

Southleigh, Havant

Appendix 9.2: Information for Habitats Regulations Assessment

Prepared on behalf of

Bloor Homes

Final Report

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Southleigh, Havant

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Southleigh, Havant

Appendix 9.2: Information for Habitats Regulations Assessment

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Southleigh, Havant

Appendix 9.2: Information for Habitats Regulations Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought for the provision for up to 1,800 new dwellings, a mixed-use Local Centre, a primary school and early years provision, green infrastructure, access, and other ancillary infrastructure, on land at Southleigh, Havant. Ecological Planning & Research (EPR) has been commissioned by Bloor Homes to provide advice in relation to the need to ensure that the development proposals are able to comply with the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended; the ‘Habitats Regulations’) in respect of the protection that they afford to internationally designated sites for nature conservation (‘international sites’).
- 1.2 It will be necessary for Havant Borough Council (HBC), as competent authority under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations, to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the proposals to determine whether they are likely to have a significant effect on internationally designated sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and if so to carry out an Appropriate Assessment to determine whether there will be an adverse effect on the integrity thereof.
- 1.3 The purpose of this *Information for Habitats Regulations Assessment* report is to provide HBC with the information that they will require in order to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment, and if necessary an Appropriate Assessment. These processes are described in more detail below.

Relevant Legislation, Policy, Guidance and Case Law

Legislation

- 1.4 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (known as the “Habitats Regulations”) were originally drawn up to transpose the European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the “Habitats Directive”) into UK legislation. Following the UK’s exit from the European Union, the Habitats Regulations – as amended by Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – remain in force until such a time as they are superseded by new or updated domestic legislation.
- 1.5 The key sections of relevance to projects appear from Regulation 63 onwards. Regulation 63 states that:

“(1) A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—

*(a) is **likely to have a significant effect** on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either **alone or in combination with other plans or projects**), and*

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site,

*must make an **appropriate assessment** of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.*

(2) A person applying for any such consent, permission or other authorisation must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment or to enable it to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required.” [our emphasis]

- 1.6 The above legislation thus requires that a sequential approach be adopted when addressing potential impacts upon International Sites. Guidance for doing this in practice has been published by the European Commission and others, and is discussed below.
- 1.7 The requirement for HRA under the Habitats Regulations applies to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated for certain Internationally important habitat types and animal populations under the aforementioned Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the earlier Birds Directive (now codified under Directive 2009/147/EC).
- 1.8 SACs and SPAs are collectively referred to as either European Sites or Natura 2000 sites in Europe, and are now part of the UK's "National Sites Network". However, as the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) also applies the protection afforded to these sites to Ramsar Sites (which are wetlands of International Importance designated under the separate Ramsar Convention in Iran in 1979) as a matter of National Planning Policy, these three types of site are collectively referred to within this report as 'International Sites' for expediency.

Policy

- 1.9 Policy DM23 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations) sets out the approach to the protection of SPA-qualifying wetland bird species outside of the statutory designated areas:

Planning permission will be granted for developments that avoid important sites for Brent Geese and/or waders outside of the statutory designated areas, identified on the Policies Map.

Where this cannot be avoided, development proposals on or adjacent to an important Brent Goose and/or wader site outside of the statutory designated areas will need to demonstrate levels of impact, alone and in combination with other proposals subject to the tests of the Habitats Regulations. Where a negative impact upon a site cannot be avoided or satisfactorily mitigated, and the tests of the Habitats Regulations are met as necessary, replacement feeding/roosting habitat, on a no net loss basis, will be sought.

Where a negative impact upon an important site cannot be avoided or mitigated and replacement feeding/roosting habitat is not or cannot be provided on a no net loss basis, the proposal will be refused.

Planning permission will be granted for development on or adjacent to uncertain sites for Brent Geese and/or waders outside of the statutory designated areas, where appropriate surveys are undertaken and it is determined that the site has no importance.

- 1.10 Similar wording is provided in Draft Policy 25 of the emerging Local Plan.

- 1.11 Policy DM24 sets out the approach to recreational effects upon Special Protection Areas:

Planning permission will be granted for residential developments that avoid or mitigate a likely significant effect on the SPAs, caused by recreational disturbance through the in-combination effect of net additional dwellings. This mitigation can be provided through:

a) A financial contribution.

b) A developer provided package of measures associated with the proposed development designed to avoid or mitigate any significant effect on the SPAs subject to meeting the tests of the Habitats Regulations.

c) A combination of measures in (a) and (b) above. Where these measures cannot be provided development proposals will be refused, unless the applicant can show, subject to meeting the tests of the Habitats Regulations, that there would not be an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPAs.

The provisions of this policy do not exclude the possibility that some residential schemes, due to their size/and or location, may require individual assessment under the Habitats Regulations on advice from Natural England and additional site specific avoidance or mitigation measures.

- 1.12 Similar wording is provided in Draft Policy 22 of the emerging Local Plan, whereas Draft Policies 20 and 23 respectively address the approach to designated sites in general and the achievement of nutrient neutrality in particular.

Emerging Local Plan HRA

- 1.13 An analysis of the policies and allocations proposed within the emerging Local Plan – including the draft Southleigh allocation, of which the proposed development forms the major part - is provided in the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Draft Building a Better Future Plan (January 2025).

Guidance

The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

- 1.14 Reference has been made to European Commission guidance on Habitats Regulations Assessment (EC, 2000, 2001, 2018). This guidance provides advice on meeting the correct stepwise approach required by Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. The whole process is usually referred to in the UK as “Habitats Regulations Assessment” (HRA) and is split into the following stages that are undertaken in sequence:

- Screening the need for an Appropriate Assessment;
- The “Appropriate Assessment” (AA);
- The Assessment of Alternative Solutions; and
- Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain (also known as the test for “Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest” or IROPI).

- 1.15 Each of the stages determines the requirement for the next one in the sequence to be carried out. For example, if it is concluded at the Screening stage that the plan or project is unlikely to generate significant adverse effects upon the International site in question, there is no need to proceed to the Appropriate Assessment stage, and so on.
- 1.16 Undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of the decision maker as the Competent Authority for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations (in this case HBC as the Local Planning Authority); although it is the responsibility of the proponent of a plan or project to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose.
- 1.17 In the first instance, this report is intended to provide the Competent Authority under the Habitats Regulations with the information that is required in order to determine whether or not the proposals are likely to have a significant effect on an International Site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and consequently whether or not an Appropriate Assessment is required. Should it be considered that an Appropriate Assessment is required, then this report also aims to supply the information that will be necessary in determining whether or not there will be an adverse effect on the integrity of the International Site(s) concerned.
- 1.18 Other guidance that has been taken into account during the preparation of this document includes:
- The European Commission's *'Managing Natura 2000 Sites'* document (2018) that provides guidance on some of the key concepts enshrined in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive);
 - The *'Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle'* (2000) which provides guidance on the correct application of the precautionary principle, stating that it should be applied with proportionality and should not aim at zero risk;
 - Circular 06/05 *'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System'*;
 - *'Planning for the Protection of European Sites'* (DCLG, 2006); and
 - PINS NOTE 05/2018 *'Consideration of avoidance and reduction measures in Habitats Regulations Assessment: People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta'* (Planning Inspectorate 9 May 2018).
- 1.19 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) also contains sections of relevance to HRA and International Sites, and this has been taken into account.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment's Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom (CIEEM, 2018)

- 1.20 Whilst the key guidance documents for the HRA process are those produced by the European Commission (EC, 2000, 2001, 2018), the approach taken in this document has also been carried out in accordance with the broad process advocated in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's "Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment" 2018 (the "EcIA Guidelines").

- 1.21 These guidelines are endorsed by the main stakeholders in the UK planning system that have a specific responsibility for wildlife and nature conservation, including Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trusts.
- 1.22 Broadly, the EclA Guidelines prescribe an approach that can be summarised as the following sequential process:
- Establishing the spatial extent of the Zone of Influence (ZoI) within which the proposed development is likely to exert biophysical changes upon the environment during either the site clearance, construction or operational phase;
 - The identification, description and valuation (where possible) of ecological features and resources of value within that ZoI (note that in this case the ecological features of relevance will be those for which the relevant International Sites were designated, and consequently of International nature conservation value);
 - The assessment of the likely magnitude and significance of potential impacts and effects that might be exerted upon those features and resources in the absence of any impact avoidance or mitigation measures;
 - The development of impact avoidance and/or mitigation measures to avoid and/or minimise potentially significant effects;
 - The assessment of any residual effects (positive or negative) that would remain following the application of any impact avoidance and/or mitigation measures, and the development of appropriate compensation measures where significant residual negative effects remain;
 - The development of ecological enhancement measures to be incorporated into the project proposals to deliver net gains; and
 - Advice on the consequent potential implications of relevant nature conservation related legislation or planning policy.
- 1.23 Other subject specific guidance is referred to in the relevant assessment sections in this document.

