



Coventry City Council

**Coventry Local Plan Review
2021-2041
Regulation 19 Consultation**

**Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
Screening Report**

August 2024

enfusion



Coventry Local Plan Review 2021-2041: Regulation 19 Consultation

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) HRA Screening Report

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CONTENTS

	Page
1 Introduction	
Habitats Regulations Assessment & Appropriate Assessment	1
The Coventry Local Plan Review (CLPR) 2021-2041	2
The Scope of this HRA	3
2 Approach & Method	
Guidance & Approach	6
Method Stages 1-3	7
Likely Significant Effects (LSEs)	8
Potential Types of Impacts of Local Plans on Sites	9
In-Combination Effects	10
3 Designated Sites for Nature Conservation: Characterisation	
Introduction	11
Ensor's Pool	11
Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar	12
4 Potential Impact Pathways & Screening for Likely Significant Effects (LSEs)	
Atmospheric Pollution (Nitrogen Deposition)	13
Loss or Damage to Habitats, Functionally Linked Land	14
Disturbance from Noise, Vibration or Light to Sensitive Species	14
Recreational Pressures	14
Changes to Water Quality or Water Quantity/Levels/Flow	15
In-Combination Effects	17
5 HRA Screening Conclusion	

Figure 1: Location of SACs within a 20km zone of Coventry Local Plan area (Warwickshire CC, 2016)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Habitats Regulations Assessment & Appropriate Assessment

- 1.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)¹ refers to assessments that must be undertaken in accordance with the Habitats Regulations (2017)² to determine if a plan or project may affect the protected features of a habitats site. The aim of the HRA process is to assess the potential effects arising from a plan or project against the nature conservation objectives of any site designated for its nature conservation importance.
- 1.2 The Habitats Regulations transpose the requirements of the European Union (EU) Directive (92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna [the Habitats Directive] which aims to protect habitats and species of European nature conservation importance. The Directive establishes a network of internationally important sites designated for their ecological status. These are referred to as European Sites and comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)³. The UK Government also requires Ramsar sites⁴ that support internationally important wetland habitats to be included within the HRA process – and as required by the Regulations. The relevant designated sites will be referred to as habitats sites in this HRA (and as used in Government guidance on undertaking HRA).
- 1.3 The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, and whilst the UK is no longer a member of the EU, a requirement for HRA will continue as set out in the Conservation of Habitats & Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019)⁵. These are amendments, they do not replace the HRA Regulations (2017).
- 1.4 The initial screening stage of the HRA process considers if the potential impacts arising as a result of the plan or project are likely to have a significant effect on these sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. Where the potential for likely significant effects (LSEs) cannot be excluded, a competent authority⁶ must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site, in view of the site's conservation objectives.
- 1.5 UK Guidance advises that the scope and content of an appropriate assessment will depend on the nature, location, duration and scale of the proposed plan or project and the interest features of the relevant site. The term "appropriate" indicates that the assessment needs to be proportionate and sufficient to support the competent authority in determining whether the plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site. Where an adverse

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

² [Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 \(as amended\)](#)

³ Designated under European Directive (2009/147/EC) on the conservation of wild birds [the Birds Directive]

⁴ Listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance [Ramsar Convention]

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/579/contents/made>

⁶ For example, a local authority, including a metropolitan borough council – such as the Coventry City Council

effect on a site's integrity cannot be ruled out, and there are no alternative solutions, the plan or project can only proceed if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest and if the necessary compensatory measures can be secured.

- 1.6 The process of HRA is based on the precautionary principle and where there is uncertainty, the risk or possibility for effects should be assumed. A competent authority must consult the relevant statutory nature conservation regulatory body (for Coventry City Council - Natural England) for the purposes of the assessment and must have regard to any representations that the statutory body may wish to make.

