

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Estates
Local Plan
Stage 3: Publication
December – February 2016

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Merton Council has to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening exercises for the Estates Plan hereby referred to as the Plan. This assessment is independent from the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment although its findings will be noted in the report and will be submitted with other environmental assessments to the planning inspector as part of the evidence base for the Examination in Public (EIP).

2 Methodology

- 2.1 This section set out the methodology for the HRA (figure 1). There are three potential development options available for each estate.

1. Demolish and redevelop the entire estate.
2. Partial redevelopment
3. Invest in existing properties to bring them up to minimum standards.

- 2.2 This HRA is only assessing Option 1 for the following reasons:

- Option 1 potential has the potential the greater adverse impact in relation to the European Sites (these are identified later in this report) when compared to the Options 2 and 3. Therefore this HRA has assessed this option only as the Plan itself provides the site specific policies for such development scheme.
- Should Option 1 not be taken forwarded and one of the other two options are, they would be subject to meet other existing development planning polices in Merton's Local Plan namely the Core Planning Strategy (2011), the Sites and Polices Plan (2014) together with national and regional planning polices and guidance.
- All the fore mentioned planning documents have already had a HRA's carried out at various consultation stage towards adoption and was subject to Examination in Public (EIP) with an independent Planning Inspector. The inspector found Merton's Local Plan development plans to be 'sound'. Therefore there is no requirement to carryout a HRA assessment on the Option 2 and 3 for the reason mentioned above.

Figure 1: HRA methodology

Principle	Rationale
Use of existing information	This HRA makes the best use of existing information to inform this assessment. This will include information gather as part of the SA/SEA of the Plan, information held by the Environment Agency, Natural England and environmental agencies.
Consult with Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England and other stakeholders	Continuous consultation with Natural England for the duration of the assessment and to utilise information held by Natural England, other stake holders and to take on board nay comments on the assessment process and findings.
Ensure a proportional assessment	Ensure the level of detail address in the assessment reflects the level of detail in the Plan. Therefore with this in mind this assessment will focus on information and impact considered appropriate to the local level.

3 Background to the Plan

- 3.1 The draft Estates Local Plan hereby referred to as the Plan gives effect to the Merton Local Plan strategic and development management policies. The Plan is required to be in conformity with Merton’s Local Plan (for example Merton’s Core Planning Strategy; and Sites and Policies Plan) as well as national and regional planning requirements, policies and guidance.
- 3.2 The aim of the Plan is provide a statutory planning development framework which informs any potential development that may come forward this could be either partial or full development (namely demolish and redevelop the entire estate). The main objective of the Plan is to contribute to the delivery of Merton’s Local Plan strategic objectives.
- 3.3 Once adopted the Plan will become part of Merton’s Local Plan and will be a major consideration in any development proposals on the following estates High Path (South Wimbledon/Colliers Wood sub area), Eastfields (Mitcham sub area) and Ravensbury (Morden sub area) along side existing national, regional and local development planning policies, requirement and guidance.
- 3.4 The council held a number of public consultations at various stages of the Plan’s development. These are outlined below (figure 2)

Figure 2: The Plan consultation stages

Plan stage	
Stage 1 (September - November 2014)	Residents, businesses and interested parties for their views and thoughts of each estate – letting the council know what they liked and what needed to be improved on each estate.
Stage 2: (February-March 2016)	<p>This stage asked the public and interested parties for comments and views on the Plan and their preferred development option. The development option for each estate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demolish and redevelop the entire estate. 2. Partial redevelopement 3. Invest in existing properties to bring them up to minimum standards.
Stage 3: publication stage: (December 2016- February 2017)	This was the final opportunity to comment on Merton's Estate Local Plan, prior to submission to and independent planning inspector for examination.

4 HRA legislation

- 4.1 The EU directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora, also referred to as the 'Habitats Directive', provides legal protection for habitats of exceptional European importance. Article two of the directive requires the restoration and maintenance of habitats and species to a favourable conservation status and subsequent articles set up the means to designate protection areas. These are either set up as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA) depending on the protection aim.
- 4.2 In order that these designated areas are protected the Habitats Directive has set the requirement for plans and projects to be assessed for their likely impact on them; in order to ensure that they do not have a negative impact. The assessment is to ensure that any significant effects are identified and avoided.

5 How to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 5.1 The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 have been amended to implement a judgement of the European Court of Justice. The amended Regulations came into force in 2007. The effect of the Regulations (as amended) is to add Part IVA (Regulations 85A -85E) under the title "*Appropriate Assessments for Land Use Plans in England and Wales*".

- 5.2 The essential requirement of this amendment is for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess the potential effects of land use plans, to ensure that the protection and integrity of European Sites is considered by the planning process at a local level. The process by which this is achieved is by way of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The HRA assess the impacts of a land-use Plan against the conservation objectives of sites and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of that site.
- 5.3 The European Sites network (also known as Natura 2000) provides for the protection of sites that are of exceptional importance for rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Offshore Marine Site (OMS). Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance) are included as if they are fully designated European Sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.
- 5.4 Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Directive states the requirement for assessment in order to determine whether the Plan is ‘likely to have a significant effect’ on a European Sites. This is the screening stage of the process and determines whether further steps need to be taken to prevent an adverse impact to the European sites. The Department of Communities and Local Government guidance states the following:
- “The comprehensiveness of the assessment work undertaken should be proportionate to the geographical scope of the option and the nature and extent of any effects identified. The assessment should be confined to the effects on the internationally important habitats and species for which the site is classified. An Appropriate Assessment need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose.”*
- 5.5 If, following the screening, the Plan is determined to have significant effects on any European Sites then the Plan will have to undergo a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) where alternative measures are suggested. The alternative measures should prevent the Plan from undermining the conservation objectives of the European Sites.
- 5.6 The Plan has been assessed in accordance with the criteria produced by Tyldesley and Associates for Natural England entitled, ‘The Habitats Regulations Assessment of Local Development Documents Revised Draft Guidance for Natural England – February 2009.’ The relevant sites have been identified and their features and impacts listed. Thereafter, the potential effects of each policy have been categorised according to the draft guidance. If any policies were considered to have ‘likely significant effects’, appropriate avoidance, cancellation or reduction measures would be considered.

6 Appropriate Assessment: Key Tasks

- 6.1 The council used the methodology given in the Draft Guidance ‘The Habitats Regulations Assessment of Regional Spatial Strategies and Sub-Regional Strategies’, David Tyldesley and Associates for Natural England (March 2007). This is one of several guidance documents available but it represents a standardised methodology that endorsed by Natural England.

6.2 The process involves the following methodological steps:

Figure 3: Habitats Regulation Assessment

Habitats Regulation Assessment	
Stage1: Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying international site in and around the plan/strategy area • Examine conservation objectives (if available) • Analyse the policy/plan and its key components • Identify potential effects on European Sites • Examine other plans and programmes that could contribute to 'in combination 'effects • <i>If no effects likely-report that no significant effect.</i> • <i>If effects are judged likely or uncertainty exists- the precautionary principle applies proceed to stage 2</i>
Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate information on sites and evaluate impact in light of conservation objectives • Consider how plan 'in combination' with other plans and programmes will interact when implemented (the Appropriate Assessment) • Consider how effect on integrity of site could be avoided by changes to plan and the consideration of alternatives • Develop mitigation measures (including timescale and mechanisms) • <i>Report outcomes of AA and develop monitoring strategies</i> • <i>If effects remain following the consideration of alternatives and development of mitigations proceed to stage 3</i>
Stage 3: Assessment where no alternatives and adverse impacts remain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI) • Identify/ develop potential compensatory measures • Difficult test to pass, requirements are onerous and untested to date.

6.3 Steps 1 and 2 are reported in this document. This process is referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' with 'Appropriate Assessment' forming a stage within it. If, at the screening stage it is determined that the land-use Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any international site, alone or in combination with other plans and projects; the Appropriate Assessment stage of the process is not required and it may proceed to publication.