Relevant Case Law

Case C-127/02 of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) – The ‘Waddenzee’ Case

- 1.24 The ECJ Waddenzee Case clarified a number of important points in relation to the correct interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive in particular. This clarification has been helpfully set out in Government Circular 06/05 ‘*Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*’.
- 1.25 In particular, one of the key messages from the ECJ was that, where a plan or project has the potential to affect a Natura 2000 site, an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is necessary:

*“....if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of **objective information**, that it will have a significant effect on that site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects” [our emphasis]*

[Paragraph 13 of Circular 06/05 or paragraph 44 of the Waddenzee Judgment]

- 1.26 The ECJ expanded upon this by saying that:

“...where such a plan or project has an effect on that site but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned.”

[Paragraph 47 of the Waddenzee Judgement]

- 1.27 Further to the above the ECJ clarified that, once an Appropriate Assessment has been triggered, except in the circumstances outlined in Article 6(4) of the Directive, a plan or project can only be authorised where it will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, and that:

“That is the case where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects”.

[Paragraph 21 of Circular 06/05, or paragraph 59 of the Waddenzee Judgement]

The ‘Dilly Lane’ and ‘People over Wind’ Judgments

- 1.28 The High Court, in the judgment of J Sullivan in *Hart DC v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* (2008), has for some time formed the basis of established HRA Practice pertaining to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, insofar as it has determined the approach to the Screening and Appropriate Assessment stages of the HRA process.
- 1.29 Up until recently the established approach derived from the Dilly Lane Case meant that where impact avoidance and mitigation measures (such as SANG) were put forward as integral parts of a plan or project, and where the Competent Authority was also satisfied that those measures would both be effective, deliverable and could be secured, then there was no need for an Appropriate Assessment to be carried out.
- 1.30 This was because in such circumstances it was considered that the information pertaining to the efficacy of those impact avoidance and mitigation measures represented the ‘objective information’ referred to by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in the Waddenzee case (above)
- 1.31 More recently however, in case C-323/17 of the ECJ (referred to as ‘People over Wind’), the ECJ concluded that it was not appropriate to take account of “...*measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project...*” at the Screening stage of the HRA process. Although there appear to be some inconsistencies between this judgment and previous ECJ case law, until such time as the ECJ may provide further clarification, it will be necessary to consider the efficacy of impact avoidance and mitigation measures such as SANG and SAMM through the medium of an Appropriate Assessment in order to ensure compliance with the findings of the judgment.
- 1.32 A further more recent ECJ case, known as the *Grace and Sweetman* case (July 2018)(Case C-164/17) appears to have reiterated the approach taken in ‘*People over Wind*’ with respect to measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a plan or project, as well as outlining that compensatory measures should only be taken into consideration in the circumstances laid

out by Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (i.e. where there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest).

Scope of the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report

1.33 In view of the above considerations, the scope of this report is as follows:

- To gather information to establish whether or not the proposed development is likely to contribute to a significant effect on any international sites of nature conservation importance, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects;
- To gather information to establish, if a significant impact is likely, whether or not it would adversely affect the integrity of any international sites;
- To recommend impact avoidance and mitigation measures, if required, to address any potential impacts identified; and
- To make recommendations in relation to the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in view of the information collected.

2. CHARACTERISATION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

- 2.1 Guidance from the European Commission indicates that the first stage of providing the information that is necessary for a Competent Authority to undertake the HRA process is for all those aspects of the subject project or plan, which either alone or in combination with other plans and projects have the potential for having a significant effect on an international site, to be identified and characterised.

Relevant Details of the Proposed Development

Site Location and Context

- 2.2 The site lies to north and south of Southleigh Road, between the settlements of Denvilles to the west and Emsworth to the east. The site extends to approximately 107ha and forms the major part of the draft Southleigh Allocation proposed in the emerging Havant Borough Local Plan.
- 2.3 The site is largely occupied by arable land, with smaller areas of improved and herb-poor permanent grassland, and woodland. Its north-eastern part is occupied by a parkland landscape associated within the adjacent Southleigh Park House.

Development Proposal

- 2.4 As described in ES Chapter 4, the proposed development provides for up to 1,800 new dwellings, a mixed-use Local Centre, a primary school and early years provision, green infrastructure, access, and other ancillary infrastructure. The Southleigh Park parkland is proposed to form the basis of a new 'community park'.

Likely Biophysical Changes and Zone of Influence

- 2.5 The Zone of Influence (Zol) of a proposed development is defined by the EclA Guidelines as:
- “... the area over which ecological features may be affected by the biophysical changes caused by the proposed project and associated activities”.*
- 2.6 In this case, the Zol of the proposed development will encompass different areas, and thus potentially impact upon different ecological receptors, depending upon the spatial extent of the relevant biophysical change. During either its construction or operational phase, the proposed development has the potential to result in the following biophysical changes, which could result in ecological effects on international sites:
- Loss or degradation of habitat utilised by populations of SAC or SPA qualifying species;
 - Recreational pressure arising from increased visitation of publicly accessible sites;
 - Increased water abstraction;
 - Water quality changes arising from the effects of wastewater generated by occupants of the proposed development; and

- Air quality changes arising from traffic generated by the proposed development.

3. CHARACTERISATION OF INTERNATIONAL SITES

Introduction

- 3.1 This section briefly describes the internationally designated nature conservation sites within the potential Zol of the proposed development, particularly in relation to the potential sensitivities of their qualifying features, their conservation objectives, and the environmental conditions that are required to support them, in order to enable an assessment to be made of the potential for significant impacts to occur in the absence of impact avoidance and mitigation measures.
- 3.2 **Map 1** shows the location of internationally designated sites within the vicinity of the application site. The scope of this assessment – in terms of the identification of sites which may be considered to fall within the potential Zol of the proposed development – is informed by the HRA of the emerging Local Plan (2025) discussed in **Section 1**, which concludes that likely significant effects upon the New Forest SAC, SPA, and Ramsar Site, Kingsley Vale SAC, and Pagham Harbour SPA and Ramsar site – are *“unlikely due primarily to the distance between them and any potential impact pathways arising from the policies and allocations in the Plan.”* The sites for which likely significant effects are not excluded are:
- Solent Maritime SAC;
 - Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC;
 - Butser Hill SAC;
 - Singleton & Cocking Tunnels SAC;
 - Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site;
 - Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Ramsar site;
 - Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site;
 - Solent & Dorset Coast SPA;
- 3.3 The qualifying features of each site are identified in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1: Qualifying Features

Site	Qualifying Features
Solent Maritime SAC	<p>1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time</p> <p>1130 Estuaries</p> <p>1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Intertidal mudflats and sandflats</p> <p>1150 Coastal lagoons</p> <p>1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves</p> <p>1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Glasswort and other annuals colonising mud and sand</p> <p>1320 Spartina swards (<i>Spartinionaritimae</i>); Cordgrass swards</p> <p>1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</p> <p>2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes"); Shifting dunes with marram</p> <p>1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></p>
Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC	1150 Coastal lagoons
Butser Hill SAC	<p>6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</p> <p>91J0 <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles; Yew-dominated woodland</p>
Singleton & Cocking Tunnels SAC	<p>S1308 Barbastelle Bat <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i></p> <p>S1323 Bechstein's Bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i></p>
Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA	<p>A046a Dark-bellied rent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i></p> <p>A048 Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A050 Eurasian Wigeon <i>Mareca penelope</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A052 Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A054 Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A056 Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A069 Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A137 Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A141 Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A144 Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A149 Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A157 Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A160 Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A162 Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A169 Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> (Non-breeding)</p> <p>A191 Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i> (Breeding)</p> <p>A193 Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> (Breeding)</p> <p>A195 Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i> (Breeding)</p> <p>Waterbird Assemblage</p>
Chichester & Langstone Harbours Ramsar	<p>Criterion 1: Habitats associated with large estuarine basins</p> <p>Criterion 5: Important waterfowl assemblage</p> <p>Criterion 6: Qualifying populations of Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Dark-bellied Brent Goose, Common Shelduck, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Little Tern</p>

Portsmouth Harbour SPA	A046a Dark-bellied Brent Goose A069 Red-breasted Merganser A149 Dunlin A156 Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>
Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar	Criterion 3: Intertidal mudflats supporting notable species populations Criterion 6: Qualifying population of Dark-bellied Brent Goose
Solent & Southampton Water SPA	A046a Dark-bellied Brent Goose A069 Red-breasted Merganser A149 Dunlin A156 Black-tailed Godwit A176 Mediterranean Gull <i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i> (Breeding) A191 Sandwich Tern A192 Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougalli</i> (Breeding) A193 Common Tern A195 Little Tern
Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar	Criterion 1: Major sheltered channel with distinctive characteristics and habitats Criterion 2: Important rare plant and invertebrate assemblage Criterion 5: Important waterfowl assemblage (wintering) Criterion 6: Qualifying populations of Dark-bellied Brent Goose, Eurasian Teal, Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit
Solent & Dorset Coast SPA	A191 Sandwich Tern (breeding) A193 Common Tern (breeding) A195 Little Tern (breeding)

Conservation Objectives

SAC Sites

3.4 Natural England's conservation objectives for the SACs listed in **Table 3.1** are as follows:

“Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;*
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;*
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;*
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely;*
- The populations of qualifying species; and*
- The distribution of the qualifying species within the site.”*

SPA Sites

3.5 The respective conservation objectives for SPAs are to:

“Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- *The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;*
- *The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;*
- *The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;*
- *The population of each of the qualifying features; and*
- *The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.”*

Ramsar Sites

- 3.6 Although Natural England does not publish conservation objectives for Ramsar sites, these typically coincide with SAC and/or SPA designations, and applicable SAC or SPA conservation objectives may be considered in assessment terms as extending to apply to coinciding Ramsar designations, with the caveat that the respective qualifying features may differ to some degree.

