken by Footprint Ecology, Sharp, J., Lowen, J. and Liley, D. (2008) Changing patterns of visitor numbers within the New Forest National Park, with particular reference to the New Forest SPA. Footprint Ecology.), indicates that 40% of visitors to the area are staying tourists, whilst 25% of visitors come from more than 5 miles (8km) away. The remaining 35% of visitors are local day visitors originating from within 5 miles (8km) of the boundary.

The report states that the estimated number of current annual visits to the New Forest is predicted to increase by 1.05 million annual visits by 2026 based on projections of housing development within 50km of the Forest, with around three quarters (764,000) of this total increase originating from within 10km of the boundary (which includes Southampton).

The application site is located 5.4km from the nearest part of the New Forest SPA and Ramsar site in terms of linear distance and as such, students resident in the proposed development would fall into the category of non-local day visitors.

Characteristics of visitors to the New Forest

In addition to visitor numbers, the report, "Changing patterns of visitor numbers within the New Forest National Park", 2008 also showed that:

- 85% of visitors to the New Forest arrive by car.
- 23% of the visitors travelling more than 5 miles come from the Southampton/Eastleigh area (see para 2.1.1).
- One of the main reasons for visiting the National Park given in the 2005 Visitor Survey was dog walking (24% of visitors - Source New Forest National Park Visitor survey 2005).
- Approximately 68% of visitors to UK National Parks are families.
(Source: www.nationalparks.gov.uk).

The majority of the visitors to New Forest locations arriving from Southampton could therefore be characterised as day visitors, car-owners in family groups and many with dogs. Whilst students may fall within the first two of the above bullet points they are unlikely to have dogs or visit as part of a family group.

Occurrence of students

The peak period for visitor numbers in the New Forest National Park is the summer, Sharp, J., Lowen, J. and Liley, D. (2008), which also coincides with the critical breeding period of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford Warbler which are features of interest of the New Forest SPA. Although students would be able to remain in occupation within their accommodation throughout the year (tenancies would be for a complete year) many, particularly undergraduates, will vacate their accommodation and return home over the summer period.

There is no direct evidence of the extent to which students contribute to visitor numbers to the New Forest National Park. However, the characteristics of typical visitors to the New Forest are consistent with an analysis of visitors to the North York Moors National Park in 2002 which showed that skilled manual workers, poor retired couples, young single parents and students were more likely to use the local Moorsbus Network but were poorly represented in surveys at car parks (Countryside Recreation News April 2002, "Missing Persons - who doesn't visit the people's parks". Bill Breaker).

It would therefore be reasonable to conclude that there are likely to be very low numbers of students visiting the New Forest, particularly during the sensitive summer period.

Car ownership and accessibility

Data gathered as part of the visitor survey undertaken by Footprint Ecology in 2008 clearly indicated that the majority of visitors travel to the New Forest by car. The proposed development will not have any private car parking spaces available for students and it is a condition of their tenancy agreement that students are not allowed to bring their own cars. This would be enforced by termination of the letting agreement. Facilities at the proposed development will be limited to just 4 car parking spaces, including 1 disabled space which are mainly for staff use. In addition, the area around the development is subject to parking restrictions and students will not be able to obtain parking permits. On this basis the development can reasonably be described as car free.

Car parking on the campuses of both universities is very limited. Solent Southampton University (SSU) does not have any on campus parking whilst the University of Southampton (UoS) is seeking to further reduce levels of car use from the current 4.6% down to 4.2% by 2015 (UoS Travel Plan)

Students will therefore be expected to travel around Southampton on foot, bicycle and public transport. To support this the development will provide:

- Only 4 car parking spaces will be provided on site, with 1 allocated for disabled and the remaining three to be used by staff;
- A restrictive tenancy barring on students from bringing their cars whilst resident. A breach of this agreement will result in tenancy being terminated;
- A restrictive tenancy barring students from keeping dogs whilst resident. A breach of this agreement will result in tenancy being terminated;
- 102 secure cycle spaces;
- A leaflet showing local amenity parks close to the site (such as Watts and East Parks which are within 250m) and within the city (including Southampton Common which is less than a 20 minute walk from the site), plus key public transport links and cycle routes.