The Coventry Local Plan Review (CLPR) 2021-2041

- 1.7 The Coventry Local Plan 2021-2041 covers the entire administrative boundary for Coventry City Council, extending beyond the city centre, and located some 15 km to the south-east of Birmingham. Since the current Local Plan was adopted in 2017, there have been various wider reaching changes in both the national and local contexts, including major changes to climate change and environmental requirements. The longer term effects of Brexit and the Covid pandemic are still uncertain, for example, on patterns of working. In consideration of the significant changes associated with Government calculations for housing need, as well as major changes to climate change and environmental requirements, the Council approved a full review of the Local Plan in December 2022.
- 1.8 Many of the policies in the adopted LP are still relevant and require only minor amendment or updating. Around 20-30 policy areas have been investigated with updated evidence, most notably associated with the new Coventry & Warwickshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA, November 2022)⁷. Issues & Options for the Local Plan Review were subject to public consultation in 2023, and comments received have also been taken into account in the preparation of the Draft Coventry Local Plan publication version for Regulation 19 consultation.
- 1.9 The CLPR follows a similar format to the adopted plan and it comprises sections on Overall Growth & the Duty to Cooperate; Health & Wellbeing; Jobs & Economy; Housing; Retail & Town Centre Uses; Communities; Green Belt & Green Environment; Design; Heritage; Accessibility; Environmental Management; Connectivity; City Centre; and Infrastructure, Implementation & Monitoring. The section on Housing includes information on extant site allocations including the status of some being developed, some consented, and some not started. The Council identified that 25 housing and mixed use sites, and 7 employment sites, were still suitable and should be retained in the Local Plan Review. There are 12 new proposed allocations and amendments to 3 current site allocations.

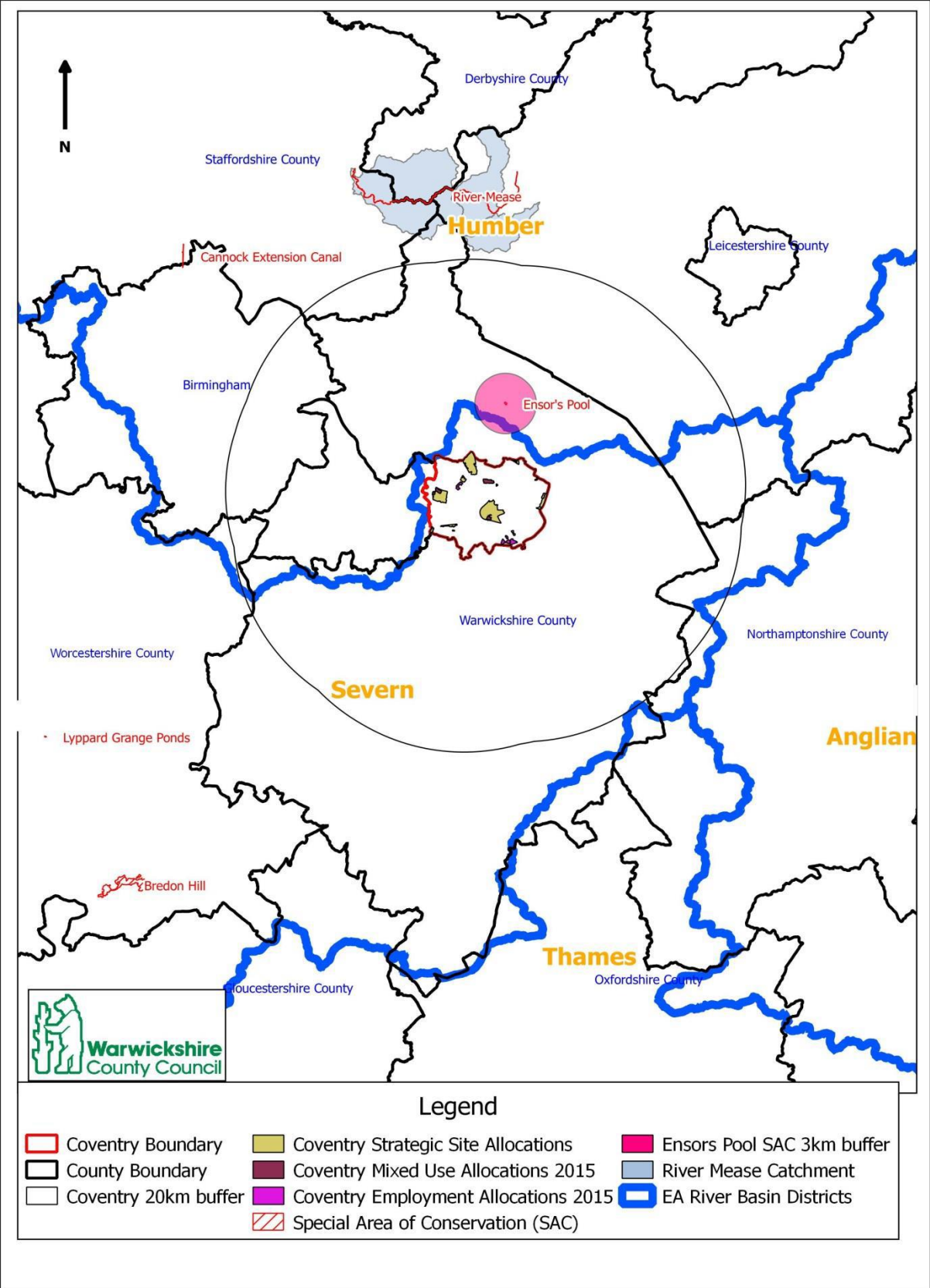
⁷ <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/planning-policy/coventry-local-plan-2011-2031/3>