Supplementary Advice

- 3.7 Natural England’s ‘Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features’ for SACs and SPAs, provides site-specific targets intended to support the achievement of the respective conservation objectives. Both this advice and Natural England’s Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) identify factors with the potential to adversely affect site condition and outline appropriate remedial measures; these have been afforded due consideration in the preparation of this assessment.

4. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON INTERNATIONAL SITES

Introduction

- 4.1 This section uses the Source-Pathway-Receptor model to outline how international site qualifying features might be adversely affected by the changes predicted to arise as a result of the proposed development in the absence of impact avoidance and mitigation measures.

Habitat Loss and Degradation

- 4.2 Qualifying populations of highly mobile species – such as bats and birds - which depend on habitats linked to but remote from designated sites, may be vulnerable to the loss or degradation of roosting, resting, or foraging opportunities presented by supporting habitats beyond the confines of the statutory designation. This may occur either directly, as a result of permanent land use change, or indirectly through disturbance or displacement effects arising from construction phase or operational changes such as increases in lighting or human activity.
- 4.3 Potential habitat loss and degradation impacts upon the qualifying features of international sites are considered in **Section 5** of this assessment.

Recreational Pressure

- 4.4 Qualifying species can be sensitive to increased recreational use of nearby land by residents of new housing as this may disturb their feeding and breeding behaviour, potentially leading to adverse effects through the abandonment of nests, roosts, or feeding and resting habitats. Increased recreational activity also has the potential to result in fragmentation and degradation of qualifying habitats as a result of trampling damage, creation of desire lines, eutrophication of habitats as a result of dog fouling and littering, and increased risk of fire.
- 4.5 Potential recreational pressure impacts upon the qualifying features of international sites are considered in **Section 6** of this assessment.

Hydrological Changes

- 4.6 Qualifying wetland and coastal habitats can be sensitive to water quality changes arising from increased levels of nutrient nitrogen input generated by new development, both directly, through wastewater contributions, and indirectly, as a result of the effects of land use change on diffuse pollution. Qualifying wetland bird species can also be sensitive to water quality-related changes to the condition, structure, and function of supporting habitats.
- 4.7 Potential water quality impacts upon qualifying features of international sites are considered in **Section 7** of this assessment.
- 4.8 Water abstraction effects are scoped out of consideration: as reported in the draft Local Plan HRA, water resources within Havant Borough are managed by Portsmouth Water, which currently projects a supply surplus up to 2044 notwithstanding the effects of anticipated growth in demand and climate change.

Air Quality

- 4.9 Many terrestrial habitats are sensitive to changes in air quality, including atmospheric nitrogen dioxide concentrations usually associated with traffic and leading to localised effects, and nutrient deposition and acidification which may lead to changes in habitat composition and condition in the long term.
- 4.10 Potential air quality impacts upon the qualifying features of international sites are considered in **Section 8** of this assessment.

5. HABITAT LOSS AND DEGRADATION

Introduction

- 5.1 This section considers potential effects upon Singleton & Cocking Tunnels SAC, the nearby Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site, and the broader assemblage of Solent SPAs and Ramsar sites, arising from the loss or degradation of offsite supporting habitat – that is, habitat that supports SAC or SPA-qualifying populations outside of the respectively designated boundary.

Assessment Methodology

- 5.2 As set out in ES Chapter 9: Ecology and Appendix 9.1 thereto, the proposed development has been subject to a comprehensive programme of ecological assessment, including the following elements of particular relevance to this assessment:
- Desktop research, including a review of available data regarding the behaviour and distribution of SAC-qualifying bat species and SPA-qualifying coastal bird species, and procurement of relevant records held by Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) and Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SBRC), most recently in March 2025;
 - Bat activity transects and automated sampling conducted at monthly intervals between April and October 2023 in accordance with the then-current 3rd edition of the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, and rare bat trapping surveys undertaken over a total of six nights in May, July, and August 2023; and
 - Winter bird surveys conducted between November 2022 - March 2023, and November 2025 - February 2026.

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site (and broader suite of Solent Marine SPAs and Ramsar sites)

Desktop Study

- 5.3 The southern half of the application site, together with adjacent land within the broader draft allocation, was surveyed on numerous occasions between 2007 and 2016 to inform the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (SW&BGS): no Brent Geese or other SPA qualifying species were recorded. As represented in **Map 2**, this area is identified in the SW&BGS as a site with 'negative records only'.
- 5.4 A 'low use' SW&BGS site, separately proposed for residential development, lies some 120m to the south-west of the application site. The key areas of the local habitat network which supports the SPA bird assemblage lie to the south of the site, beyond the A27.
- 5.5 The south-eastern part of the application site (*i.e.*, the land to the south-east of the Southleigh Farm yard) was also assessed over the course of nine winter bird survey visits conducted between November 2013 and March 2014 to inform the then-proposed (now operational) residential development to the west of Horndean Road (APP/14/00547): no Brent Geese or

other SPA species were recorded during this survey (*Land off Horndean Road, Emsworth: Brent Goose Survey* (Azure Ecology, 2014)).

Survey Results

- 5.6 As set out in ES Chapter 9 and Appendix 9.1 and summarised in **Table 5.1**, no Brent Geese were recorded during the 2022-23 and 2025-26 winter bird surveys of the application site and its close surrounds.

Table 5.1: Wintering Bird Survey Summary Results

Species	BoCC status	Peak Count		Number of visits on which seen	
		2022-23	2025-26	2022-23	2025-26
Blackbird		2	9	3	4
Black-headed Gull	Amber	62	250+	5	4
Blue Tit		2	24	3	3
Buzzard			3		3
Carrion Crow		19	21	10	4
Chaffinch			2		2
Chiffchaff			4		1
Coal Tit		2		1	
Collared Dove			2		1
Common Gull	Amber	13		1	
Duncock*	Amber	1	8	1	3
Feral Pigeon			5		2
Fieldfare			3		3
Goldfinch		46	14	4	4
Goldcrest			1		1
Great Tit		2	11	3	4
Great Spotted Woodpecker		1		3	
Green Woodpecker			1		2
Greenfinch	Red		5		2
Grey Heron		1		1	
Grey Wagtail			1		1
Herring Gull*	Red	184	70+	5	4
House Sparrow*	Red	20	37	3	4
Jackdaw		53	50	6	4
Jack Snipe			1		1
Jay			2		1
Kestrel	Amber		1		3
Lapwing*	Red		12		2
Lesser black-backed gull	Amber		30+		2
Little Egret		2		3	
Long-tailed Tit		2	7	3	1
Magpie		24	30	8	4
Mallard	Amber	1	3	1	1
Meadow Pipit	Amber	12	8	6	4
Mistle Thrush	Red	5	2	3	2
Moorhen	Amber	1		1	
Nuthatch			1		1
Peregrine			1		1
Pheasant		1	6	2	5
Pied Wagtail			6		4
Raven			1		1
Red-legged Partridge			8		3
Redwing			110+		3
Reed Bunting			1		3
Robin		2	19	2	4
Rook	Amber	92	35	5	3

Skylark*	Red	22		5	
Snipe	Amber	5	72	3	5
Song Thrush*	Amber	3		2	
Sparrowhawk			1		1
Starling*	Red	84	230+	4	4
Stock Dove	Amber	16	4	4	2
Stonechat		1	1	1	1
Skylark*	Red		15		4
Tawny Owl			1		1
Teal	Amber	3		1	
Woodpigeon	Amber	128	400+	6	4
Wren	Amber	1	6	1	4

*Section 41 species

- 5.9 Low numbers of the SPA-qualifying species Teal and Little Egret were recorded during the 2022-23 survey programme: the former in a group of three on a single occasion, the latter, singly or in pairs, on three of the ten survey visits. Both species were recorded within the corridor of 'West Brook', which runs parallel to the southern part of the site's eastern boundary and is offset therefrom by approximately 20m. This section of West Brook was designed as 'low flow wet ditch' within a wet grassland corridor, and created by the rerouting of an existing field boundary ditch in or around 2019 as part of the above-mentioned residential development to the west of Horndean Road.
- 5.10 Lapwing, apparently added as a named component of the broader Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA waterbird assemblage through the SPA network review process, was encountered in small flocks of 5 and 12 individuals, during two of the 2025-26 survey visits.
- 5.11 Aside from gull species, other waterbirds, such as Mallard and Moorhen, were largely encountered infrequently or in low numbers, although, in early 2026, counts of up to 72 Common Snipe were recorded from within a flood attenuation basin, constructed concurrently with the above-mentioned development to the west of Horndean Road, in the south-east corner of the site – responding to a wetland habitat opportunity presented by a period of exceptionally wet winter weather. Although listed in the SW&BGS, Snipe is not a 'named' component of the local SPA or Ramsar waterbird assemblages: the 2025 periodic review determined that it was not possible to "add" this widespread species to any site within the SPA network, even on the basis of applying a lower assessment threshold value of 0.5% of the national population.