The development site is in close proximity to city centre facilities and to bus and train connections, all of which reduce the need for students to have cars. Uni-link bus stops located approximately 200m from the development enable travel to the University of Southampton's Avenue and Highfield campuses, whilst another, approximately 450m to the south, enables travel to the General Hospital. The site is therefore highly accessible to residing students.

The high level of accessibility and the lack of parking mean that it is very unlikely that the residents have access to cars.

Recreation options for students

Students at both universities have extensive opportunities to access sports and recreational facilities and are positively encouraged to make use of these. Details of the UoS facilities can be found at the following web address:

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/imported/transforms/content-block/UsefulDownloads_Download/67A7C84E3D424F08B28A6E76CADD46E5/2015-16%20Sport%20and%20Wellbeing%20Brochure.pdf . Solent University has two major sports centres in the city centre, extensive playing fields at Test Park Sportsground, Fitness Centres and access to a range of local sports clubs and recreational facilities (details available on SSU) website <http://www.solent.ac.uk/sport/facilities/facilities-home.aspx>).

In addition, Southampton benefits from an extensive network of common land, green corridors, city and district parks and local green spaces, which provide opportunities for quiet recreation of the type available to visitors to the New Forest. In particular, the Central Parks are located on the southern side of Cumberland Place whilst Southampton Common, a 125 hectare natural green space in the heart of the city, is only 20 minutes walking distance from the application site. Just to the north of the Common lie the Outdoor Sports Centre, Southampton City Golf Course, and the Alpine Snow Centre which provide opportunities for organised and informal recreation activities. Outside the city centre are the Greenways, a series wooded stream corridors which connect a number of open spaces. The four most significant of these, Lordswood, Lordsdale, Shoreburs and Weston, are within easy cycling distance of the development site and provide extended opportunities for walking and connections into the wider countryside.

The road network close to the application site is suitable for cycling. Figure 1 below is an extract from the Southampton Cycle Map which demonstrates that to the north of the development it is possible to cycle along quiet roads to access the cycleway that runs along the Avenue directly to the University of Southampton campuses.



Figure 1

These cycle routes link the development site with Southampton Common (1.5km) and National Cycle Route 23 which passes through Southampton. It is reasonable to expect that students will make use of the many leisure activities and commercial centres of Southampton.

Just outside the city boundary, to the north-east, are the Itchen Navigation (6.6km) and Itchen Valley Country Park (7.8km). These sites provide opportunities for informal recreation in a 'countryside' type environment and can be readily accessed by bicycle.

The development is in close proximity to two cycle routes one of which connects Southampton to Lyndhurst. Route 236 runs from Southampton via Totton to Ashurst at which point it reaches the boundary of the New Forest. Following this route would result in a distance of approximately 11.3km from the development site to the boundary of the New Forest sites. Continuing on to Lyndhurst, which forms a focal point of the New Forest, would involve a trip of 15.3km. As detailed in the Framework Travel Plan, the average length of a cycle trip is around 4km and therefore the distance between the site and the boundary of the New Forest designated sites is almost three times this distance. Whilst it is not considered possible to rule out cycle trips to the New Forest sites by new residents, it is considered that any such visits would only be made by a competent cyclist on an occasional basis and would be highly unlikely to result in regular trips from the development site.

In addition, any cycling visitors would likely access the New Forest along existing roads, formalised tracks and designated cycle routes which are less likely to result in disturbance to nesting birds or damage to sensitive habitats.

The availability of good quality and accessible open space described above, combined with sport and recreation facilities at both universities reduces the likelihood that students would travel to the New Forest for recreational purposes.

Visiting the New Forest National Park using public transport

The linear distance to New Forest SPA/Ramsar site is approximately 5.4km however, by road the distance is somewhat longer. The shortest route, using the Hythe Ferry, is 7.8km whilst the closest section when travelling purely by road is approximately 11km. It is unlikely, therefore, that visits made on foot or by bicycle will be a frequent occurrence.