6.4 This assessment of the Plan under the Habitats Regulations was undertaken during the preparation of the plan so that the assessment has influenced the objectives, the development approach and their effects.

Figure 4: Habitat Regulation Screening Stages

HRA Screening Stage		
Evidence gathering: Identification of European Sites and characterisation	❖	Identification of European Sites both within Merton's boundary, within 15 km of the boundary and/or within the potential influence of the plan.
	❖	Information was obtained for each European Site, based on publicly available information and consultation with Natural England where appropriate.
	❖	This included information relating to the sites' qualifying features; conservation objectives (where available) vulnerabilities/ sensitivities and geographical boundaries.
Task 1: Strategy review, policy screening and identification of likely impacts	❖	Screening of the policies and the identification of likely impacts (including a review of the strategy to determine likely significant effects)
Task 2: Consideration of other plans and programmes	❖	Consideration, where appropriate, of other plans and programmes that may have in combination effects
Task 3: Screening Assessment	❖	Summary of screening outcomes and recommendations. Mitigation measures and alternative solutions where adverse effects are identified as Task 2 the Plan should be altered until adverse effects are cancelled out fully

6.5 This HRA will be assessing the following:

- How the Plan will impact on the European sites
- If there are any adverse impacts by the Plan and importantly how the plan will mitigate against this.

7 The assessment

7.1 The assessment of significant effects of a policy needs to be taken into account, its impact in-combination with other plans/strategies such as the London Plan (March 2015) and the plans/projects of neighbouring boroughs.

8 Consultation

8.1 The Habitats Regulations requires plan making/competent authority (Merton Council) is to consult with Natural England (environmental advisory statutory body). The Habitats Regulations gives responsibility for consultation with other bodies and the public to the discretion of the plan-making authority.

8.2 Where possible the guidance recommends that this consultation be undertaken alongside the consultation for the Plan. A copy of

this HRA will also be sent to Natural England as stated above and in addition the Environment Agency (EA) and Historic England (formally known as English Heritage) (HE) for consideration, comments and advice.

9 Identification of European Sites and characterisation

- 9.1 The first steps is to identify the European Sites that may be affected by the land use plan, and to acquire, examine and understand the conservation objectives of each interest feature of each site potentially affected. Natural England has assisted in the identification of the relevant sites.
- 9.2 There are two sites which are immediately relevant for Merton are Wimbledon Common (within the Merton boundary) of which Wimbledon Common is within the Merton's boundary; the other Richmond Park (Royal Park) is approximately 3-4km away with the borough of Kingston. It has been agreed with Natural England that a distance of 15km is a suitable catchment to identify Habitats Directive designated sites, as the effects of a plan can go beyond its boundary.
- 9.3 Beyond these two sites there are a number of sites outside London such as the Thames Basin Heaths, the Windsor Forest Great Park and the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment which are too far away to be considered relevant. In addition apart of the South West London Water bodies are just within the 15km catchment. However, the only possible impact that the Plan could have on these habitats would be through run-off but given that the river catchment areas for the borough do not drain into the South West London Water bodies any run-off impact is unlikely to occur.
- 9.4 Therefore the potential impacts of the Plan will be screened with regard to the conservation objectives of Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park. The description and the reason for their designation are set out below.

Wimbledon Common Special Area of Conservation

- 9.5 Much of Wimbledon Common is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The common measures 348.31ha, is located 1.5km to the north west of Wimbledon town centre and 1km of Richmond Park. . The majority of the SAC is located within Merton and a smaller area within Putney Heath (London Borough of Wandsworth).
- 9.6 Wimbledon Common is one of the largest area of uncultivated land of London and sits in the Thames Valley Natural Character Area. The underlying soils are mostly sands, gravel and silty clays which give rise to poorly drained, nutrient poor and acid conditions.
- 9.7 The west of Wimbledon Common SAC also borders the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and consists of the following general habitat types:
- Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (1%)
 - Bogs Marshes Water fringed vegetation. Fens (0.5%)
 - Heath Scrub Maquis and garrigue Phygrana (5%)
 - Dry grassland Steppes (45%)

- Improved grassland (3.5%)
- Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (45%)

9.8 Other key environmental assets of Wimbledon common:

- London Wildlife Trust managed Local Nature Reserve Fishpond Wood (managed)
- Largest area of wet heath in London, areas of dry heath and one of London's very few sphagnum bogs
- High ground hosts an ancient tumulus and an ancient monument, Caesar's Camp, can be seen near the Royal Wimbledon Golf Course.

9.9 Wimbledon Common has a large number of old trees and much fallen decaying timber. It is at the heart of the south London centre of distribution for the stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*. The stag beetle is listed as an Annex II species in the Habitats Directive and is a primary reason for the designation of this site. Wimbledon Common also supports a number of other scarce invertebrate species associated with decaying timber.

9.10 The following Annex I habitats are present as a qualifying feature; however these are not a primary reason for designation of this site.

- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
- European dry heaths

9.11 Richmond Park is one of two National Nature Reserves in London and is a SAC measuring 846.68ha, of which 0.3ha is within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The park is to the west of Wimbledon Common with the Beverley Brook and the A3 (part of the London Strategic Road Network) separating the two, along with a cemetery and a golf course. Unlike, Wimbledon Common, the Royal Park is closed every night at dusk. The park consists of the following general habitat types:

- Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (1.5%)
- Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (0.5%)
- Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. *Phygrana* (25%)
- Dry grassland. Steppes (18%)
- Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (5%)
- Improved grassland (20%)
- Broad-leaved deciduous
- Mixed Woodland (5%)

9.12 Other key environmental feature:

- Adjacent golf courses and commons provide additional areas of acid grassland and secondary woodland
- Fallow and Red deer grazing in the park

9.13 As with Wimbledon Common, Richmond Park has a large number of ancient trees with decaying timber. It is at the heart of the south London centre of distribution for the stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*. The stag beetle is listed as an Annex II species in the Habitats Directive and is a primary reason for the designation of this site. Figure x and x set out the two sites' designations more explicitly; their current condition, uses of the sites and the impacts.

Site descriptions

- 9.14 Information for the sites including the rationale for their declaration as European Sites has been taken from the *'Appropriate Assessment for the London Plan'*. This also includes supplementary information to assist in the assessment of the significance of any impacts of policies on their nature conservation interest.

Potential impact on the European Sites

- 9.15 Both European Sites within Merton's catchment have been designated primarily due to the presence of Stag beetles and Wimbledon Common for some secondary habitat protection. The main impacts identified are related to the potential increased recreational use and the secondary impacts would be due to air pollution, increase in housing provision and transport use (emissions).
- 9.16 Stag Beetles are dependent on mature trees and deadwood therefore there is less concern that recreation will have an unduly detrimental impact on their habitat. The designated wet and dry heaths on Wimbledon Common could however, be affected by trampling from walkers, dog walkers or other recreational users.
- 9.17 Nevertheless, the management of the common and park, respectively by the Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath Conservators and the Royal Parks Authority by way of dog control orders and other appropriate byelaws are deemed an appropriate way of minimising potential impact.