Impact Assessment

- 5.12 The proposed development will not directly impact the recently created offsite wetland habitat in the corridor of West Brook, which will be offset from new residential development by a semi-natural habitat buffer of at least 50m. The existing attenuation basin will form part of a substantial new wetland and semi-natural habitat corridor along the site's eastern boundary, which, in addition to a similar proposed treatment to the southern boundary, will increase the quantity and diversity of wetland and seasonally wet grassland habitat that may, subject to suitable design and management, continue to present occasional seasonal foraging opportunities for wetland species.
- 5.13 In view of this, and the low-level or sporadic occurrence of waterfowl within the site and its surrounds – and the particular paucity of SPA-qualifying species or key components of the qualifying assemblages – the proposals are not considered likely to generate a significant effect arising from supporting habitat loss upon the Solent Marine SPAs and Ramsar sites.

Singleton & Cocking Tunnels SAC

Background

- 5.14 Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC lies approximately 15km north-east of the application site. The draft *Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol* prepared by the South Downs National Park Authority and Natural England recommends that a 6.5km radius around the Sussex bat SACs should be regarded as the 'key conservation area', within which 'all impacts' are duly assessed, and that a 12km radius should be regarded as the 'wider conservation area', within which consideration of 'significant impacts or severance to flightlines' should be considered. This zonal approach provides the basis for assessment in the HRA of the Chichester Local Plan (2023).
- 5.15 Although populations of the SAC's qualifying species, Bechstein's Bat and Western Barbastelle, occur within Havant Borough and east Hampshire in general, the extent to which these are functionally linked to the relatively remote SAC is undetermined. As reported in the draft Local Plan HRA, such a link has only been established in respect of a third species (Natterer's Bat), not listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. On a precautionary basis, however, the Local Plan HRA adopts the assumption that: "*populations of Bechstein's Bat in the Plan area are functionally linked to populations within the SAC and that therefore any impacts to bat habitat (roosts, foraging/commuting habitat) could result in impacts alone or in combination.*"

Desktop Study

- 5.16 It is widely recorded that Bechstein's Bat maternity colonies occur within Southleigh Forest, which lies almost immediately to the north-east of the application site, and within the broader complex of East Hampshire woodlands to the north. Bechstein's Bats have been captured during trapping surveys undertaken (most recently in July 2022) to inform the proposed redevelopment of Southleigh Park House (APP/21/01451), immediately to the north of the application site.
- 5.17 Radiotracking surveys commissioned by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in 2024 have recorded Bechstein's Bats foraging within the parkland landscape that occupies the north-eastern section of the application site, and a Barbastelle dispersing southward through the site from a maternity roost in Barton's Copse to coastal foraging habitats via underpass crossings of the A27 (*pers. comm. Ecological Consultancy Services Ltd.*).
- 5.18 Similar surveys undertaken in 2017 and 2021 to inform proposals for the development of land north of Long Copse Lane, Emsworth (APP/21/00893), determined that Bechstein's Bats use the corridor of the River Ems as a key southward commuting route, either crossing the A27 or dispersing to east and west along its wooded corridor – progressing westward from the Ems toward the south-eastern extent of the broader draft allocation (but not as far west as the application site itself).

Survey Results

Transect Survey

- 5.19 As discussed in Appendix 9.1, the predominant activity recorded during the 2023 programme of activity transect surveys was the occurrence of low numbers of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle bats foraging at intervals along boundary features. Myotis species bats (the genus which includes Bechstein's Bat) were recorded on a total of three occasions, in various parts of the site. Barbastelle was briefly recorded once, to the west of Eastleigh Road.

Automated Survey

- 5.20 Summary results of the automated sampling are provided in **Table 5.2** below.

Table 5.2: Average Passes per Night at each Automated Sampling Location

Species	Location			
	1	2	3	4
Myotis species	10.7	78.9	4.2	7.8
Barbastelle	1.2	3.9	2.9	3.7

Location 1: SU735078 - Interface of Eastleigh Copse and pasture west of Eastleigh Road

Location 2: SU735078 – Spinney within Southleigh parkland

Location 3: SU735078 - South edge of Southleigh Copse (NW of Southleigh Farm buildings)

Location 4: SU738068 - Small tree group in open farmland south of Southleigh Farm

- 5.21 Myotis species bats were disproportionately active at location 2 (the small ‘spinney’ woodland within the Southleigh parkland); 77.7% of all Myotis activity was recorded at this location.
- 5.22 Some notable temporal and seasonal variations in activity were recorded. 32% of all Myotis species passes were recorded during a single exceptional night (between 21:02 and 04:43 on 28-29th April 2023) at location 2 – this is presumably indicative of constant foraging activity around the detector by one or more bats, following a sudden increase in temperature toward the end of April. A further 28.3% of all Myotis species passes were recorded (on a more evenly distributed basis) during the September sampling period. This could be taken to mean that the habitat at this location has greater importance for the Myotis species group during ‘transitional’ periods (outside the maternity season) – although it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from the purely quantitative data.
- 5.23 Some of this activity may be attributable to Bechstein’s Bats, although at least a proportion is likely to be attributable to Natterer’s - a congeneric species with similar echolocation characteristics – which were positively identified during trapping surveys.
- 5.24 Barbastelle was recorded at each sampling location in 2023 but only on a relatively infrequent basis, recalling the observation in the Mammal Society’s comprehensive review of British mammal populations (Matthews *et al.*, 2018) that *“With the advent of widespread use of static acoustic detectors, it has become apparent that the [barbastelle] is widely distributed — although never common — across the rural landscape of southern Britain and parts of Wales.”*

Trapping Surveys

- 5.25 Despite suitable conditions, observed activity levels during the trapping surveys were very low, and only four bats were caught: two Natterer’s Bats, one Brown Long-eared, and one Soprano Pipistrelle.
- 5.26 Although no Bechstein’s Bats were caught during the 2023 trapping survey programme, the Southleigh parkland presents highly suitable foraging opportunities for this species, and it is understood that evidence of foraging behaviour was recorded during radiotracking surveys commissioned by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in 2024. The 2024 radiotracking surveys are also understood to have indicated that the application site may provide a dispersal route for Barbastelle commuting southward toward the coastal marshes and pastures beyond the A27 – albeit that this is predicated on a brief ‘snapshot’ of the seasonal behaviour of one individual bat.

- 5.27 Although there is no direct evidence of a functional link between the local Bechstein's Bat and Barbastelle populations and the SAC, and notwithstanding that the site lies some 3km beyond even the 'wider' conservation buffer applied thereto in local planning guidance, this assessment defers to the precautionary assumptions of the draft Local Plan HRA in concluding that, in the absence of mitigation, residential development at Southleigh could result in a likely significant effect on the Singleton & Cocking Tunnels SAC as a result of impacts on supporting or functionally linked habitat.

Information for Appropriate Assessment

- 5.28 The Southleigh parkland represents the key feature of potential importance for the conservation of Annex II bat species, and bats in general, within the application site. This will be wholly retained as a community park, and its value as a foraging resource for rare bat species will be enhanced in line with Local Nature Recovery Strategy objectives through a suite of measures including the planting of future cohorts of mature and veteran trees; the introduction of species-rich grassland and scrub layers; and the adoption of conservation-led management.
- 5.29 While the proposed development will generate a significant increase in recreational activity within the parkland, this is likely to be largely diurnal and passive in nature, which inherently moderates its potential effect on bats. Although the parkland presents potentially suitable roosting opportunities for bats, no Annex II species roosts or other roosts of high conservation importance have been identified to date. Potential disturbance effects on roosting bats will be avoided by design – particularly by the sensitive location of path routes and other amenity infrastructure, which are proposed to be offset from wooded areas and freestanding trees.
- 5.30 In the absence of mitigation, health and safety considerations arising from the recreational use of retained habitats (within the parkland and elsewhere) may conduce to an increase in the intensity of arboricultural management during the occupation phase. Resultant negative effects on the availability of roosting opportunities will be avoided and mitigated by a conservation-led approach to management, as prescribed within a LEMP - which will prioritise the retention of standing deadwood and veteran features wherever possible, and require ecological input to any arboricultural intervention.
- 5.31 New residential development at Southleigh could also conduce towards increased visitation of Southleigh Forest itself – although any such effect is unlikely to be particularly significant in relation to baseline levels, given the quantity of existing dwellings within northern Emsworth from which the woodland is more conveniently accessible. Furthermore, the very considerable quantity (c.50ha) of green infrastructure proposed alongside residential development is likely to have the effect of absorbing a significant proportion of the local recreational activity generated not only by new residents but also by those of many existing dwellings in both Emsworth and eastern Havant.
- 5.32 The capability of Annex II and other bat species to disperse through the site will be maintained and enhanced by the provision of a continuous semi-natural habitat corridor, exceeding 50m in minimum width, along the full length of the site's eastern boundary to the south of Southleigh Road, forming an enhanced habitat buffer to the existing riparian corridor of West Brook.
- 5.33 This will provide a substantial and enduring habitat link between important bat habitat resources to the north - the parkland, Barton's Copse, Southleigh Forest, and the broader complex of East Hampshire woodlands - and foraging and dispersal opportunities to the south - including West

Brook, the adjacent 'Land West of Emsworth Recreation Ground' (or "Little Meadow") SINC, the wooded A27 corridor, and underpass crossings of the A27 south of Emsworth.

