

Ipswich Borough Council

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Ipswich Borough Council Draft Development and Archaeology Supplementary Planning Document, February 2018.

Introduction

Ipswich Borough Council is preparing a Development and Archaeology Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to implement the following policies, set out in the Ipswich Local Plan (2017):

- CS4 Protecting Our Assets – this strategic policy states that:
The Council is committed to conserving and enhancing the Borough's built, heritage, natural and geological assets.

The Council will conserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas, by preparing character appraisals and using them to guide decisions about development. The Council will also conserve and enhance heritage assets within the Borough through its development management policies, the use of planning obligations to secure the enhancement and promotion of the significance of any heritage asset, the maintenance of a list of buildings and other heritage assets of local importance, and taking steps to reduce the number of heritage assets at risk.;

- DM8 Heritage Assets and Conservation – this policy states that:
c. *Archaeology*

Development will not be permitted which may disturb remains below ground, unless the proposal is supported by an appropriate assessment of the archaeological significance of the site and, if necessary, a programme of archaeological investigation in accordance with that assessment. Such assessments should be proportionate to the importance of the site. Sites within the Area of Archaeological Importance are highly likely to contain significant archaeology.

Planning permission will not be granted if the remains identified are of sufficient importance to be preserved in situ and cannot be so preserved in the context of the development proposed, taking account of the necessary construction techniques to be used.

Where archaeological potential is identified but there is no overriding case for any remains to be preserved in situ, development which would destroy or disturb potential remains will be permitted, subject to an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation, recording, reporting and archiving.

- Those site allocations made through the Site Allocations and Policies (incorporating IP-One Area Action Plan) development plan document, which are accompanied by site sheets in Appendix 3A of the plan that identify the requirement for archaeological investigation, monitoring of groundworks, etc.

Specifically, this SPD seeks to:

- Promote a high level of understanding in assessing the archaeological potential of any development site, thereby minimising the risk of unexpected discoveries and thus reducing associated costs;

- Provide further guidance to applicants on the likely archaeological works that will be expected for their sites;
- Explain the procedures which applicants or their representatives will need to follow at each stage in the planning application and development process; and
- Promote the Historic Environment of Ipswich as a positive contributor to the identity and regeneration of the town.

What is the purpose of this statement?

The purpose of this statement is to assess the need for appropriate assessment in relation to the Draft Development and Archaeology Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The SPD does not create new policy but provides detail in respect of the implementation of the policies identified above. The SPD will provide further information to applicants so that development can proceed in a timely, appropriate, legally and policy compliant manner in Ipswich.

What is the legislative background?

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires that an ‘appropriate assessment’ is carried out in relation to any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, on European wildlife sites. Where an appropriate assessment is carried out a plan may only be adopted after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

European wildlife sites are Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. Ramsar sites should also be given the same level of protection, as stated within the National Planning Policy Framework. The Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area and Ramsar site lies partly within Ipswich Borough. The Habitats Regulations Assessments¹ (Appropriate Assessments) for the Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted in February 2017), identified a list of European sites outside the Borough which may also be potentially be affected by development in Ipswich.

What were the conclusions of the appropriate assessment?

The Local Plan was subject to ‘appropriate assessment’ under the Habitats Regulations as part of its production. The Appropriate Assessments concluded that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of European sites through the delivery of the Ipswich Local Plan provided that a suite of mitigation measures were put in place to address the identified impacts.

The plan level appropriate assessment noted the key elements of mitigation, but highlighted the need for further consideration and information gathering relating to mitigation, particularly in relation to measures on the European sites to manage access. Key mitigation measures included for Ipswich Borough include the provision of a new Country Park, provision of green spaces as part of new development, visitor management measures for key European sites

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- ¹ Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) for Ipswich Borough Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy and Policies DPD Review (The Landscape Partnership, November 2014)
 - Habitats Regulations Assessment Addendum for Pre-Submission Modifications to the Ipswich Borough Council Core Strategy and Policies DPD Review (Proposed Submission stage) (The Landscape Partnership, September 2015)
 - Habitats Regulations Assessment for Ipswich Borough Council Proposed Submission Site Allocations and Policies (Incorporating IP-One Area Action Plan) Development Plan Document (The Landscape Partnership, November 2014)
 - Habitats Regulations Assessment Addendum for Pre-Submission Modifications to the Ipswich Borough Council Site Allocations and Policies (Incorporating IP-One Area Action Plan) DPD (Proposed Submission stage) (The Landscape Partnership, September 2015)

and monitoring the impact of recreational pressure on birds in protected sites. To make mitigation delivery more co-ordinated, efficient and effective a joint and strategic approach, known as the Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) is being established by Ipswich Borough, in partnership with Suffolk Coastal District and Babergh District.

Does this SPD need an additional appropriate assessment?

The draft Development and Archaeology SPD seeks to:

- Promote a high level of understanding in assessing the archaeological potential of any development site, thereby minimising the risk of unexpected discoveries and thus reducing associated costs;
- Provide further guidance to applicants on the likely archaeological works that will be expected for their sites;
- Explain the procedures which applicants or their representatives will need to follow at each stage in the planning application and development process; and
- Promote the Historic Environment of Ipswich as a positive contributor to the identity and regeneration of the town.

This approach is consistent with the ongoing work on the RAMS and with the HRA mitigation set out in the Local Plan HRA for Ipswich Borough. The SPD's effect would be to 'unlock' development sites which are already allocated through the adopted Local Plan and which would in the case of residential development, along with any windfall, be mitigated by the RAMS.

Natural England has been consulted on this Screening Assessment and advises that there is unlikely to be a significant effect of the Development and Archaeology SPD, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, on internationally designated sites.

Therefore, no further assessment of the SPD under the Habitats Regulations is required.