Figure 5: Wimbledon Common assessment

Main Habitat	Area (ha)	Assessment Description	Comment
Dwarf shrub Heath - Lowland	64.2291	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>This is an extensive area with a mosaic of heathland set amongst long-established secondary woodland. Most of the heath is best described as humid heath as it does not appear to be permanently wet.</p> <p>There are areas which are in good condition but most of the heath fails to meet key targets. There is no evidence of loss of habitat extent, indeed there has been recent tree and scrub clearance in parts of the unit to promote expansion of heath.</p> <p>Key concerns are low structural and age diversity in the heath vegetation, low cover of bare ground and gaps in the vegetation.</p> <p>The dominant heath species is heather with only very small amounts of cross-leaved heath. The heather is generally in the building/mature growth phase with little in the pioneer stage, and conditions to promote establishment of new generations of heather are currently poor. Habitat structure for invertebrates of tall vegetation and scrub edge is good but there are generally few gaps in the vegetation or areas of bare ground suitable for invertebrates of short turf and sandy soils.</p> <p>The frequency of characteristic associated plants is generally lower than desirable although tormentil, catsear, heath rush, common sedge, mat grass, heath grass and creeping willow are locally frequent. These are all scarce plants in London.</p> <p>Molinia is abundant but overall cover is within target (& lt; 60%). Cover of bracken is generally low and is well within target overall.</p> <p>Cover of scrub is generally within target but cover exceeds target in a few places (up to 40%).</p> <p>Cover of common gorse is within target.</p> <p>There are no indications of significant damaging impacts arising from non-native species, drainage, trampling, burning or disturbance.</p> <p>Measures to increase structural and age diversity in the heather, increase the amount of bare ground and gaps, and reduce scrub cover would bring the unit into favourable condition.</p>

Acid grassland - Lowland	129.3094	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>Includes an extensive area of species-rich acid grassland, areas of wet /dry heath, and acid grassland in the areas around the golf course, amongst long-established secondary woodland. Acid grassland is in good condition but most of the heath fails to meet key targets. No evidence of loss of habitat extent, indeed there has been recent tree and scrub clearance in parts of the unit to promote expansion and restoration of heath. Much of the heath has low structural and age diversity, and low cover of bare ground and gaps in the vegetation. Dominant heath species is heather with only very small amounts of cross-leaved heath. Heather is generally in the building/mature growth phase with little in the pioneer stage, and conditions to promote establishment of new generations of heather are currently poor. Habitat structure for invertebrates of tall vegetation, shady woodland and scrub edge is good but there are generally few gaps in the vegetation or areas of bare ground suitable for invertebrates of short turf and sandy soils. Frequency of characteristic associated plants is generally lower than desirable but tormentil, catsear and heath rush are locally frequent. Molinia is abundant but overall cover is within target (< 60%). Cover of bracken is generally low and is well within target. Cover of scrub is generally within target but exceeds in a few places (up to 20%). Cover of common gorse within target. No indications of significant damaging impacts arising from non-native species, drainage, trampling, burning or disturbance. Measures to increase structural and age diversity in the heather, increase the amount of bare ground and gaps, and reduce scrub cover would bring the heath into favourable condition. Acid grassland meets targets for sward height; amount of leaf litter, cover of bracken, there is a wide range of associated plants including yellow rattle, oval sedge, mat grass, sheep sorrel and tormentil.</p>
Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland - Lowland	44.8322	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>This unit contains a small area of acid grassland mainly on areas of rough on golf course. The grassland fails on high proportion of bare ground(25%) cover of litter (30%), cover of negative indicator species (10%) and just fails on the cover of trees and shrubs (5%- target <5%). Only one species recorded in sward as occasional. All other targets passed. The sward appears to be suffering from its use as a golf course-this could be through high footfall but also possibly through rolling and fertiliser spread- and management or use of the areas of acid grassland really needs to become less intensive to improve the condition.</p> <p>The Woodland area within this unit was assessed against the appropriate habitat conditions for the Stag Beetle. Generally there was a good variation of tree age class across the woodland area but very few veteran or mature trees. There was a good range of decaying wood but some areas lacked large trunks or dead limbs (Mainly due to the lack of mature trees). The decaying wood was located in a variety of different conditions both warm and wet. Sycamore and Holly management is required; this should be addressed in the current EWGS. Where management/ removal takes place stumps should be treated in order to prevent Sycamore and Holly regeneration. In areas of heavy recreational use soil compaction is preventing regeneration. Woodland management should focus on Holly and Sycamore removal, identification and management of mature/veterans of the future and</p>

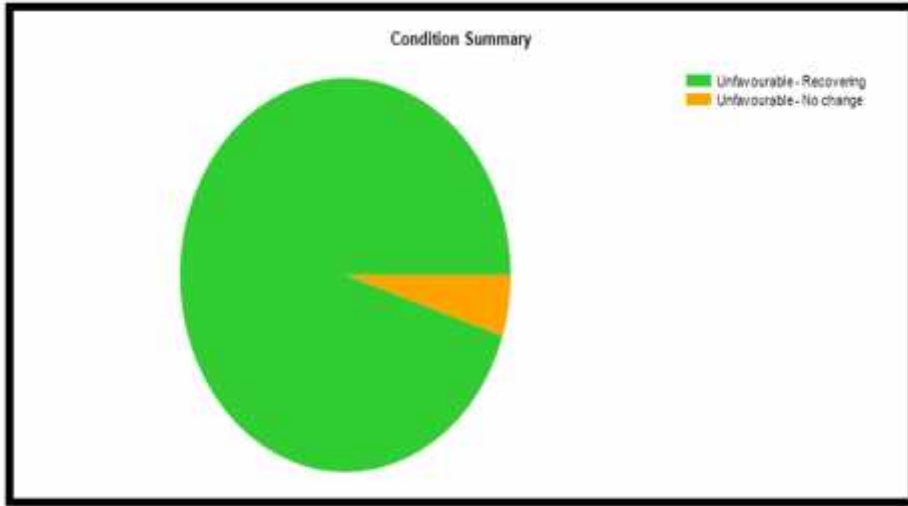
			management of decaying wood habitat.
Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland - Lowland	95.395	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The Woodland area within this unit was assessed against the appropriate habitat conditions for the Stag Beetle. The trees in this unit were varied in age class, although lacking in veteran and mature trees. Decaying wood was frequent throughout the unit, although the habitat would benefit from having more large stumps either standing or fallen. The decaying wood was situated in a variety of conditions humid, dry and wet offering a variety of decaying habitats. In one area where a heavy thin had taken place, the saplings will need to be retained for succession and mature replacements in years to come. Some areas across the Unit were choked with Holly but this will be addressed through the EWGS. Rhododendron was also present in some area within the centre of the unit.</p> <p>A very short sward across all grassy areas in this unit of 2-5cm and very few species. Species seen included, Dock, Rye Grass and Yarrow- possibly suffering from heavy rabbit grazing and management as part of the golf course A very small area of heath managed under HLS as restoration in this Unit is looking successful, more restoration patches would be beneficial due to success of current plots.</p>
Dwarf shrub Heath Lowland	17.6173	Unfavourable - No change	<p>This unit contains areas of grassland at the edge of a golf course and areas of heathland in the rough and at the edges of the fairways. Signs of gorse control where visible when visited and the rough areas did not seem to be suffering from significant over management/ high footfall. However the unit fails on frequency of gramanoids and the proportion of dwarf shrubs in building/ mature and pioneer stage. The majority of the heather is at pioneer stage suggesting that it has been cut at the same time- however there is a small proportion of heather at the mature degenerate stage and little encroachment by scrub suggesting that more sympathetic management is taking place.</p>

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Figure 6 Wimbledon Common condition summaries

	% meeting area of favourable or unfavourable recovering	Favourable	Unfavourable - Recovering	Unfavourable - No change	Unfavourable - Declining	Partially destroyed	Destroyed	Not Assessed
Area (ha)	333.77		333.77	17.62				
Percentage	94.99%	0.00%	94.99%	5.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

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Figure 7 Richmond Park assessment

Main Habitat	Area (ha)	Assessment Description	Comment
Acid grassland – Lowland	114.6705	Unfavourable - Recovering	The Royal Parks have developed a grassland management strategy which, when implemented, will result in an improvement in the condition of the areas of acid grassland in the park.
Broadleaved , mixed and yew woodland - Lowland	3.0315	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.</p> <p>The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:</p> <p>SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.</p> <p>Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole: Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.</p> <p>Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.</p> <p>Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.</p> <p>Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey.</p> <p>Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.</p> <p>Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland; cover was 5-10%</p> <p>Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.</p> <p>High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through</p>

			<p>herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.</p> <p>Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.</p> <p>The unit provides good levels of scrub, lying dead wood but has a closed canopy and is very shaded. Garden escapes and rhododendron are a problem.</p>
Acid grassland - Lowland	153.6037	Unfavourable - Recovering	The Royal Parks have developed a grassland management strategy which, when implemented, will result in an improvement in the condition of the areas of acid grassland in the park
Acid grassland - Lowland	205.2137	Unfavourable - Recovering	The Royal Parks have developed a grassland management strategy which, when implemented, will result in an improvement in the condition of the areas of acid grassland in the park
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - Lowland	29.3364	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.</p> <p>The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:</p> <p>SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.</p> <p>Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole: Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.</p> <p>Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting. Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.</p> <p>Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey.</p> <p>Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.</p> <p>Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland;</p>

cover was 5-10%

Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.