- 5.34 The indicative landscape treatment for this area is favourable for bat dispersal and foraging, and includes linear tree planting, blocks of mixed native scrub, semi-natural and seasonally wet grassland, and wetland habitat components. Taken together with the adjacent West Brook corridor, it may serve to 'mirror' the established Bechstein's Bat commuting corridor along the River Ems on the distal side of Emsworth.
- 5.35 The proposals also allow for a >100m semi-natural habitat buffer to the wooded corridor of the A27, where this lies adjacent to the central part of the site's southern boundary. It is anticipated that, along with other land within the draft allocation to the east and west, this is likely to form part of a broader green infrastructure corridor running parallel to the A27, thereby facilitating continued bat dispersal along the east-west axis and between underpass crossing opportunities that may be utilised by dispersing bats.
- 5.36 Further details of impact assessment and mitigation in respect of bats and other important ecological features are provided in Chapter 9. These include:
- Avoidance of impacts upon any hitherto unidentified bat roosts by the implementation of standard mitigation measures, particularly including update and pre-commencement surveys;
 - Mitigation of construction phase lighting and other disturbance pursuant to a CEMP; and
 - The development of a suitably sensitive external lighting strategy.

Conclusion

- 5.37 In view of its parameters, which protect key features of importance to bats and maintain their ability to disperse through the site, and subject to the implementation of the prescribed measures, the proposed development will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

6. RECREATIONAL PRESSURE

- 6.1 This section considers the potential for the proposed development to generate effects arising from increased recreational pressure on the nearby Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site, and the broader suite of Solent SPAs and Ramsar sites (the 'Solent Marine Sites').

Assessment Methodology

- 6.2 Existing information regarding the respective sensitivity of International Sites to effects arising from recreational pressure was investigated through desktop study, including review of site management plans, SSSI unit condition assessments, and strategic-level mitigation frameworks.

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

- 6.3 The existence of a well-evidenced recreational impact pathway toward a disturbance effect on SPA-qualifying bird species is reported in the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (SRMS; Bird Aware Solent, 2017). Information presented in the SRMS indicates that the core recreational catchment of the Solent SPAs extends to 5.6km linear distance from SPA boundaries.
- 6.4 The proposed development lies 1.2km from the Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA, and within the zone within which new residential development is considered likely to have significant effects on the Solent Marine SPAs.

Information for Appropriate Assessment

- 6.5 Although conventional Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is not usually considered to represent an effective mechanism for impact avoidance in a coastal context, as it is not possible to re-create the unique attraction of the seaside, the capacity of the proposed development to exert recreational pressure will be inherently moderated by the substantial quantity (c.50ha) of green infrastructure proposed - an approximate provision rate of 12ha per 1,000 residents – which will also serve to absorb a proportion of the quotidian activity generated by the residents of existing nearby dwellings.
- 6.6 This notwithstanding, the residual effect will be mitigated by a proportionate financial contribution to the SRMS in accordance with adopted and emerging local policy.

Conclusion

- 6.7 The proposed development will provide a mitigation contribution in accordance with the requirements of local policy and will consequently not give rise to adverse recreational pressure effects on the integrity of the Solent Marine SPAs and Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

7. WATER QUALITY

Introduction

- 7.1 This section considers the potential for the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to generate effects arising from changes in water quality upon Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site, the Solent Maritime SAC, and the broader suite of 'Solent Marine Sites'.

Assessment Methodology

- 7.2 The potential effects of the proposed development have been assessed by application of Natural England's current (V03_01_3) 'Nutrient Neutrality Budget Calculator' for development in the Solent region.

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

- 7.3 In view of the excessive level of nitrogen loading upon the Solent Marine Sites, Natural England considers that the additional nutrient load exerted by any new residential development in the Solent region will have a likely significant effect thereupon. Downstream sites could also potentially be affected by other forms of upstream water pollution such as uncontrolled siltation, chemical spills, or surface water contamination.

Information for Appropriate Assessment

Projected Nutrient Contribution

- 7.4 Natural England's current guidance sets out a stepwise approach to quantifying the net nutrient contribution generated by proposed development. The completed outline-stage nutrient budget calculation is separately enclosed; its various steps are summarised below.

Wastewater Effects

- 7.5 For the purposes of this provisional assessment, application of the Natural England calculator indicates that the occupation of 1,800 new dwellings at an average rate of 2.4 persons per dwelling would generate 1,312.17 kg/year of total nitrogen through discharge of treated wastewater from the receiving wastewater treatment works (WwTW) at Budds Farm, which currently operates within an effluent permit limit of 0.77mg/l.

Land Use Change Effects

- 7.6 Information regarding the site's pre-development use has been collated from the results of desktop study, such as review of aerial images, and habitat assessment undertaken between 2019 and 2025. As represented in **Map 3**, the site is in agricultural use and predominantly occupied by arable land used for the cultivation of cereal crops. Areas of permanent grassland used for either livestock grazing or cropping for hay or silage are assessed as 'lowland grazing' land as a category of best fit.
- 7.7 The proposed (outline) use of the application site is represented in **Map 4**. For the purposes of this provisional assessment, larger and more continuous areas of proposed informal greenspace are categorised as 'greenspace'. Smaller and more formal components of the open space provision, including areas with an indicative 'amenity grassland' landscape treatment are

categorised as ‘open urban land’, whereas small verges within the built environment are assessed as part of the surrounding residential development. For the purposes of this outline assessment, no distinction is made between the treatment of areas proposed for residential development and the proposed local centre and education provision.

- 7.8 Before mitigation, the overall net effect of wastewater generation and land use change is a projected increase in nutrient loading of 501.18 kg/year.

Nutrient Mitigation

- 7.9 The applicant's current expectation is that all runoff from areas of residential development will be conveyed to Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) treatment trains designed in accordance with Natural England-endorsed CIRIA guidance on nitrogen reduction – resulting in a 30% reduction in nutrient export from urban runoff.
- 7.10 After the application of a precautionary 20% buffer, this would reduce the currently projected (outline) nutrient nitrogen budget to 309.78 kg/year.
- 7.11 The residual nutrient mitigation liability will either be met by a proportionate in-perpetuity nutrient offsetting solution – undertaken elsewhere in the catchment and secured by means of a suitable planning or legal mechanism – or addressed under an applicable Environmental Delivery Plan (EDP).
- 7.12 Unless the terms of an EDP obviate the need for further site-level assessment, the actual quantum of mitigation would be determined by recalculation of the project nutrient budget at subsequent planning stages, so as to take account of the detailed layout and landscape treatment of the development; the actual number and type of dwellings proposed (and overall occupancy as determined through HBC's calculator); details of the surface water strategy and SuDS design; and the effects of any further subsequent changes in legislation, Natural England guidance, or the extant wastewater permitting regime.

Pollution Prevention

- 7.13 Other forms of pollution that might affect local watercourses upstream of the Solent Marine Sites - such as chemical spills, excessive siltation, or contaminated surface water run-off – will be avoided during the construction of the proposed development by the implementation of pollution prevention prescriptions provided in an approved Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and during its operation by the implementation of an approved SuDS strategy.

Conclusion

- 7.14 Subject to the achievement of nutrient neutrality under an approved EDP or through the implementation of a nutrient mitigation or offsetting solution, secured by condition or legal obligation, the proposed development will not result in an adverse eutrophication effect on the integrity of the Solent Marine Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

8. AIR QUALITY

- 8.1 This section considers the potential effects of air pollution generated from development-related traffic (exhaust emissions) upon sites for which the draft Local Plan HRA - in advance of a detailed technical assessment - does not exclude the potential for air quality effects: Butser Hill SAC, Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site, Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Ramsar site, Solent & Dorset Coast SPA, and Solent Maritime SAC.

Relevant Background Information

National Air Quality Strategy & Trends

- 8.2 Under the requirements of the Environment Act 1995, the UK government published an Air Quality Strategy (AQS). The AQS sets out the UK's national standards and objectives for ambient air quality, and measures to help achieve the objectives. The overall aim of the AQS is to achieve steady improvement in air quality into the long term. The objectives are transcribed into regulations in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000, as amended.
- 8.3 In 2019, the Government published its Clean Air Strategy, which sets out the measures that the Government intends to take to achieve legally binding international targets to reduce emissions of key pollutants.
- 8.4 Notwithstanding the implementation, or otherwise, of the proposed development, future air quality baseline conditions are expected to improve as there will likely be a reduction in vehicle emission rates and background concentrations following increased uptake of less polluting vehicles.