Should students choose to visit the National Park using public transport they are unlikely to find it a straight forward proposition. Direct travel from the development site to the designated areas is not possible. Travelling from Southampton city centre, the destinations for train and bus services are the urban centres which, aside from Beaulieu Road, lie outside the New Forest SPA/Ramsar site. Once at these locations further travel is required to reach the designated site. Table 1 below provides details of the train services available from Southampton Central Railway Station.

Table 1 Train services from Southampton Central to New Forest Locations

Destination	Service frequency (outside of peak hours)	Journey time
Ashurst	1 service per hour	10 mins
Beaulieu Road	6 services between 0900- 1800	14 mins
Lyndhurst	No service	
Brockenhurst	4 services per hour	16 mins
Lymington	2 services per hour (change at Brockenhurst)	20 mins
Burley	No service	

The only direct bus service from Southampton to the locations in the New Forest identified above is the Bluestar 6 service which runs hourly from the city centre (during the day) to Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst and Lymington taking 30-40 minutes. Other services are available throughout the National Park from those locations.

Clearly, whilst it is possible to reach the designated site from the proposed halls of residence the process is complicated and likely to be costly. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that there are only likely to be a very small number of visits as a consequence.

Conclusions

The evidence provided suggests that students comprise a small proportion of visitor to the New Forest and that, as a visitor destination, the New Forest is most attractive to dog walkers and/or families that have access to a car.

Students resident within the new accommodation will not be permitted to keep dogs and will not be present with their families. In addition, the development will be designed in such a way as to stop students bringing their cars with them. Finally, the wide range of recreation and sports facilities available to students are closer to the development and easier and cheaper to access than the New Forest. As a consequence, it is very unlikely that students will make trips to the

New Forest designated sites and will not therefore contribute to increased recreational disturbance,

Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar site

In 2008 the Council adopted the Solent Disturbance Mitigation Project in collaboration with other Councils within the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire in order to mitigate the effects of new residential development on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA. This enables financial contributions to be made by developers to fund appropriate mitigation measures.

The proposed student accommodation will result in a net increase in the population of the city and thus lead to significant impacts on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA. However, due to the characteristics of this type of residential development, specifically the absence of car parking and the inability of those living in purpose built student accommodation to have pets, the level of disturbance created, and thus the increase in bird mortality, will be less than C3 housing. The SDMP research showed that 47% of activity which resulted in major flight events was specifically caused by dogs off of a lead¹. As such, it is considered that the level of impact from purpose built student accommodation would be half that of C3 housing and thus the scale of the mitigation package should also be half that of C3 housing.

Assuming a typical 3 bedroomed house can accommodate 5 students, for the purposes of providing SPA mitigation, five study bedrooms will therefore be considered a unit of residential accommodation.

The calculation to establish the level of the mitigation package required is as follows:

$$\frac{S}{5} \times \frac{174}{2}$$

S = number of study bedrooms

$$\frac{198}{5} \times \frac{174}{2} = 39.6 \times 87 = \text{£}3445.2$$

It is considered that, subject to a level of mitigation, which has been calculated as £3445, being secured through a legal agreement, appropriate and effective mitigation measures will have been secured to ensure that effects associated with disturbance can be satisfactorily removed. The applicant has agreed to enter into a legal agreement to this effect.

¹ See paragraph 3.15 of the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project Phase II bird disturbance fieldwork

Conclusions regarding the implications of the development for the identified European sites in view of those sites' conservation objectives

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the evidence provided:

- Residents of the new accommodation will not have access to cars.
- The availability of open space, sport and recreation facilities at both universities reduces the likelihood that students would travel to the New Forest for recreational purposes.
- Evidence suggests that low car and dog ownership amongst students contributes to the relatively low proportion of students in the make-up of visitor numbers to the New Forest.
- Access to New Forest locations by students living at the proposed development would be

complicated and costly especially when compared to the availability of alternative recreational activities.