High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.

Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.

The unit provides nectar sources: bramble, rhododendron and has a high proportion of young oak and birch trees but few saplings

Broadleaved,
mixed and yew
woodland -
Lowland

4.6562

Unfavourable -
Recovering

The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.

The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:

SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.

Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole:

Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.

Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.

Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.

Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey.

Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.

Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland;

			<p>cover was 5-10%</p> <p>Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.</p> <p>High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.</p> <p>Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.</p> <p>The unit provides good levels of scrub and has a good age structure. Overall volume of fallen timber is high</p>
<p>Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - Lowland</p>	<p>7.8647</p>	<p>Unfavourable - Recovering</p>	<p>The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.</p> <p>The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:</p> <p>SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.</p> <p>Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole: Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.</p> <p>Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.</p> <p>Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.</p> <p>Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey. Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.</p> <p>Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland;</p>

			<p>cover was 5-10%</p> <p>Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.</p> <p>High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.</p> <p>Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.</p> <p>The unit provides good levels of scrub, young and middle aged trees. Ground flora provides good nectar sources. Rhododendron is a problem in this unit.</p>
Acid grassland - Lowland	205.1202	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The Royal Parks have developed a grassland management strategy which, when implemented, will result in an improvement in the condition of the areas of acid grassland in the park.</p>
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - Lowland	5.8234	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.</p> <p>The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:</p> <p>SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.</p> <p>Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole: Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.</p> <p>Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.</p> <p>Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.</p> <p>Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey. Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had</p>

a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.

Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland; cover was 5-10%

Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.

High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.

Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.

The unit provides good levels of scrub, young and middle aged trees. Ground flora provides good nectar sources. Little dead wood evident, however abundant dead wood attached to trees.

Broadleaved,
mixed and yew
woodland -
Lowland

22.5203

Unfavourable -
Recovering

The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.

The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:

SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.

Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole:

Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.

Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.

Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.

Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey.

Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had

			<p>a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.</p> <p>Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland; cover was 5-10%</p> <p>Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.</p> <p>High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.</p> <p>Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.</p> <p>The unit provides good nectar sources through planted shrubberies. There are many planted saplings and middle aged trees but few old/veteran trees. Dead wood resource was scarce.</p>
Acid grassland - Lowland	57.2713	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The Royal Parks have developed a grassland management strategy which, when implemented, will result in an improvement in the condition of the areas of acid grassland in the park</p>
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - Lowland	18.7478	Unfavourable - Recovering	<p>The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.</p> <p>The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:</p> <p>SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.</p> <p>Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole: Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.</p> <p>Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.</p> <p>Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.</p>

Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey.

Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.

Dead organic matter: This was variable across the site, in much of the parkland; cover was 5-10%

Negative factors: Rhododendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.

High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.

Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.

The unit provides good dead wood resource - lying fallen timber, stumps and loggeries. There is a poor scrub layer and few saplings/young trees. Nectar sources are in short supply. Rhododendron is present but not widespread.

Broadleaved,
mixed and yew
and woodland -
Lowland

18.7614

Unfavourable -
Recovering

The unit was assessed as a component part of the wider lowland parkland and wood pasture habitat supporting invertebrate assemblages. As such the unit does not contain all features necessary to support the assemblage.

The assessment of the habitat as a whole follows:

SRS assessment: Average of 4.3 surfaces across the site. Average of 4 surfaces for the unit.

Preferred surfaces for the site as a whole:

Scrub: Less than 10% across the site. However there are a number of enclosures which have allowed the development of hawthorn and gorse scrub for example.

Tree age structure: Across the site there are fewer saplings than veteran trees. There are greater than 25% of middle aged trees as there are veterans. The shortage of saplings is being addressed through a program of tree planting.

Nectar sources: Less than 10% of the sward is able to flower across the site due to deer grazing. However, new enclosures in the open parkland and woodland management in closed woodland areas will result in ground flora development.

Dead Wood, No. of veteran trees: A baseline of 1517 trees was established in a 2008 Royal Parks survey.

Dead Wood, No of tree with attached dead wood: Most veteran trees observed had a significant amount of attached deadwood greater than 20cm diameter.

Dead organic matter: this was variable across the site in much of the parkland cover was 5-10%

Negative factors: Rhodendron cover in many of the enclosed woodlands. This is being addressed through a program of clearance.

High bracken coverage increases fire risk. Bracken is being controlled through herbicide spraying and periodic rolling.

Poor age structure of trees: This is being addressed through a tree planting program.

The unit provides good dead wood resource - a high proportion of trees have signs of decay/hollowing and the quantity of fallen timber is good. Many of the logs are in open and dappled conditions. Scrub resource is poor.

Complied October 2015: Natural England

Figure 8: Richmond Park condition summary

	% meeting area of favourable or unfavourable recovering	Favourable	Unfavourable - Recovering	Unfavourable - No change	Unfavourable - Declining	Partially destroyed	Destroyed	Not Assessed
Area (ha)	846.62		846.62					
Percentage	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Report generated December 2016

9.18 Figures 5 to 8 illustrates the known sensitivities / vulnerabilities of the European Sites. The following sections summarise the effects which could be relevant to the proposals that occur within the Plan. As mentioned earlier in this report this HRA is only assessing policies within the estates Local Plan and is not reviewing or assessing other planning document within Merton's Local Plan.

10 Strategy review, policy screening and identification of likely impacts (Task 1)

- 10.1 **All London Green Grid (ALGG): Wandle Valley area framework** - The Wandle Valley Regional Park area framework sets out a vision for the creation and improvement of a linked network of open spaces along the river corridor. The park will connect to town centres, transport hubs, communities and business areas extending out to connect to other green infrastructure along the Wandle Valley.
- 10.2 This includes Mitcham Common a large area of grassland and woodland which added to the proposed new regional park would provide an extensive open space corridor to Beddington Park (London Borough of Croydon) in the south. The protection and restoration of the river corridor's natural qualities will play an instrumental role in making the regional park a sustainable and vibrant piece of green infrastructure for south London.
- 10.3 The objectives for the Wandle Valley Area Framework is to achieve the vision and maximise the benefits of the network include:
- Enhancing and improving access to open space
 - increasing access to nature
 - managing flood risk and urban heat
 - improving sustainable travel connections
 - enhancing distinctive visitor destinations and boosting the visitor economy
 - promoting health and well-being
 - promoting sustainable food production
 - promoting quality of design, management and maintenance
 - enhancing heritage features and landscape character
 - improving air quality and sound-scapes
- 10.4 The ALGG is not a stand alone and isolated network its key objective is to integrate it with other strategic economic and environmental programmes and plans with the aim to maximise the synergy between attractive and multifunctional open spaces, the links and corridors between them and other development programmes highlighted in the London Plan. These include Opportunity Areas (OA), Areas of intensification (AI) and Strategic Outer London Development Centres.
- 10.5 It is not envisage that the ALGG will have an adverse impact to the European Sites highlighted earlier in this HRA and furthermore the ALGG is in conformity with the London Plan.