Assessment Methodology

- 8.5 In accordance with Natural England's 2018 guidance on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations, and the recommendations of JNCC guidance on decision-making thresholds for air pollution (2021), this assessment 'defers upwards' to the findings of prior strategic-level assessments, including the Air Quality HRA (2019) for HBC's withdrawn Local Plan 2036 and equivalent assessments commissioned by neighbouring authorities and also allowing for the effects of cumulative, pan-authority traffic growth within the potential zone of influence.
- 8.6 The HRA of the emerging Local Plan states that HBC will in due course commission an update air quality assessment thereof in order to take "*into account any new/modified policies and site allocations*". The Southleigh allocation is not 'new' to the emerging Local Plan: it was also proposed within the withdrawn Local Plan which was the subject of the 2019 AQ HRA assessment.

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Butser Hill SAC

- 8.7 Butser Hill SAC lies to the west of the A3, 10.4km to the north of the application site. This is slightly beyond the 10km zone of influence recommended (in respect of plan-level HRA) in the

2021 JNCC decision-making guidance, which also advises that the effects of traffic growth on strategic ‘trunk roads’ such as the A3 (i.e., elements of the ‘Trunk Road Network’ maintained by Highways England) should be excluded from the scope of project-level HRA as *“traffic patterns on trunk roads are a consequence of predicted growth across the UK generally”* and *“are more appropriately taken into account as part of national and regional strategic plan level HRAs.”* Relevant strategic-level conclusions are nevertheless provided below for information.

- 8.8 The SAC is designated for two Annex I habitats - semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates, and *Taxus baccata* (Yew) woods of the British Isles, which are both considered sensitive to the effects of traffic-related changes in air quality – although only a small proportion (<10%) of the SAC lies within the 200m roadside zone that could potentially be affected by strategic traffic growth.
- 8.9 On the basis of the spatial distribution of sensitive qualifying features within the area that could potentially be affected by traffic emissions, the AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan was able to conclude that *“likely significant effects can be discounted for nitrogen deposition, acid deposition, airborne oxides of nitrogen and airborne ammonia as causal pollutants, arising from increased road emissions associated with the HBLP (either alone or in combination).”*
- 8.10 The same ultimate conclusion is presented in the HRA of the Chichester Local Plan (2023), which notes that *“even if the A3 was closed entirely it would have a relatively minimal benefit on nitrogen deposition at Butser Hill SAC. Moreover, road traffic is not only a small contributor but is getting smaller (better) as time goes by”*.

Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar

- 8.11 Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar site lies some 1.2km to the south of the application site, although its most proximate component (Chichester Harbour) is relatively well-removed from the strategic road network. Further to the west, relatively minuscule parts of the SPA and Ramsar site lie within 200m of the A27 near to its junctions with the A3(M) and A230, and within 200m of the A2030 itself. The A27 and A3(M) are strategic trunk roads, and the effects of traffic patterns thereupon are properly a matter for regional and strategic-level HRA as opposed to this project-level assessment.
- 8.12 On the basis of strategic-level air quality modelling and analysis of the distribution of sensitive qualifying features in relation to potential exceedance areas, the AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan concluded that *“Adverse effects (pre-mitigation) can be discounted for all qualifying features of the Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar and SPA, and for nitrogen deposition, acid deposition, oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and ammonia (NH3) as causal pollutants.”*
- 8.13 The same conclusion is presented in the HRA of the Portsmouth Local Plan (2025), which determines that no adverse effect on integrity would arise either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Ramsar

- 8.14 Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Ramsar site lies some 8.4km to the south-west of the application site and partly within 200m of the M27 and M275 – both of which are strategic trunk roads and consequently beyond the proper scope of project-level assessment.

- 8.15 On the basis of strategic-level air quality modelling and analysis of the distribution of sensitive qualifying features in relation to potential exceedance areas, the AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan concluded that *“Adverse effects (pre-mitigation) can be discounted for all qualifying features of the Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar and SPA, and for nitrogen deposition, acid deposition, oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and ammonia (NH3) as causal pollutants.”*
- 8.16 The same conclusion is presented in the HRA of the Portsmouth Local Plan, which simply determines that *“no air pollution sensitive habitats lie within 200m of any of the modelled links, including the proposed bridge (i.e. no vegetated habitats, just intertidal mudflats).”*

Solent and Dorset Coast SPA

- 8.17 The Solent and Dorset Coast SPA lies around 8.5km to both the south-west (overlapping the Portsmouth Harbour designations) and south of the application site.
- 8.18 The AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan discounts the potential for adverse effects on the SPA, principally on the basis that the open sea and intertidal mudflat foraging habitat utilised by the qualifying tern species populations is not sensitive to the effects of traffic-related airborne pollution.

Solent Maritime SAC

- 8.19 As with the largely overlapping Chichester & Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar designations, the Solent Maritime SAC lies some 1.2km to the south of the application site. Parts of the SAC lie nearly adjacent to the A27/A3(M) junction and A230, at respective linear distances of approximately 4km and 6km to the south-west. As related above, the A27 and A3(M) are strategic trunk roads and therefore properly fall beyond from the scope of project-level assessment.
- 8.20 The AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan determined that, within areas predicted to experience exceedance of the 1% screening threshold for nitrogen deposition, the total worst-case deposition rate would not exceed 20 kgN/ha/year, the applicable critical load for each of the SAC's qualifying habitats with the exception of 'perennial vegetation of stony banks' (PVSB; CL = 8 kg/ha/year) and 'shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")' (CL = 10 kg/ha/year). Localised areas of purported PVSB, of which the most proximate was some 6.8km to the south-west of the application site, were found to occur within exceedance areas to the east of the A2030. The white dunes habitat type was absent.
- 8.21 On this basis, the AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan identified the potential for adverse pre-mitigation effects in respect of nitrogen deposition on PVSB. Adverse effects arising from other causal pollutants and on the SAC's other qualifying features were discounted.
- 8.22 Subsequent to this determination, however, the affected area was subject to further survey work commissioned by 'Coastal Partners', a partnership of five south Hampshire and West Sussex local authorities, in order to inform the then-proposed (now operational) North Portsea Island (NPI) Phase 4 Coastal Defence Project. As reported in the HRA of the Portsmouth Local Plan (PLP, 2024), the areas formerly identified as supporting PVSB were reclassified as saltmarsh habitat, which is relatively tolerant of atmospheric nitrogen deposition and attributed with a correspondingly higher critical load. Given the absence of the more sensitive habitat types - PVSB and white dunes – from projected exceedance areas for nitrogen, the PLP HRA was

therefore able to conclude that traffic growth arising from planned development would not give rise to an adverse air quality effect on the integrity of the SAC. In other words, the sole point of concern raised in the AQ HRA of the withdrawn HBC Local Plan immaterialised.

- 8.23 This notwithstanding, it is understood that the locations of purported PVSB discussed in the AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan are in any case likely to have been significantly modified during construction of the NPI Phase 4 defence scheme, which was completed in September 2024.

Conclusion

- 8.24 Most of the major roads which occur within 200m of internationally designated sites and might be subject to traffic growth arising from development at Southleigh, or Havant Borough in general, are strategic trunk roads – the effects of traffic patterns whereupon are properly a matter for regional and strategic-scale HRA as opposed to this project-level assessment.
- 8.25 This notwithstanding, prior and overarching strategic-level assessments support the conclusion that planned development at Southleigh will not result in an adverse air quality effect on the integrity of the international designations within the zone of influence. The sole point of concern identified in the AQ HRA of the withdrawn HBC Local Plan relates to the effects of nitrogen deposition on small areas of purported PVSB, a qualifying habitat of the Solent Maritime SAC, within 200m of the A2030 on the eastern edge of Portsea Island. Following the reclassification of these areas as supporting relatively nitrogen-tolerant saltmarsh habitat (and prior to their likely modification during recently completed coastal defence works), this concern was discounted in the HRA of the Portsmouth Local Plan, supporting a conclusion of no adverse in-combination effect on the integrity of the SAC.

9. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

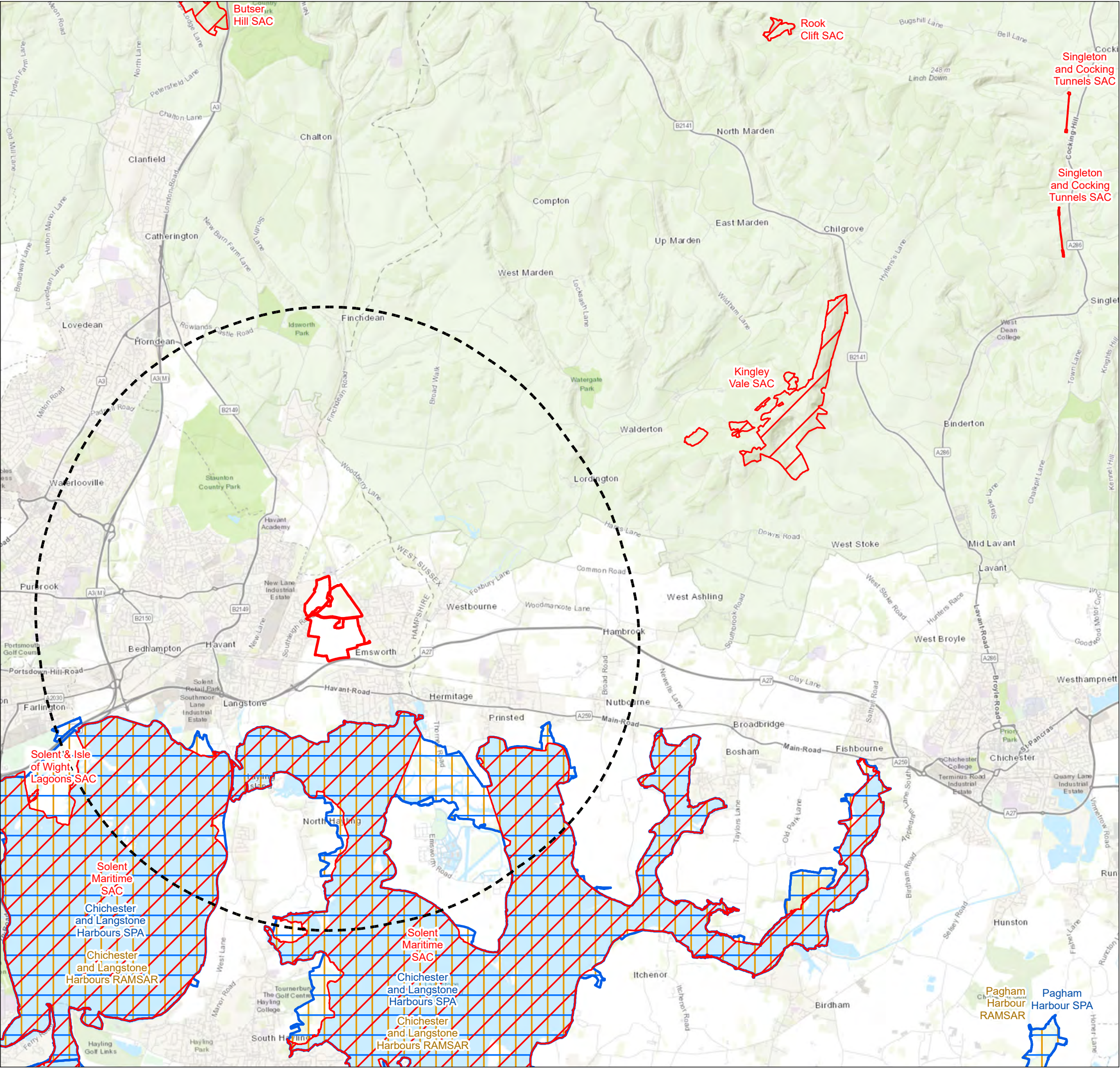
- 9.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for the proposed development to give rise to likely significant effects on the qualifying features of international sites within the predicted ZoI. Where a potential likely significant effect is identified, information for Appropriate Assessment has been provided to enable the competent authority to determine whether there will be adverse effects on the integrity of the international sites in light of their conservation objectives, taking into account the impact avoidance and mitigation measures proposed.
- 9.2 In respect of the habitat loss and degradation pathway, **Section 5** of this assessment determines that the site is subject to relatively low-level or sporadic use by wetland bird species and that the proposed development will consequently not result in a likely significant effect on the Solent SPAs and Ramsar sites. In view of its parameters, which will protect and enhance landscape features of importance to Annex II bat species, and subject to the implementation of standard impact avoidance and mitigation measures for bats, the proposals will not cause or contribute to an adverse effect on the integrity of the Singleton & Cocking Tunnels SAC.
- 9.3 In respect of the recreational pressure impact pathway, **Section 6** of this assessment determines that, subject to the securement of mitigation in accordance with local policy requirements, the proposed development will not cause or contribute to an adverse effect on the integrity of the Solent Maritime SPAs and Ramsar sites.
- 9.4 In respect of the water quality impact pathway, **Section 7** of this assessment determines that the achievement of nutrient neutrality will depend on the implementation of a proportionate mitigation or offsetting solution. Subject to the implementation of such a solution or compliance with an applicable EDP, the proposed development will not cause or contribute to an adverse effect on the integrity of the Solent Marine Sites.
- 9.5 In respect of the air quality impact pathway, **Section 8** of this assessment determines that the sole point of concern identified in the overarching AQ HRA of the withdrawn Local Plan, which allowed for development at Southleigh, has since fallen away due to the subsequent reclassification and (likely modification) of SAC-qualifying habitat features adjacent to the A2030 east of Portsea Island. The proposed development will consequently not give rise to a likely significant air quality effect on the international sites within its potential ZoI.

Conclusion in Respect of the Habitats Regulations

- 9.6 On the basis of the information presented in this document, it is considered that HBC can safely conclude that the proposals will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of international sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and that the proposed development can accordingly be consented in compliance with the Habitats Regulations and applicable guidance and case law.

Maps

Map 1	Site Location & Internationally Designated Sites
Map 2	Solent Waders & Brent Goose Areas
Map 3	Pre-development Land Use
Map 4	Post-development Land Use



MAP 1

Site Location & Internationally Designated Sites

KEY

Application site boundary

5km linear distance from Application site boundary

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Ramsar

SCALE: 1:70,000 at A3

0

1

2

3

4

5

Kilometres

N

EPR

CLIENT: Bloor Homes

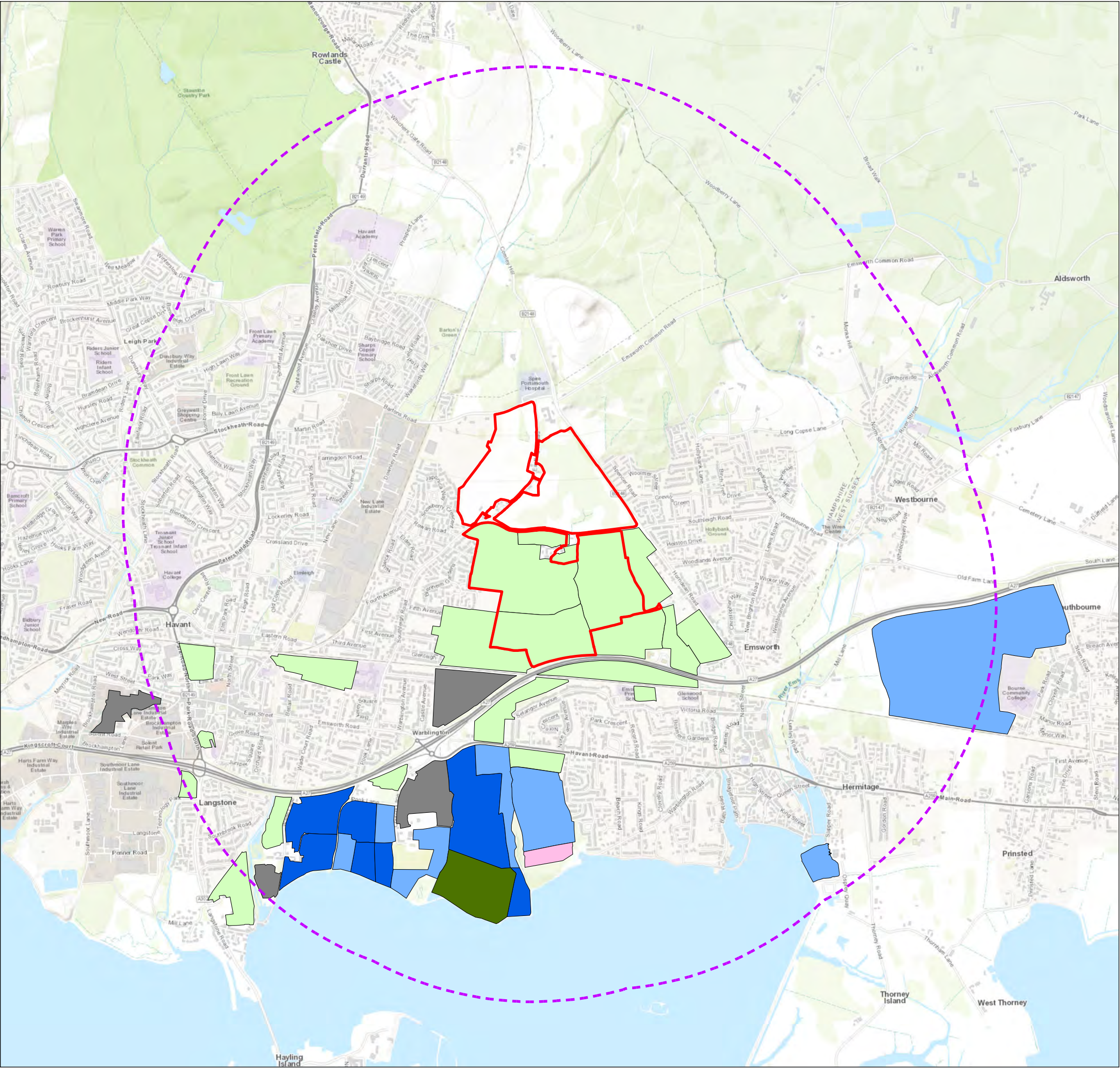
PROJECT: Southleigh, Havant

DATE: 20 February 2026

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P23/25



MAP 2 Solent Wader & Brent Goose Strategy Areas

- KEY
- Application site boundary
 - 2km linear distance from site boundary
 - Primary support area
 - Secondary support area
 - Low Use Site
 - Core area
 - Candidate site
 - Sites with only negative records 2019