The following mitigation measures have been proposed as part of the development:

- Only 4 car parking spaces will be provided on site, with 1 allocated for disabled and the remaining three to be used by staff;
- A restrictive tenancy barring on students from bringing their cars whilst resident. A breach of this agreement will result in tenancy being terminated;
- A restrictive tenancy barring students from keeping dogs whilst resident. A breach of this agreement will result in tenancy being terminated;
- 102 secure cycle spaces;
- A leaflet showing local amenity parks close to the site (such as Watts and East Parks which are within 250m) and within the city (including Southampton Common which is less than a 20 minute walk from the site), plus key public transport links and cycle routes.
- A contribution of £3445 for the Solent Recreation Mitigation Project.

As such, visitor pressure on European and other protected sites in the New Forest arising from the proposed development is likely to be extremely low and it can therefore be concluded that, subject to the implementation of the identified mitigation measures, **significant effects arising from recreational disturbance will not occur.**

European Site Qualifying Features

The New Forest SAC

The New Forest SAC qualifies under the following criteria:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*)
- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
- European dry heaths
- *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)
- Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*
- Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrub layer (*Quercion robori-petraeae* or *Ilici-Fagenion*)
- *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests
- Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains
- Bog woodland
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site

- Transition mires and quaking bogs
- Alkaline fens

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercurial*
- Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

The New Forest SPA

The New Forest SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive by supporting breeding populations of European importance of the following Annex I species:

- Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*
- Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*
- Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*
- Woodlark *Lullula arborea*; and

Overwintering population of European importance of the following migratory species:

- Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

The SPA qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive by supporting breeding populations of:

- Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
- Wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

New Forest Ramsar Site

The New Forest Ramsar site qualifies under the following Ramsar criteria:

- Ramsar criterion 1: Valley mires and wet heaths are found throughout the site and are of outstanding scientific interest. The mires and heaths are within catchments whose uncultivated and undeveloped state buffer the mires against adverse ecological change. This is the largest concentration of intact valley mires of their type in Britain.
- Ramsar criterion 2: The site supports a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals including several nationally rare species. Seven species of nationally rare plant are found on the site, as are at least 65 British Red Data Book species of invertebrate.
- Ramsar criterion 3: The mire habitats are of high ecological quality and diversity and have undisturbed transition zones. The invertebrate fauna of the site is important due to the

concentration of rare and scarce wetland species. The whole site complex, with its examples of semi-natural habitats is essential to the genetic and ecological diversity of southern England.

Solent and Southampton Water SPA

Solent and Southampton Water SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive by supporting breeding populations of European importance of the following Annex I species:

- Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
- Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
- Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*
- Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*
- Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

The SPA qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive by supporting overwintering populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

- Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*
- Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*
- Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
- Teal *Anas crecca*

The SPA also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl, including the following species:

- Gadwall *Anas strepera*
- Teal *Anas crecca*
- Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
- Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*
- Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
- Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
- Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
- Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*
- Wigeon *Anas penelope*
- Redshank *Tringa tetanus*
- Pintail *Anas acuta*
- Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
- Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*
- Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
- Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*
- Curlew *Numenius arquata*
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar Site

The Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site qualifies under the following Ramsar criteria:

- Ramsar criterion 1: The site is one of the few major sheltered channels between a substantial island and mainland in European waters, exhibiting an unusual strong double tidal flow and has long periods of slack water at high and low tide. It includes many wetland habitats characteristic of the biogeographic region: saline lagoons, saltmarshes, estuaries, intertidal flats, shallow coastal waters, grazing marshes, reedbeds, coastal woodland and rocky boulder reefs.
- Ramsar criterion 2: The site supports an important assemblage of rare plants and invertebrates. At least 33 British Red Data Book invertebrates and at least eight British

Red Data Book plants are represented on site.

- Ramsar criterion 5: A mean peak count of waterfowl for the 5 year period of 1998/99 – 2002/2003 of 51,343
- Ramsar criterion 6: The site regularly supports more than 1% of the individuals in a population for the following species: Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*.