Air pollution and quality

- 10.6 The primary source of air pollution in the borough is vehicle related. Air pollution threats (nitrogen deposition and acidification) which can arise from thermal treatment facilities put forward by waste strategies or an increase in traffic levels in close proximity to the sites, or in-combination with air emissions from other sources (sourced from relevant Conservation Objectives).
- 10.7 The National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) establishes the framework for air quality improvements. Measures agreed at the national and international level are the foundations on which the strategy is based. It is recognised however that despite these measures

areas of poor air quality will remain and these are best dealt by, using local measures implemented through the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime.

- 10.8 Therefore the role of local authorities' review and assessment process is to identify all those areas where the air quality objectives are or are likely to be exceeded. Experience has shown that such areas may range from single residential properties to whole town centres. The air quality objectives applicable to LAQM are set out separately in Air Quality Regulations for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 10.9 In accordance with the NAQS the London Plan air policy seeks an improvement in air pollution which could have a beneficial effect on European Sites. The specific need for avoidance of likely adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites is addressed through the London Plan policy 7.14 *'Improving air quality'* policy which recognises the importance of tackling air pollution and improving air quality to London's developments. In addition the health and well-being of those living, working in London and those visiting the capital.
- 10.10 To meet the aims of the National Air Quality Objectives Merton Council has designated the entire borough as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This means any development that may result in an adverse impact to local air quality may require an Air Quality Impact Assessment in order for the council to consider any possible pollution impact linked to development proposals.
- 10.11 Merton has an adopted Air Quality Action Plan and is designated as a Low Emissions Zone. The council currently monitors air quality by way of Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).

Drainage and Water Pollution

- 10.12 Drainage and water pollution are issues which need to be addressed for any development proposal in Merton and more so for large scale regeneration envisage in the Plan. Any development proposal for the sites will need to include appropriate and accepted mitigation subjected to regulatory controls to ensure that adverse impact on integrity of European Sites from water pollution do not occur. Such development will be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment if it is in an area where a European Sites could be affected. The London Plan policy 5.13 Sustainable Drainage states
- 'Development should utilise sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) unless there are practical reasons for not doing so....'*
- 10.13 In addition policy 5.14 (London Plan) water quality and wastewater infrastructure seeks to ensure that London has adequate and appropriate wastewater infrastructure, protect and improve water quality having regard to the Thames River Basin Management Plan.
- 10.14 Furthermore the London Plan goes further and instructs local authority's plans should be in line with the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2009 and utilise borough's Surface Water Management Plans (SWMP) to identify areas where management issues, develop actions and policy approaches aimed at reducing and managing such risks. Merton Local Plan is in conformity with the FWMA, WFD and Merton's SWMP, Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and other flood studies/plans/strategies that also have consideration of water infrastructure including drainage and water pollution.

- 10.15 Additionally the Mayor's Sustainable design and construction Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG 2014) supports the London Plan policy 5.13 which requires that developers should aim for greenfield run-off rates from their developments. It states that developments that are located in a catchment that contributes to combined sewers with known and/or modelled capacity or flooding issues.
- 10.16 Moreover Merton's Local Plan identifies the councils approach to managing flood risk in the borough. The Local Plan strategic objective 1 is:
'to make Merton a municipal leader in improving the environment, taking the lead in tackling climate change, reducing pollution, developing a low carbon economy, consuming fewer resources and using them more effectively.'
- 10.17 Furthermore Merton's Local Plan strategic objective 6 states:
... 'to make Merton an exemplary borough in mitigating and adapting to climate change and to make it a more attractive and green place.'
- 10.18 Building on the strategic objectives above Merton's Core Planning Strategy CS16 policy Flood Risk Management c) requires the implementation of SuDS across the borough and to work towards effective management of surface water flooding.
- 10.19 The Sustainability Appraisal for Merton's Core Planning Strategy concluded that CS16 policy:
'At the strategic level, the Core Strategy has been informed by a Flood Risk Assessment. In addition, Policy 16 Flood Risk Management will ensure individual development proposals will have no adverse impact and that essential community infrastructure will be at less risk of damage.'
- 10.20 Merton's Core Planning Strategy Habitat Regulation Assessment concluded that CS 16 policy:
'..... is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Sites.'
- 10.21 Moreover Sites and Policies Plan (development management policies) policy DM F2 Sustainable drainage (SuDS) policy builds on the strategic objective above and aims to reduce discharge into the drainage system and reduce the boroughs susceptibility to surface water in line with the NPPF, national Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Merton's Site and Policies Plan's Habitat Regulation Assessment concluded that policy DM F2:
... "meets a number of the sustainability objectives that relate to the safeguarding and promotion of the natural environment, by ensuring individual development proposals will have no adverse impact, that essential infrastructure will not be at risk and
- 10.22 Furthermore Merton's Local Plan is supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. In 2016 this was updated using the latest data and information from the Environment Agency. The SFRA was produced in partnership with our neighbouring boroughs of

Wandsworth, Sutton, Croydon and the Environment Agency. A site assessment was carried out on all three sites a requirement of a SFRA. Each site assessment was based on a 'More Vulnerable'¹ development scenario.

- 10.23 Fundamentally Merton's Local Plan flood risk management policies clearly states that applicants, developers and local authorities must consult and work closely with the Environment Agency and local water companies/local Sewage Company on all flooding risk management and water infrastructure matters. This is also the case with the Plan being assessed its supports Merton's Local Plan and highlights estate specific flood risk management and water infrastructure issues. Ensuring the impact to the European Sites is minimal and unlikely to have an adverse impact to the European Sites.

Urbanisation

- 10.24 This impact is closely linked to visitor/recreational pressures in that they both result from an increased population within close of sensitive sites. The list of urbanisation impact can be extensive, but core impact can be singled out as followed:
- 10.25 *Increased fly tipping:* Fly tipping is the illegal deposit of waste on land contrary to Section 33(1) (a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The types of waste fly tipped range from 'black bag' waste to large deposits of materials such as industrial waste, tyres, construction material and liquid waste. Fly tipping is a significant blight on local environments; a source of pollution; a potential danger to public health and hazard to wildlife. It also undermines legitimate waste businesses where unscrupulous operators undercut those operating within the law.
- 10.26 However the council and the Environment Agency (EA) both have a responsibility in respect of illegally deposited waste. Local councils deal with most cases of fly tipping on public land, whilst the EA investigates and enforces against the larger, more serious and organised illegal waste crimes. Furthermore the council can issue fixed penalty notice (FPN) for certain offences such as littering and fly tipping
- 10.27 *Cat predation:* The most recent figures are from the Mammal Society they estimates that the UK's cats catch up to 275 million prey items a year, of which 55 million are birds. This is the number of prey items that were known to have been caught. We don't know how many more the cats caught, but didn't bring home, or how many escaped but subsequently died.
- 10.28 The most frequently caught birds, according to the Mammal Society are probably (in order) house sparrows, blue tits, blackbirds and starlings. However according to the RSPB despite the large numbers of birds killed, there is no scientific evidence that predation by cats in gardens is having any impact on bird populations UK-wide. This may be surprising, but many millions of birds die naturally every year, mainly through starvation, disease, or other forms of predation. There is however evidence that cats tends to take weak or sickly birds as prey.

¹ Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification Planning Practice Guidance (2014) Hospitals, residential institutions such as residential care homes, children's homes, social services homes, prisons and hostels. Buildings used for dwelling houses, student halls of residence, drinking establishments, nightclubs and hotels.

- 10.29 *Visitor and recreational pressure:* As mentioned earlier in this report the habitats and species of the European Sites are known to be sensitive to recreational pressure primarily dog walking. Although the London Plan and Merton's Local Plan could have an adverse impact to the sensitivity by increasing the number of people accessing the European Sites due to the potential increases in the local population and possible increase in work and travel patterns due to increase development.
- 10.30 However the management of the common and park respectively by the Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath Conservators, the Royal Parks Authority and the use of legal instruments such as bylaws and dog control orders are important tools which can assist in mitigate against such adverse impacts.