SCALE: 1:22,500 at A3

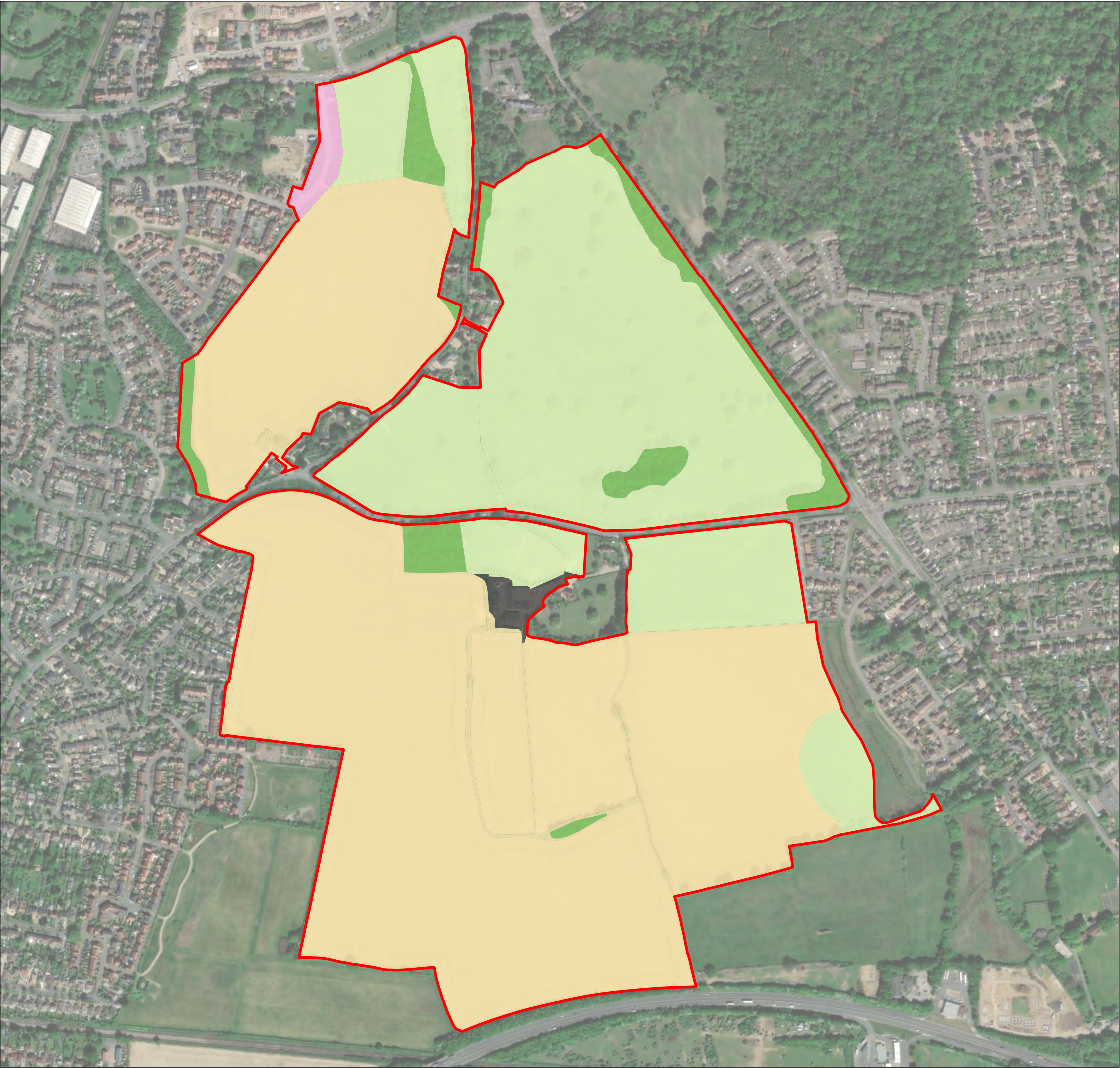
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CLIENT: Bloor Homes

PROJECT: Southleigh, Havant

DATE: 20 February 2026



MAP 3 Pre-development Land Use

KEY

-  Application site boundary
-  Cereal (63.46ha)
-  Commercial (0.69ha)
-  Grassland (37.15ha)
-  Woodland (4.44ha)
-  Residential (0.83ha)

SCALE: 1:6,000 at A3

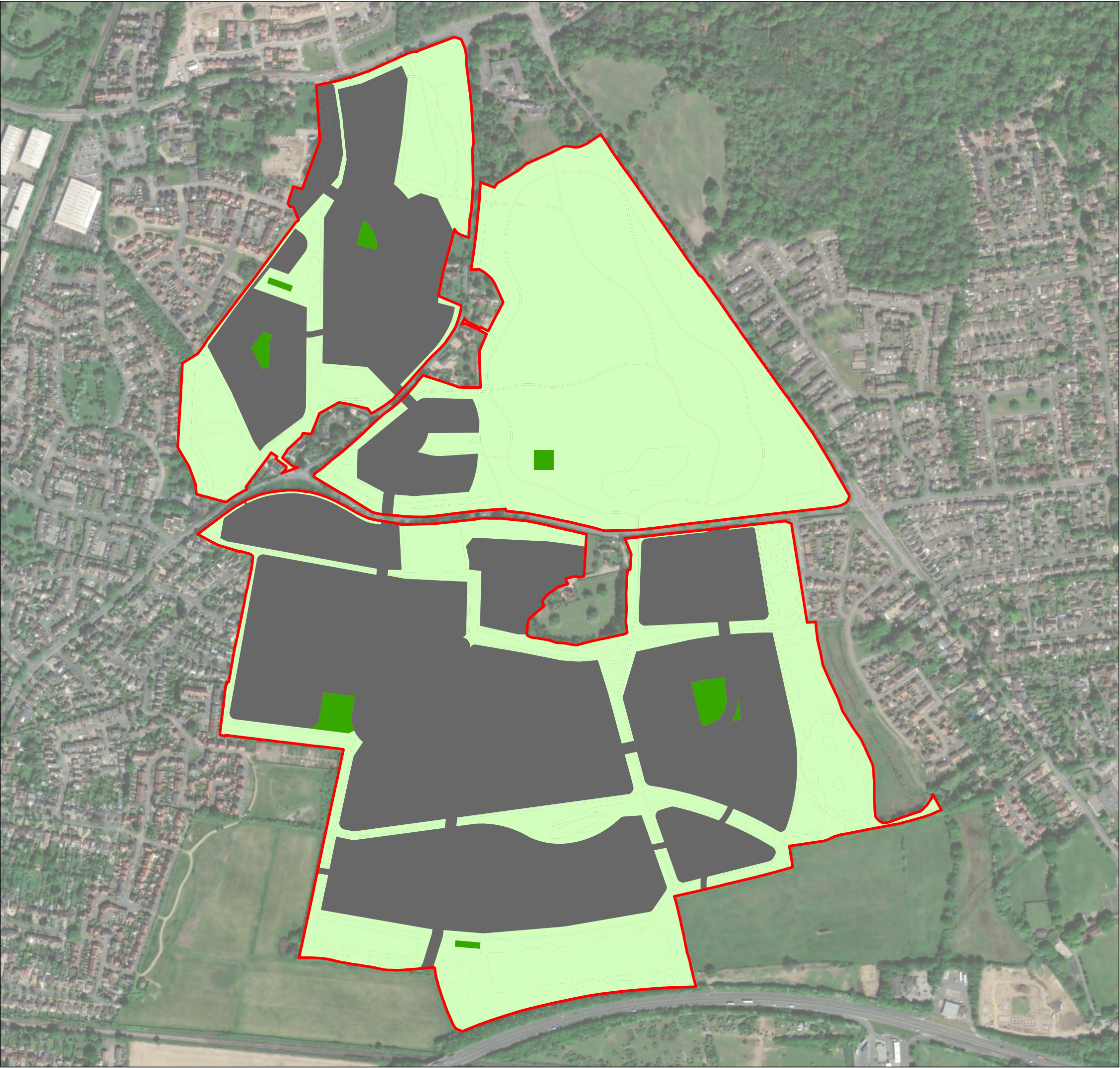
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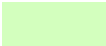
CLIENT: Bloor Homes

PROJECT: Southleigh, Havant

DATE: 04 March 2026



MAP 4 Post-development Land Use

- KEY
-  Application site boundary
 -  Greenspace (52.86 ha)
 -  Open urban land (1.04 ha)
 -  Residential (52.68 ha)

SCALE: 1:6,000 at A3

0 100 200 300 400 Metres



CLIENT: Bloor Homes

PROJECT: Southleigh, Havant

DATE: 26 February 2026