

Ipswich Borough Council

Urban Character Supplementary Planning Document

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Assessment (July 2015)

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 Appropriate Assessment for Ipswich Borough Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy and Policies (Landscape Partnership, 2009), which relates to the adopted Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document, identified a list of European sites outside the Borough which may also be potentially be affected by development in Ipswich.

The purpose of this statement is to assess the need for appropriate assessment in relation to the Urban Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Urban Character SPD is being produced in eight parts, the first four (Parks, Gipping and Orwell Valley, Norwich Road and California) having been adopted in January 2015. The fifth part, relating to south east Ipswich, is being produced currently and the final three parts are to be produced during 2015/16/17. The primary purpose of the SPD is to improve the quality of building design and protect the distinctive character of neighbourhoods. In this respect the SPD contains an analysis of the history, land use and patterns of movement, open space, landform and views and design details for each area, which informs guidance on design principles for future development. The SPD will not inform the principle or nature of development in any location, which is governed by other policies contained in the Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (2011).

The guidance provided in the SPD relates to the implementation of policies CS2 (part g) and DM5 of the Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (2011). Policies CS2 and DM5 were subject to assessment under the Habitats Regulations as part of their production. This is contained in the Appropriate Assessment for Ipswich Borough Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy and Policies (Landscape Partnership, 2009).

In relation to policy CS2 the Appropriate Assessment did not identify any negative impacts in relation to the relevant part ('development demonstrating principles of very high quality architecture and urban design').

In relation to policy DM5 the Appropriate Assessment concluded that this policy is unlikely to have an impact on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site (note that the policy was titled DC5 at the time).

The Core Strategy and Development Policies Development Plan Document is currently being reviewed. Policies DM5 and CS2 (part g, now part h) remain broadly similar. The Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) for Ipswich Borough Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy and Policies DPD Review (The Landscape Partnership, December 2014) again does not identify any negative effects arising from these policies.

As the Urban Character SPD relates to the implementation of these policies it can be concluded that **there will be no further effects on European sites and that an appropriate assessment is not required.** This conclusion relates to all eight parts of the Urban Character SPD. In addition it should be noted that the Urban Character SPD identifies open spaces which are important to the character of their neighbourhood. The retention or enhancement of such spaces may assist in meeting the requirements for mitigation (identified in the Appropriate Assessments of the adopted and emerging Core Strategies) by maintaining/providing alternative publicly accessible open spaces to the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA), thus reducing the potential for disturbance to SPA birds.

Natural England have been consulted and concur with this conclusion.