11 Consideration of other plans and programmes (Task 2)

- 11.1 It is a requirement of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that a HRA examines the potential for plans, strategies and programmes to have a significant effect either individually or *'in combination'* with other plans and programmes. Undertaking an assessment of other plans and programmes requires a pragmatic approach (given the extensive range of plans and programmes underway in the region).
- 11.2 For this screening consideration of other plans and programmes has focused on those likely to lead to significant infrastructure/ development changes with related impacts. This screening exercise also requires that development plans be considered in combination with the effects of other plans or projects. It should be noted that any appropriate development in Merton are in conformity with and reflect the strategic objectives, targets and policies set out in The London Plan and are in line with the provision of Merton's Local Plan.
- 11.3 The *in-combination* effect of all development planning documents, in the interest of the identified SACs and SPAs, should be no greater than the effect of the Core Planning Strategy and where new developments plans are prepared; these will be subject to additional HRA.
- 11.4 Merton's Core Planning Strategy (part of Merton's Local Plan) Habitat Assessment concluded:
"Subsequent to the amendment of CS 9 Housing Provision, none of polices in the Core Planning Strategy are likely to result in significant adverse impact of European Sites. In particular, the potential primary impact, from increased recreation use, will not have an impact on the main reason for designation of the sites (the protection of stag beetle habitats) and there is therefore no need to undertake task two and task three of the Appropriate Appraisal process."
- 11.5 The South London Waste Plan (Part of Merton's Local Plan) Habitat Regulation Assessment concluded:
"In particular, the polices, on their own or in combination with any other relevant plans and projects, are unlikely to result in significant effect on the primary reasons for the designation of the European Sites and there is therefore no need to undertake task two and task three of the Appropriate Appraisal process"

In combination assessment

- 11.6 The *'in combination'* assessment has taken into account neighbouring borough's Local Plans (Core Planning Strategies, Sites Allocations and Development Management plans). The following local authorities' plans were taken into account as part of the In-

Combination Assessment:

- Royal Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- London Borough of Sutton
- London Borough of Wandsworth
- London Borough of Croydon

11.7 Figure 8 below sets out the relevant plans and projects that may have an ‘*in combination*’ effect with the plan. It focuses on housing delivery policies in neighbouring borough’s Local Plan documents. It should be noted that some neighbouring boroughs are currently updating their Local Plan in light of the changes to the housing supply targets in the London Plan (2015).

Figure 9: Housing delivery in neighbouring boroughs to Merton

Borough	Local plan	Proposal
London of Borough Sutton	<p>Local Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Core Planning Strategy and Proposals Map (2009) ❖ Site Development Policies (2012) 	<p>3,626 (minimum) new homes over ten year target (2015-2025) - in line with London Plan (2015).</p> <p>Broad locations are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sutton town centre – 2,000 to 2,150 units • Hackbridge - 1,000 to 1,100 units • Wallington – 500 to 550 units • Other District Centres – 500 to 550 units • Remainder of the Borough – 1,000 to 1,100 units. <p>HRA Screening Assessment concluded no likely significant effects on European Sites.</p>
London Borough of Wandsworth	<p>Local Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Strategy (2nd proposed submission 2014) • Development Management Policies Document (2nd proposed submission 2014) • Site Specific Allocations Document (2nd proposed submission) 2014) • Proposals Maps (2nd proposed submission 2014) 	<p>18,123 (minimum) new homes over ten year target (2015-2025) - in line with London Plan (2015).</p> <p>HRA Screening Assessment concluded- overall conclusion of the assessment is that the Wandsworth Local Plan is not likely to have adverse effects on a European site.</p>
London Borough of	Local Plan	15, 594 (minimum) new homes over ten year target (2015-2025) - in line with

Lambeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan (2015) 	<p>London Plan (2015).</p> <p>Draft HRA Screening Assessment concluded 'no significant adverse impacts on European Sites'.</p>
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	<p>Local Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Strategy (2012) 	<p>6,434 (minimum) new homes over ten year target (2015-2025) - in line with London Plan (2015).</p> <p>HRA Screening Assessment concluded no significant adverse impacts on European Sites.</p>
London Borough Richmond	<p>Local Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Strategy (2009 - <i>currently under review</i>) Development Management Plan (2011 <i>currently under review</i>) Twickenham Area Action Plan Site Allocations Plan (underway) 	<p>3,150 (minimum) new homes over ten year target (2015-2025) - in line with London Plan (2015).</p> <p>Broad areas for housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Richmond - 700-1100 Twickenham - 700-1100 Teddington and the Hamptons - 700-800 Whitton - 400 East Sheen – 300 <p>HRA Screening Assessment concluded no significant adverse impacts on European Sites.</p>
London Borough of Croydon	<p>Local Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Croydon Local Plan: Strategic Policies (CLP1) (2013) The Croydon Local Plan: Detailed Policies and Proposals (CLP2) (underway) 	<p>14, 348 (minimum) new homes over ten year target (2015-2025) - in line with London Plan (2015).</p> <p>HRA Screening Assessment concluded no significant adverse impact on European Sites (2013)</p>

11.8 As highlighted in the table above all the neighbouring boroughs concluded in their Local Plan's HRA screenings that their housing delivery policies are unlikely to have a 'negative impact' on the European Sites.

11.9 The *in-combination* assessment also incorporated an assessment of neighbouring boroughs transport proposals, policies and supporting maps/diagrams to see if any major transport infrastructure proposals are located on or close by to the adjoining boundaries of neighbouring boroughs of Merton, as together they could have the potential to have an impact upon European Sites.

Figure 10: In combination Assessment-transport infrastructure

Local Plans	Proposals
Royal Borough of Richmond upon Thames	There are no transport proposals identified on or around the adjoining boundary with Merton therefore, it is highly unlikely that there will be any adverse impact <i>in combination</i> with the plan
London Borough of Sutton	There are no transport proposals identified on or around the adjoining boundary with Merton therefore, it is highly unlikely that there will be any adverse impact <i>in combination</i> with the plan
London Borough of Wandsworth	There are no transport proposals identified on or around the adjoining boundary with Merton therefore, it is highly unlikely that there will be any adverse impact <i>in combination</i> with the plan
London Borough of Croydon	There are no transport proposals identified on or around the adjoining boundary with Merton therefore, it is highly unlikely that there will be any adverse impact <i>in combination</i> with the plan
London Borough of Lambeth	There are no transport proposals identified on or around the adjoining boundary with Merton therefore, it is highly unlikely that there will be any adverse impact <i>in combination</i> with the plan

11.10 Merton’s second Local Implementation Plan (LIP2) has been developed in response to the Mayor’s Transport Strategy 2010. As it is the transport strategy for the borough; it therefore is in conformity with Merton’s Local Plan and furthermore the Mayor of London Transport Strategy and support documents. LIP2 identifies how the council will implement the Mayor’s Transport Strategy at a local level. Figure 10 below sets out the potential effects of the development polices in combination with LIP2. The factors identified were:

- Local and diffuse air pollution (specifically NOx)
- Direct land take
- Housing pressure and disturbance
- Invasive and/or non-native species
- Water quality and quantity

Figure 11: Merton's Local Implementation Plan (LIP2) impact on SAC and SPA sites

Plan Name	European sites which could be affected by plan	How could they be affected	Likely effect SAC and SPA sites.
Sustainable Transport Strategy and Local Implementation Plan (LIP2)	Richmond Park SAC	Diffuse air pollution Local air pollution	No. This plan seeks to develop a sustainable transport network in the borough which will lessen congestion, improve access and promote sustainable forms of transport thus improving air quality and reducing diffuse air pollution
	Wimbledon Common SAC		
	Part of the South West London Bodies SPA	Direct land take	No

12 Screening Assessment (Task 3)

12.1 In line with the screening requirements of the Habitats Regulations an assessment was undertaken to determine the potential significant effects of potential sites on the integrity of the European Sites that lie within the potential influence of the plan.