The Scope of this HRA

- 1.10 The Coventry City Council (CCC) has commissioned independent specialist assessors Enfusion Ltd to undertake the HRA on behalf of the City Council. There is no prescriptive requirement for the geographical scope of an HRA of a local plan. Current guidance and common HRA practice in England suggests that European sites (and Ramsar sites) should be included, as follows:
- All European sites within the boundary of the local plan area
 - European sites within a 15km radius of the local plan boundary
 - Other European sites shown to be potentially linked to proposed development in the LP area through an environmental pathway (such as a watercourse) – essentially, the route by which a development plan policy/proposal could lead to a significant effect on a Habitats site
- 1.11 The adopted Coventry Local Plan & City Centre Area Action Plan) was subject to HRA (2016)⁸ according to guidance and good practice at the time. The HRA screening process identified five habitats sites to be included in the scope of the HRA. Established HRA practice at the time considered a 20 km radius from the LP area to identify sites that should be investigated.
- 1.12 The previous HRA of the adopted Coventry Local Plan screened five sites – one Ensor's Pool SAC within 20 km and a further four habitats sites close to the Warwickshire boundary but outside of the 20km buffer zone - Bredon Hill SAC, Worcestershire; Cannock Extension Canal SAC, Staffordshire; and Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC, Worcestershire; and the River Mease SAC in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire. The previous HRA also considered the potential for LSEs on hydrologically connected SACs in Wales and associated with public water supplies that might become resourced from Wales into the Midlands. The SACs were not listed and at that time (2016) there were no plans to use water from Wales in supplies to the Coventry area.
- 1.13 The location⁹ of these SACs within the 20km buffer zone around the Coventry Local Plan area and subjected to HRA of the adopted Coventry Local Plan is shown in Figure 1, as follows:

⁸ https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/19291/habitat_regulations_assessment_2016.pdf

⁹ Warwickshire County council (2016) HRA Screening Report for Coventry Local Plan & City Centre Area Action Plan



