

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

PLEASE NOTE: Undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of Havant Borough Council as the Competent Authority for the purpose of the Habitats Regulations. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose.

HRA drafting date:	28 th January 2021
HRA completion date:	24 th February 2021
Application reference:	APP/20/00888
Application address:	Site of 19 St Peters Avenue, Hayling Island
Application description:	Construction of new dwelling to replace house demolished under Planning Permission 97/61610/000
Lead Planning Officer:	David Eaves
Please note that all references in this assessment to the 'Habitats Regulations' refer to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).	

Stage 1 - details of the plan or project

European site potentially impacted by planning application, plan or project:	▪ Chichester & Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) ▪ Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar site ▪ Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) ▪ Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) ▪ Solent and Southampton Water SPA ▪ Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar ▪ Portsmouth Harbour SPA ▪ Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar ▪ Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC (Hereafter known as the Solent European Sites)
Is the planning application directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (if yes, Applicant should have provided details)?	No. The development consists of an increase in residential dwellings, which is neither connected to nor necessary to the management of any European site.
Are there any other projects or plans that together with the planning application being assessed could affect the site?	Yes. All new housing development within 5.6km of the Solent SPAs is considered to contribute towards an impact on site integrity in combination with other development in the Solent area due to increase in recreational pressure. All new housing development that would drain to the Budds Farm or Thornham Wastewater Treatment Works due to increase in nitrogen deposition leading to a reduction in water quality.

The PUSH Spatial Position Statement (<https://www.push.gov.uk/work/planning-and-infrastructure/push-position-statement/>) sets out the scale and distribution of housebuilding which is being planned for across South Hampshire.

Stage 2 - HRA screening assessment

Screening under Regulation 63(1)(a) of the Habitats Regulations – The Applicant to provide evidence so that a judgement can be made as to whether there could be any potential significant impacts of the development on the integrity of the SPA/SAC/Ramsar.

Recreational Pressure

The proposed development is within 5.6km of Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA/Ramsar. In accordance with advice from Natural England and as detailed in Policy DM24 of the adopted Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations), Policy E16 of the Pre-Submission Havant Borough Local Plan and the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, a net increase in housing development within 5.6km of the Solent SPAs is likely to result in impacts to the integrity of those sites through a consequent increase in recreational disturbance.

Development within the 5.6km zone will increase the human population at the coast and thus increase the level of recreation and disturbance of bird species. The impacts of recreational disturbance (both at the site-scale and in combination with other development in the Solent area) are analogous to impacts from direct habitat loss as recreation can cause important habitat to be unavailable for use (the habitat is functionally lost, either permanently or for a defined period). Birds can be displaced by human recreational activities (terrestrial and water-based) and use valuable resources in finding suitable areas in which to rest and feed undisturbed. Ultimately, the impacts of recreational disturbance can be such that they affect the status and distribution of key bird species and therefore act against the stated conservation objectives of the Chichester and Langstone Harbour SPA and Ramsar sites.

The proposed development represents a net increase in residential dwellings. Paragraph 6.4 of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy sets out that the “developer contribution will be required for every net additional dwelling within 5.6 kilometres of the boundaries of the Solent Special Protection Areas” (see para 6.3).

As a result, there would be a likely significant effect to the Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA due to recreation.

Water Quality

The proposed development is within the catchment of a wastewater treatment works that would drain into the Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA.

Natural England advises that there is a likely significant effect on the Solent European Sites due to the increase in wastewater from the new housing as a result of the Havant Borough Local Plan. Natural England also advises that any development proposed through any planning application providing overnight accommodation which would discharge into the Solent would be likely to cause a significant effect as there is uncertainty as to whether the increase in waste water from new housing in the Solent catchment will have an adverse effect on the Solent’s European Sites.

Natural England advise that there is existing evidence of high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Solent water environment with evidence of eutrophication at some designated sites. This causes eutrophication, which affects vegetation growth and food resources for qualifying species such that it affects the status and distribution of those species and therefore act against the stated conservation objectives of the Chichester and Langstone Harbour SPA and Ramsar sites.

The Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), Natural England (NE), and Environment Agency (EA) have been jointly working to develop an Integrated Water Management Strategy (IWMS). This examines the potential for the PfSH region to accommodate future housing growth without having a detrimental effect upon the water environment. There is currently uncertainty as to whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the new housing growth.