Screening Methodology

12.2 This section of the report covers the screening assessment of the policies/objectives within the Plan. The Plan has been analysed to assess whether development proposed in the Plan would be likely to result in significant adverse impacts on European Sites within the Merton catchment area as identified in section 4. It is unlikely, that any of the estates would have an adverse impact the European Sites based on the criteria set out in section 5 of the revised draft Natural England guidance prepared by Tyldesley and Associates 2009.

12.3 This assumption is formed by identifying the European Sites (section 3) and using the catchment area (15km) which helps us to understand how land use and development may affect land that is outside the Plan's boundary. Furthermore looking outside the HRA boundary area (15km catchment area) that may be affected in the case of Merton this would be the neighbouring boroughs.

12.4 In addition looking outside the catchment area that maybe affected for example, by way of infrastructure for example water supply reservoirs or treatment works infrastructure that receives waste or discharge from the Plan area.

12.5 Therefore it is considered that such development in conjunction with '**sound evidence**' namely The South London Waste Plan (SLWP), the findings of HRA for the SWLP and the London Plan is unlikely to adverse impact to the European Sites. Other considerations were the Thames Basin Heaths, the Windsor Forest Great Park and the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment however due to the location these sites there are deemed too far away to be judged relevant. The guidance also advises that where uncertainty is encountered a precautionary approach should be adopted with worst outcomes assumed. Figure 11; below put this advice into practise.

13 HRA Screening

- 13.1 The following tables are the HRA screening against the *Categorisation of the potential effect of the policies on the European Sites*. The Screening is carried out for the Plan's polices and all three estates as the Plan is essentially is identifying and allocating the estate as Site Allocations.

Figure 12: Screening of the Plan's policies

Policy	Assessment category	Categorisation of the potential effect of the policies on the European Sites
EP E1: Townscape	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP E2: Street network	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP E3: Movement and access	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP E4: Land use	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP E5: Open space	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP E6: Environmental protection	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP E7: Landscape	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP E8: Building heights	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP H1: Townscape	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP H2: Street network	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP H3: Movement and access	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP H4: Land use	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP H5: Open space	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP H6: Environmental protection	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP H7: Landscape	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP H8: Building heights	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site

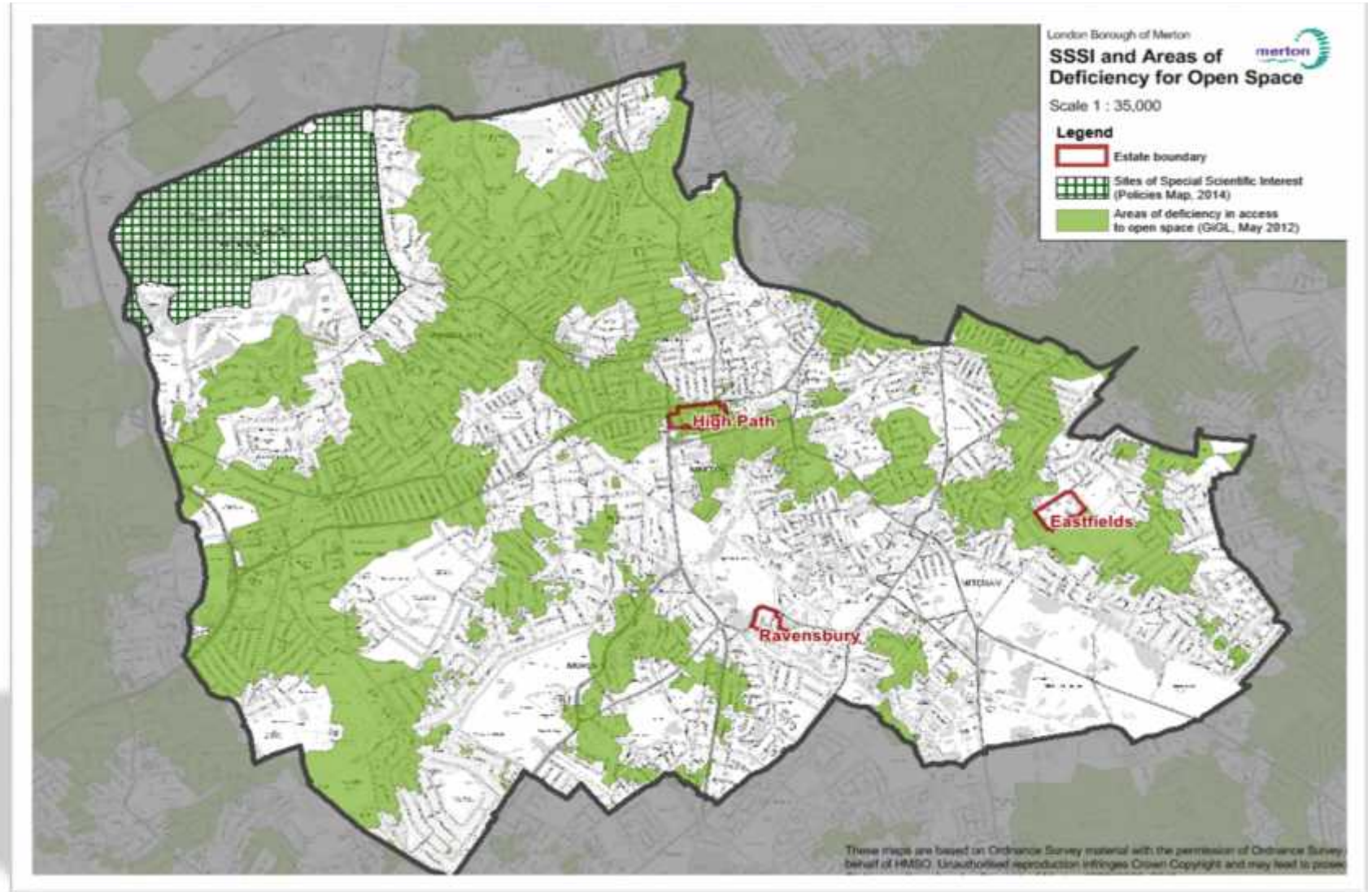
EP R1: Townscape	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP R2: Street network	A1	This policy will not itself lead to development because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development and is not a land use planning policy
EP R3: Movement and access	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP R4: Land use	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP R5: Open space	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP R6: Environmental protection	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EH R7: Landscape	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site
EP R8: Building heights	A3	This policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on European Site

Figure 13: Screening of the estates (Site Allocation).

Site Allocation	Assessment category	Categorisation of the potential effect of the policies on the European Sites	Comment
High Path Estate		The policies that positively steer development away from European Sites and associated sensitive areas	<p>This site allocation is 2.6km away from the European sites. The site area is 7 hectares in size. The site currently has 608 homes. However due to the size of the area and areas of unused space within the estate the regeneration could potential double the existing homes (estimate).</p> <p>It should be noted that the actual number proposed for this site is not know at the time of this HRA. The details such as final number of homes would be part of the planning application process.</p>
Eastfields Estate		The policies that positively steer development away from European Sites and associated sensitive areas	<p>This site allocation is 5.2km away from the European sites. The Eastfields Estate site area is approx. 5.4ha. Currently there are a total of 252 existing homes on the estate. However due to the size of the site it could potential double this figure (estimate).</p> <p>It should be noted that the actual number proposed for this site is not know at the time of this HRA. The details such as final number of homes would be part of the planning application process.</p>
Ravensbury Estate		The policies that positively steer development away from European Sites and associated sensitive areas	<p>This site allocation is 4km away from the European sites. The Ravensbury Estate site area is approx. 4.5ha. Currently the site area has 192 homes. However again due to the size of the site it could potential double this figure (estimate), although it should be noted there are a number environmental constrains e.g. flooding, biodiversity which are likely to influence the final number of homes on the estate.</p> <p>It should be noted that the actual number proposed for this site is not know at the time of this HRA. The details such as final number of homes would be part of the planning application process.</p>

13.2 In line with the screening requirements of the Habitats Regulation an assessment was undertaken to determine the potential significant effects of the potential site allocations on the integrity of the European Sites that lay within the potential influence of the plan namely the three estates.