- 1.14 All four habitats sites are beyond the 15 km zone of influence buffer distance used by current HRA practice. The canal, ponds and river SACs are within the adjacent Humber River Basin District. They are not within the Severn River Basin District in which the Coventry Local Plan area is located and thus, are not connected hydrologically such that there will be no impact pathways regarding water quality or water quantity/flow/levels.
- 1.15 HRA practice has developed since the previous HRA, including guidance updated with the findings from court judgements and information from various research studies. These changes are particularly associated with when mitigation measures are considered in the staged method, the significance of recreational and transport impacts, and a stronger understanding of the implications of functionally linked land. Since functionally linked land has been identified for the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar associated with the River Severn in Worcestershire (and potential linkages with the Warwickshire Avon that connects to the River Severn at Tewkesbury), this habitats site is also considered for screening.
- 1.16 Taking into account the previous HRA, changes in guidance and method, and current good practice¹⁰, it is considered that the scope of the HRA of the Coventry LP should include habitats sites, as follows:
- Ensor's Pool SAC
 - Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar for any hydrological and functional land linkages

Consideration is also given to the SACs associated with the Lake Vyrnwy/River Severn water transfer and any need for updating since 2016.

¹⁰ Distances measured using Magic Map (Defra) application <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>

2.0 APPROACH & METHODS

Guidance & Approach

- 2.1 Habitats Initial guidance for HRA was published by the Government¹¹ based on the European Commission's (2001) guidance for the Appropriate Assessment (AA) of Plans, and recommends three main stages to the HRA process:
- Stage 1: Screening for Likely Significant Effect (LSEs)
 - Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment, Ascertaining Effects on Integrity
 - Stage 3: Mitigation Measures and Alternatives Assessment
- 2.2 Subsequently, the nature conservation statutory body Natural England produced detailed guidance (DTA, 2009)¹² on the HRA of development planning documents that built on assessment experience and relevant court rulings. However, this remained in draft format and is not available on the Natural England website. The guidance was further developed into The HRA Handbook (DTA, 2013) and is now kept updated online through a subscription service¹³.
- 2.3 A High Court Judgment in 2017 provided clarification with regard to interpretation of air quality assessment guidance¹⁴ on HRA in-combination relating to industrial installations and emissions to air, and the Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB) guidance on environmental assessment including implications for habitats sites. As a result of this Judgment, Natural England developed internal guidance¹⁵ in 2018 and advises that usually only those Habitats Sites present within 200m of the edge of a road on which a plan or project will generate traffic will need to be considered when checking for LSEs from road traffic emissions with regard to HRAs. The DMRB was updated in 2020¹⁶.
- 2.4 In 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) issued a judgment¹⁷ that provided clarification regarding the application of mitigation measures. The implication of this judgment is that competent authorities cannot take account of any avoidance or reduction measures when considering at the HRA screening stage whether a plan is likely to have an adverse effect on a European Site – and as had been the standard approach applied in the UK. A second judgment (Sweetman II) was issued

¹¹ DCLG, 2006, Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment

¹² Tyldesley, D., 2009, The Habitats Regulations Assessment of Local Development Documents (Natural England)

¹³ <https://www.dtapublications.co.uk/handbooks>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tag-unit-a3-environmental-impact-appraisal>

¹⁵ NE Internal Guidance – Approach to advising competent authorities on Road Traffic Emissions and HRAs (June 2018) (NEAA001)

¹⁶ <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/suppliers/design-standards-and-specifications/design-manual-for-roads-and-bridges-dmr/>

¹⁷ People over Wind & Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta Case C-323/17

later in 2018 and provided further clarification on the interpretation of mitigation measures.

- 2.5 In March 2022, Natural England wrote to a number of planning authorities regarding certain river catchments protected under habitats law that are considered to be in unfavourable condition due to exceeded nutrient threshold. Such excess nitrogen and phosphorus in the water meant that new development proposals should only be approved where they would not cause additional pollution, ie neutral effects – and resulting in housing developments being held up in certain areas. Coventry City Council was not included in the 74 LPAs¹⁸ that are required by Government to demonstrate nutrient neutrality. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has provided a legal briefing (2023)¹⁹ on HRA and this situation for local authorities.
- 2.6 This HRA has been undertaken with consideration of these legal rulings and briefing, together with updated UK Government guidance on appropriate assessment (2019)²⁰. It has also taken into account guidance for competent authorities on how to decide if a plan or project proposal that affects a habitats site can go ahead (2021, updated 2023)²¹. This HRA seeks to be proportionate and sufficient to support the Council in determining if the draft plan is likely to have any significant effects on the integrity of habitats sites.