Natural England recommends that any new proposals which include overnight accommodation have inevitable wastewater implications. These implications, and all other matters capable of having a significant effect on designated sites in the Solent, must be addressed in the ways required by Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations. Nonetheless, the existing use of the site can be taken into account and it is the 'net' nutrient emissions into European Sites that is critical.

This would need to be examined within an appropriate assessment and that the existing nutrient and conservation status of the receiving waters be taken into account.

As a result, there would be a likely significant effect to the following Solent European Sites due to water quality:

- Chichester & Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar site
- Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar
- Portsmouth Harbour SPA
- Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar
- Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC

Would the proposal lead to a likely significant effect on European site integrity? Yes, due to recreational pressure and water quality loss/degradation of supporting habitats and construction impacts.

(If yes, continue to Stage 3).

Stage 3 - Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment under Regulation 63(1) - if there are any potential significant impacts, the applicant must provide evidence showing avoidance and/or mitigation measures to allow an Assessment to be made. The Applicant must also provide details which demonstrate any long-term management, maintenance and funding of any solution.

Recreation Pressure

The project being assessed would result in a net increase of dwellings within 5.6km of the Solent SPAs. In line with Policy DM24 of adopted Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations), Policy E16 of the Pre-Submission Havant Borough Local Plan and the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, a permanent significant effect on the Solent SPAs due to increase in recreational disturbance as a result of the new development, is likely. As such, in order to lawfully be permitted, the development will need to include a package of avoidance and mitigation measures.

Havant Borough Council formally adopted the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy in February 2018. The SRMS provides a strategic solution to ensure the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are met with regard to the in-combination effects of increased recreational pressure on the Solent SPAs arising from new residential development. This strategy represents a partnership approach to the issue which has been endorsed by Natural England.

As set out in the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, an appropriate scale of mitigation for this scheme would be:

Size of units	Scale of mitigation per unit	Amount proposed in this scheme	Cost
1 bedroom	£356.00	0	£0.00
2 bedroom	£514.00	0	£0.00
3 bedroom	£671.00	0	£0.00
4 bedroom	£789.00	1	£789.00
5 bedroom	£927.00	0	£0.00
Flat Rate (Caravan/ Tent Pitches)	£595.00	0	£0.00

Monitoring fee¹ for this scheme: £39.45

Administration fee² for this scheme: £23.00

TOTAL AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION PACKAGE: £851.45

¹Monitoring fee is 5% of total mitigation cost

²Administration fee is £23 per application

Policy E16 of the Pre-Submission Havant Borough Local Plan and sets out HBC's approach to securing the appropriate mitigation measures to address the in-combination impact of increased recreational disturbance arising from increased housing development. It states:

"Planning permission will be granted for residential development resulting in a net increase in population that mitigates a likely significant effect on the Solent SPAs"

A legal agreement will be necessary to secure the mitigation package. The applicant has confirmed through a European Site Avoidance and Mitigation Checklist that they commit to providing a mitigation package. Without the security of the mitigation being provided through a legal agreement, a significant effect would remain likely. As long as such a legal agreement is secured through the planning process, the proposed development will not affect the status and distribution of key bird species and therefore the development will not act against the stated conservation objectives of the European sites.

Water Quality

The project being assessed would result in an increase in population in the catchment of several Solent European Sites as set out in stage 2. As advised by Natural England, a permanent significant effect on the Solent European Sites due to the decrease in water quality as a result of new development, is likely. As such, in order to lawfully be permitted, further assessment is needed as to the net nutrient emissions from the site, including any avoidance or mitigation measures proposed.

Havant Borough Council has published a Position Statement and Mitigation Plan for Nutrient Neutral Development. This sets out how mitigation can be provided to enable development to take place within Havant Borough whilst avoiding any likelihood of a significant effect on the Solent European Sites identified in stage 2.

Natural England have produced 'Advice on achieving nutrient neutrality for new development in the Solent region. This sets out a methodology to calculate the nutrient emissions from a development site. The applicant has used this methodology to calculate the nutrient emissions from the site. This calculation has confirmed that the site will emit a nutrient load into any European Sites. The calculations for this development site are part of the application case file.

