

Appendix 4 - Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Ipswich Borough Council Local Validation List

Introduction

The Local Validation List outlines the specific information and supporting documentation required when submitting a planning application within the Borough. It ensures that applications are complete and contain the necessary detail to allow planning officers to carry out a thorough and timely assessment.

Adhering to the list reduces delays and invalid submissions, improving the efficiency of the planning process. Regular updates reflect the Council's commitment to a high-quality and responsive development management service.

What is the purpose of this statement?

The purpose of this statement is to assess whether an Appropriate Assessment is required in relation to the Ipswich Borough Council Local Validation List.

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. This Directive was translated into British Law via the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended. The regulations are often abbreviated to, simply, the 'Habitats Regulations' (Regulations 102 and 103 are of particular relevance).

European wildlife sites are those designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Ramsar sites should also be given the same level of protection, as stated within the National Planning Policy Framework. The Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site lies partly within Ipswich Borough. The 'Habitats Regulations Assessments¹ (Appropriate Assessment)' for the Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan 2018 – 2036 (adopted in March 2022), also identified a list of European sites outside the Borough, which may potentially be affected by development in Ipswich.

The impact on those within a 20km radius from the boundary of Ipswich Borough was chosen as the area of search, which included:

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- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Ipswich Borough Local Plan at Preferred Options Stage, 15th January 2019
- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Ipswich Borough Local Plan Review at Final Draft Plan stage, 13th January 2020
- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Ipswich Borough Local Plan Review at Final Draft Plan stage: Air Quality and Flood Risk Addendum, 28th May 2020
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Ipswich Borough Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Review, Final Draft: Addendum relating to Proposed Main Modifications, 22nd July 2021
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Ipswich Borough Local Plan Site Allocations and Policies (Incorporating IP-One Area Action Plan) Development Plan Document Review, Final Draft: Addendum relating to Proposed Main Modifications, 29th June 2021

SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Alde-Ore & Butley Estuaries	Alde-Ore Estuary	Alde-Ore Estuary
Hamford Water	Hamford Water	Hamford Water
Orfordness to Shingle Street	Stour and Orwell Estuaries	Stour and Orwell Estuaries
Staverton Park and the Thicks	Deben Estuary	Deben
	Outer Thames Estuary	
	Sandlings	

The Process

The process to complete the Habitats Regulations Assessment involves a number of steps.

1. **Likely significant effect**
The Council, in consultation with Natural England, should decide whether or not the plan is likely to have a significant effect on any European site. This is a 'coarse filter' and any effect, large or small, positive or negative, should be considered.
2. **Connected to management of the site**
The Council should decide whether the plan is connected to the nature conservation management of the European sites.
3. **Screening**
The combination of decisions on likely significant effect and connections to management is often called 'screening'. If the plan is likely to have a significant effect and is not connected to the management of the site, an Appropriate Assessment is required.
4. **Scoping**
The whole plan must be assessed, but a 'scoping' exercise helps decide which parts of the plan have the significant effects and therefore where assessment should be prioritised. Natural England is an important consultee in this process.
5. **Consultations**
Natural England is a statutory consultee. The public may also be consulted if it is considered appropriate, for example if the assessment is likely to result in significant changes to the plan.
6. **Iterations and revision**
The process is iterative; the conclusions of an initial assessment may result in changes to the plan, and so a revision of the assessment would be required. If the revised assessment suggests further plan changes, the iteration will continue. It is normally expected that iterative revisions will continue until it can be ascertained that the plan will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site.

Table 1 below screens the Ipswich Borough Council Local Validation List to assess whether Habitats Regulations Assessment is needed.

Table 1 Ipswich Borough Council Local Validation List

HRA Step	Plan – Local Validation List
Likely significant impact	The Ipswich Borough Council Local Validation List is not expected to have a significant effect on any European protected sites. The policies to which the validation list relates were subject to a full Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as part of the Local Plan preparation process.
Connected to the conservation management of the site	No – the Local Validation List is not connected to the management of any designated European site.
Screening	The Local Validation List is not connected to site management and is not likely to result in significant effects on European protected sites. Therefore, an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

What were the conclusions of the appropriate assessment?

The adopted Ipswich Local Plan Review 2018–2036 was subject to an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations as part of its preparation. The assessment concluded that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of European sites, provided that a comprehensive package of mitigation measures was incorporated into the plan. These measures were designed to address the potential impacts of increased recreational pressure on designated European sites.

All Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) referenced in the Local Validation List have similarly been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening to ensure consistency with the conclusions and mitigation measures set out in the adopted Local Plan.

The plan-level Appropriate Assessment also identified the need for ongoing information gathering and further consideration of mitigation, particularly in relation to the management of visitor access to European sites. This highlights the importance of maintaining strong procedural requirements—such as those included in the Local Validation List to support the implementation of these measures.

Does the Local Validation List need an additional appropriate assessment?

The Local Validation List requires applications for new residential development to submit a shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) or Appropriate Assessment, where applicable.

These assessments enable the Council to determine whether proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site, and whether appropriate mitigation is necessary.

It can therefore be concluded that the Local Validation List supports the safeguarding of European designated sites by requiring early-stage environmental assessment. As the document does not introduce new policy or development proposals and builds upon existing Local Plan requirements, an Appropriate Assessment of the Local Validation List itself is not required.

Natural England has been consulted on this screening assessment, and their feedback will be reported and incorporated, where relevant, in the final version of the document.