Figure 14: SSI and areas of deficiency and relationship to the three estates



Screening Assessments conclusions

- 13.3 Following the Screen Assessments it is clear that there is *'no direct land take'* from any of European Sites by way of the Plan. There are two possible impacts that the Plan could have on the European Sites; although these are not considered to be of a 'significant adverse impact'. The first is which, is common for any large scale development is urbanisation. The increase in population, recreational activities and adverse social behaviour such as, fly tipping and not taking the appropriate action in regard to dog faeces. Nevertheless as mentioned earlier in this HRA the management of the common and park, respectively by the Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath Conservators and the Royal Parks Authority by way of dog control orders and other appropriate byelaws are deemed an appropriate way of minimising potential impact.
- 13.4 The second is air pollution effects on habitat and species. However this is mitigated by way of the borough designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), Local Plan policies, the London Plan and national planning policies and planning guidance.

14 Conclusion

- 14.1 Housing delivery has a potential adverse impact due to the increase in housing provision, increase in population and the potential increase in visits to European Sites by residents within the borough and neighbouring boroughs. However the first stage of the screening assessment concluded that in isolation the Plan will not have a negative impact upon the identified European Sites.
- 14.2 The HRA recommendation is that as the Plan does not provide actual housing numbers for the estates the reason being it does not fall within the remit of the Plan and is not a consequence to the Plan's development toward adoption. The subject of housing numbers and tenures would be part of the planning application process.
- 14.3 Taking the above into consideration, as such the developer is required to carry out individual Appropriate Assessment (AA) for each estate (High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury) with any submitted planning application. Before starting an AA it is necessary that the applicant(s) agree the scope and method of the AA with Natural England and Merton Council.

Appendix 1: Categorisation of the potential effect of the policies on the European Sites

Category A: No negative effect	
A1	Policies that will not themselves lead to development e.g. because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development, or they are not a land use planning policy.
A2	Policies intended to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity.
A3	Policies intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on a European Sites.
A4	Policies that positively steer development away from European Sites and associated sensitive areas.
A5	Policies that would have no effect because no development could occur through the policy itself, the development being implemented through later policies in the same plan, which are more specific and therefore more appropriate to assess for their effects on European Sites and associated sensitive areas.
Category B: No significant effect	
B	Effects are trivial or 'de minimis', even if combined with other effects.
Category C: Likely significant effect alone	
C1	The option, policy or proposal could directly affect a European Sites because it provides for, or steers, a quantity or type of development onto a European Site, or adjacent to it.
C2	The option, policy or proposal could indirectly affect a European Site e.g. because it provides for, or steers, a quantity or type of development that may be very close to it, or ecologically, hydrologically or physically connected to it or it may increase disturbance as a result of increased recreational pressures
C3	Proposals for a magnitude of development that, no matter where it was located, the development would be likely to have a significant effect on a European Site

Appendix 2: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) glossary

Action required

This is a categorisation of the action that is required to bring the SSSI unit into favourable condition. There are three options: Natural England funding; Natural England negotiation/enforcement; and other party action. Any combination of these actions can be selected for one unit.

Adverse condition

If a SSSI unit is currently assessed as being in unfavourable no change, unfavourable declining, part destroyed or destroyed condition, it is described as being in adverse condition and is not meeting the PSA target.

Citation

The citation details the 'features of interest' for which a SSSI has been notified. Each citation shows details of the SSSI location, size and the date of notification. It also describes the general reasons for notification and the habitats, plants and animals that are found at the site.

Condition

The condition of the SSSI land in England is assessed by Natural England, using categories agreed across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. There are six reportable condition categories: favourable; unfavourable recovering; unfavourable no change; unfavourable declining; part destroyed and destroyed.

Condition assessment comments

The condition assessment comments provide more detailed information about the condition assessment. Comments will not be present for every condition assessment.

Date compiled

The date the information was extracted from the Natural England Site Information System (ENSIS).

Destroyed

Lasting damage has occurred to all the special conservation interest of the SSSI unit such that it has been irretrievably lost. This land will never recover.

Natural England funding

Natural England funding may be required for the unit to reach favourable condition e.g. a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme agreement is required.

Natural England negotiation/enforcement

Negotiation and/or enforcement by Natural England are required for the unit to reach favourable condition.

Favourable

Favourable condition means that the SSSI land is being adequately conserved and is meeting its 'conservation objectives'; however, there is scope for the enhancement of these sites.

Latest assessment date

Latest condition assessment date carried out by Natural England.

Main habitat

The broadest classification of the feature on the unit selected from a list of habitats based on the BAP Broad Habitat classification.

Meeting the PSA target

If a SSSI unit is currently assessed as being in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, it is described as 'meeting the PSA target'.

Notification date

The date the SSSI was notified to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs by Natural England. If the SSSI notification has been amended, this will be the date of the last revision.

Operations requiring Natural England's consent (formerly known as operations likely to damage the special interest)

Before any of these operations are undertaken the owner or occupier must consult Natural England and may require our consent. It is usually possible to carry out many of these operations in certain ways or at specific times of year, or on certain parts of the SSSI, without damaging the features of interest. The Natural England Conservation Officer for the SSSI can provide advice and, where appropriate, issue consent.

In certain circumstances it will not be possible to consent to these operations, because they would damage the features of interest. Where possible the Conservation Officer will suggest alternatives which would enable consent to be issued. To proceed without Natural England's consent may constitute an offence. If consent is refused, or if conditions are attached to it which is unacceptable to the owner or occupier, they may appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Other party action

Action by a public or statutory body other than Natural England is required for the SSSI unit to reach favourable condition.

Part destroyed

Lasting damage has occurred to part of the special conservation interest of a SSSI unit such that it has been irretrievably lost and will never recover. Conservation work may be needed on the residual interest of the land.

PSA target

The Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to have 95% of the SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition by 2010

Reason for adverse condition

The reason why the unit is in adverse condition (i.e. unfavourable no change, unfavourable declining, part destroyed or destroyed). The reason is selected from a defined list.

Source (reason for adverse condition)

The cause of the adverse condition is within the SSSI (on site) or outside the SSSI (off site).

SSSI unit

SSSI units are divisions of SSSIs used to record management and condition details. Units are the smallest areas for which Natural England's gives a condition assessment. The size of units varies greatly depending on the types of management and the conservation interest. There are around 22,000 SSSI units.

SSSI unit area

The area of each SSSI unit in hectares calculated from digitised unit boundaries.

Unfavourable declining

This means that the special interest of the SSSI unit is not being conserved and will not reach favourable condition unless there are changes to site management or external pressures. The site condition is becoming progressively worse.

Unfavourable no change

This means the special interest of the SSSI unit is not being conserved and will not reach favourable condition unless there are changes to the site management or external pressures. The longer the SSSI unit remains in this poor condition, the more difficult it will be, in general, to achieve recovery.

Unfavourable recovering

Unfavourable recovering condition is often known simply as 'recovering'. SSSI units are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management measures are in place. Provided that the recovery work is sustained, the SSSI will reach favourable condition in time.

In many cases, restoration takes time. Woodland that has been neglected for 50 years will take several years to bring back into a working coppice cycle. A drained peat bog might need 15-20 years to restore a reasonable coverage of sphagnum.

Views about Management (VAM)

The 'Views about Management' gives a straightforward account of the basic management that is needed to conserve and enhance the wildlife or geological features of the SSSI. By giving a clear and simple statement of management principles for conservation, these views will help to clarify and build upon the existing understanding between SSSI owners and occupiers and Natural England about the management of their SSSIs.

The views place no additional obligation on the owner or occupier of a SSSI nor do they replace any more detailed management advice which Natural England may have already given, such as advice in a Site Management Statement or a Management Agreement.

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Natural England must notify the owners and occupiers of all SSSIs of its views about the management of the SSSIs. This programme must be completed by January 2006.