Achieving a position where there are no net nutrient emissions into the Solent European Sites from this development involves the use of a specific on-site avoidance measure as well as the use of Warblington Farm as a specific off-site mitigation measure. The scientific report 'Review of the Warblington Farm Mitigation Option for Nutrient Neutral Development in the Havant Borough' is available at www.havant.gov.uk/nitrogen which confirms suitability of the use of Warblington for nutrient mitigation to mitigate for development in Havant Borough.

As set out in the Position Statement and Mitigation Plan for Nutrient Neutral Development, an appropriate scale of mitigation for this scheme would be:

Amount of mitigation required kg/N ¹	Cost of mitigation
0.80	£988.00
Administration Fee ²	£23.00
Total avoidance and mitigation package for nutrient neutrality:	£1,011.00
¹ Please refer to the nutrient budget for the final figure of mitigation required	
² Administration fee is £23 per application	

A legal agreement will be necessary to secure this avoidance and mitigation package in perpetuity. Without the security of the mitigation being provided through a legal agreement, a significant effect would remain likely. As long as such a legal agreement is secured through the planning process, the proposed development will not affect the water quality of the Solent European Sites and therefore the development will not act against the stated conservation objectives of the Solent European Sites.

Stage 4 – Summary of the Appropriate Assessment (To be carried out by the Competent Authority (the local planning authority) in liaison with Natural England)

This assessment represents Havant Borough council's Appropriate Assessment as a Competent Authority in accordance with requirements under Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive and having due regard to its duties under Section 40(1) of the NERC Act 2006 to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Consideration of the Ramsar site/s is a matter of government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

This assessment concludes that the application will have a likely significant effect in the absence of avoidance and mitigation measures on the above Solent European sites.

The authority has concluded that the adverse effects arising from the proposal are wholly consistent with the effects detailed in the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy with regards recreational disturbance. The adverse effects are also consistent with the effects detailed in the Position Statement and Mitigation Plan for Nutrient Neutral Development with regards water quality.

The authority's assessment is that the application complies with these strategies and the potential to provide mitigation to remove the significant effects that otherwise would have been likely. It can therefore be concluded that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the designated sites identified above.

Natural England Officer:

Summary of Natural England's comments:

Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations, has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment of the proposal, in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Regulations. Natural England is a statutory consultee on the Appropriate Assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.

Summary of Natural England Advice

We consider that without appropriate mitigation this proposal would have a significant effect on: Chichester and Langstone Harbour SPA & Ramsar, the Solent Maritime SAC and the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA.

No objection subject to securing appropriate mitigation

Recreational disturbance - Special Protection Areas within the Solent

This application is within 5.6km of Chichester and Langstone Harbour SPA & Ramsar and will lead to a net increase in residential accommodation. Natural England is aware that Havant Borough Council has adopted planning policy to mitigate against adverse effects from recreational disturbance on the Solent SPA sites, as agreed by the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP).

Provided that the applicant complies with the policy and the Bird Aware Definitive Strategy, Natural England is satisfied that the applicant has mitigated against the potential adverse effects of the development on the integrity of the European site(s), and would have no objection to this aspect of the application.

Nitrogen Neutrality

The application is supported by a nitrogen budget which sets out the underlying calculations resulting in a positive nitrogen contribution of TN 0.8 Kg/year (inclusive of 20% buffer). It is noted that a budget calculation is included with the online submission that seems to show a value of - 0.4kg/yr, and it is assumed this has been included in error.

Natural England is aware that Havant Borough Council is developing an interim strategy to address nutrient impacts from developments currently in the planning system and we are working with the Council to develop this approach.

It is noted that the positive N budget for this development will be mitigated by water efficiency measures as well as the use of Warblington Farm as a specific off-site mitigation measure. It is advised that efficiency savings through water use should be secured through a suitable legal arrangement.

As you are aware, appropriate assessments cannot have lacunae and must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt as to the effects of the works proposed on the protected site concerned. Complete information is required to ensure that the proposal will not affect the integrity of the international sites.

Provided you as competent authority can be satisfied that, based on a sufficient level of evidence, the development will achieve nutrient neutrality by first occupation and that the appropriate level of mitigation can be fully secured in perpetuity, Natural England would advise that the Appropriate Assessment can conclude there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Solent European Sites in relation to water quality impacts.