

## Ipswich Borough Council

### Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Suffolk Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document.

#### Introduction

Ipswich Borough Council is preparing a Suffolk Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to implement Policy CS17 Delivering Infrastructure, set out in the Ipswich Local Plan (2017).

Policy CS17: Delivering Infrastructure – this strategic policy states that:

*“The Council will seek contributions to ensure that the mitigation measures identified in the Habitats Regulations Assessment and in the Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy can be addressed and delivered, including for any measures not classified as infrastructure.”*

*“The Habitats Regulations Assessment identifies a range of measures to ensure that potential impacts of increased recreational disturbance within Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation within and outside of Ipswich Borough are mitigated. This relates to mitigating the cumulative effect of housing growth across Ipswich Borough, in combination with housing growth in Suffolk Coastal district. The measures include the provision of the Country Park or similar high quality provision to the north of Ipswich, delivering parts b, d, e, g and h of policy CS16, production and implementation of visitor management plans at key sites and a monitoring programme to assess visitor impact over time. The Council will produce a Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy by March 2017, which will specify the measures required and how these will be delivered.”*

The Suffolk Coast RAMS SPD summarises the requirements of the Strategy for developers and others and provides a framework for implementing those provisions.

#### **What is the purpose of this statement?**

The purpose of this statement is to assess the need for appropriate assessment in relation to the Suffolk Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Suffolk Coast RAMS 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 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 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 Assessments<sup>1</sup> (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 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 assessment 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 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) was established by Ipswich Borough, in partnership with Suffolk Coastal District (now East Suffolk) and Babergh District. On the advice of Natural England, the partnership was expanded to include Mid Suffolk and Waveney (now East Suffolk).

### **Does this SPD need an additional appropriate assessment?**

The Suffolk Coast RAMS SPD provides guidance to developers and the public on how the impacts of new residential developments on a number of European Sites may be avoided and mitigated. The measures that the RAMS builds on are those set out in the Ipswich Local Plan. The adopted Local Plan has been subject to an Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and HRA, therefore an additional Appropriate Assessment of the Suffolk Coast RAMS SPD is not considered necessary.

Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England have been consulted on this Screening Assessment.

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- <sup>1</sup> 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)