Methods

- 2.7 **Stage 1: Screening for Likely Significant Effects (LSEs):** Building upon the previous HRA work and updating it with new evidence, a high-level initial assessment has been undertaken to decide whether any appropriate assessment is required. This stage aims to separate out any policies or allocations of the draft plan for which it can be concluded that they are unlikely to result in any LSEs on Habitats Sites. This is usually because they are not relevant or there is no mechanism for negative effects – no pathway for impacts. This stage considers other plans that might interact with the CLPR such that there could be implications for in-combination effects.
- 2.8 **Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment:** For those elements of the plan where it is determined that a conclusion of no LSEs cannot be drawn, the assessment progresses to this next stage. Appropriate assessment is not a technical term and there are no particular analyses that need to be undertaken. Rather, the assessment progresses in more detail and in particular, to investigate if there are any available mitigation measures that would avoid or minimise any potential adverse effects.
- 2.9 For many local plan policies, there are limits to the extent of assessment that is possible at the plan level. A policy may not contain any specific details as to

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutrient-pollution-reducing-the-impact-on-protected-sites/nutrient-pollution-reducing-the-impact-on-protected-sites>

¹⁹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/topics/environment/nutrient-neutrality-and-planning-system/habitats-regulations-advice-lpas>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site>

what will be delivered or where, and so it cannot be assessed in detail at the plan level. The precise nature and significance of potential impacts (for example, visual or noise disturbance, loss of functionally linked habitat) are related to how a specific development may be designed and constructed. Therefore, the approach for the assessment is to focus on available mitigation measures (achievable, deliverable and effective), and to ascertain that there is an adequate protective framework to ensure that such policies would not lead to any adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant protected sites.

- 2.10 The recent PAS guidance on HRA confirms that the only mitigation measures that can be taken into account are those *“that are protective or preventative, meaning that they avoid direct damage in the first place.”* Compensatory measures, *“which offset or compensate for damage that will be caused, cannot be taken into account”*.
- 2.11 **Stage 3: Derogation:** A further stage that may be applied if adverse impacts remain having taken into consideration mitigation measures. It is necessary to demonstrate that there are no alternatives and to identify *“imperative reasons of overriding public interest”* (IROPI) and potential compensatory measures. Such an exemption is very complex and to be avoided, if possible.

Likely Significant Effects (LSEs)

- 2.12 A conclusion of no significant effect will only be reached where it is considered unlikely, based on available information and current knowledge that a local plan policy or proposal would have significant effects on the integrity of a habitats site. The integrity of a site depends upon it being able to sustain its qualifying features (Annex I habitats & bird populations, and Annex II species) for which it has been designated.
- 2.13 A plan, alone or in combination with other plans/proposals, could cause a significant effect²² on a habitats site if there is:
- a reduction in the amount or quality of designated habitats or the habitats that support designated species
 - a limit to the potential for restoring designated habitats in the future
 - a significant disturbance to the designated species
 - disruption to the natural processes that support the site's designated features
- 2.14 The potential for some LSEs can be determined on a proximity basis, for example, nitrogen deposition from vehicle emissions. For other potential LSEs, distances will vary and be associated with other factors, such as hydrological connectivity, and/or functionally linked land beyond the boundary of the designated site and important for bird, fish or bat populations.

²² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site>

Potential Types of Impacts of the Local Plan on Protected Sites

2.15 Good practice experience and case law in the UK has helped identify the types of impacts that are related to certain types of plans. The type of development and associated activities that are permitted by Local Plans only have the potential to result in certain types of impacts that could affect habitats sites, as follows:

- **Atmospheric Nitrogen** from increases in traffic volumes on roads close to sensitive habitats
- **Loss or Damage to Habitats** through physical activities within the designated sites themselves or at functionally linked sites. For example, a woodland that helps to support a designated species from a nearby habitats site; wetlands used as food sources for designated bird species; habitat resources for food or breeding for bat species
- **Disturbance from Noise, Vibration or Light** from construction or development in close proximity to sensitive species
- **Recreational Pressures** due to local population growth - such as from dog-walking, predation by pets, cycling, trampling (including soil/path erosion), littering, and/or fire
- **Changes in Water Quality or Water Quantity**, including pollution through increased nutrient loading (Nitrogen & Phosphorus) from increased sewage discharge, and/or changes in flow/levels caused by increased abstraction for water supply

2.16 It is necessary for the HRA to reach a conclusion as to whether or not the Local Plan Review would adversely affect the integrity of a habitats site. UK Government guidance²³ advises that integrity of the site will be adversely affected if a proposal could, for example:

- destroy, damage or significantly change all or part of a designated habitat
- significantly disturb the population of a designated species, for example, its breeding birds or hibernating bats
- harm the site's ecological connectivity with the wider landscape, for example, harm a woodland that helps to support the designated species from a nearby habitats site
- harm the site's ecological function, or its ability to survive damage, and reduce its ability to support a designated species
- change the site's physical environment, for example, by changing the chemical makeup of its soil, increasing the risk of pollution or changing the site's hydrology
- restrict access to resources outside the site that are important to a designated species, for example, food sources or breeding grounds
- prevent or disrupt restoration work, or the potential for future restoration, if it undermines the site's conservation objectives

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site>

In-Combination Effects

2.17 The Habitats Regulations require that a plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of a Habitats site – “*either alone or in combination with other plans or project*”. This recognises that an individual plan may have insignificant effects but there may be cumulative effects with other plans. Therefore, the approach to screening seeks to exclude the risk of any LSEs – and in accordance with the precautionary principle. If impact pathways are found to exist for a particular effect but that this is not likely to be significant from the emerging CLPR alone, then other plans that could result in the same impact will be considered for potential in-combination effects. The relevant plans are likely to be development plans from adjacent local planning authority (LPA) areas –

- North Warwickshire
- Nuneaton-Bedworth
- Rugby
- Stratford-on-Avon
- Solihull
- Warwick

3.0 DESIGNATED SITES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION: CHARACTERISATION

Introduction

- 3.1 It is considered that the European/internationally designated sites²⁴ for nature conservation that need to be scoped into the screening of the draft CLPR for Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) and any requirement for subsequent appropriate assessment (AA), are as follows:
- The Ensor's Pool SAC is located about 6km to the north of the CLPR area boundary
 - The Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar is located some 86km to the south west of the CLPR area boundary
- 3.2 The **Conservation Objectives**²⁵ are generally the same for European sites and comprise all or relevant elements of the following - to 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 habitats of qualifying species rely
 - The populations of qualifying species, and,
 - The distribution of qualifying species within the site
- 3.3 The characteristics and priority issues, pressures/threats, for the European sites are summarised²⁶, and summarised in the following paragraphs of this section of the HRA report.

Ensor's Pool SAC

- 3.4 The habitats site comprises 3.86 ha of inland water (70%) and grassland (30%). The primary reason for selection of the site is recorded as *"This lowland site in central England represents white-clawed crayfish Austropotamobius pallipes in standing water. This 1 ha marl pit holds a very large population,*

²⁴ Distances measured (direct nearest boundary to nearest boundary) using Magic Map (Defra) application <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>

²⁵ <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK>

²⁶ Data from JNCC <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation-overview/> and Natural England <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/>

estimated at 50,000. Although crayfish plague outbreaks have occurred in the Midlands, this waterbody is isolated from river systems and is a good example of a 'refuge' site in an important part of the species' former range."²⁷

- 3.5 The habitats site is an abandoned clay pit with an average depth of 8m and is fed from groundwater; it is located on the western edge of the urban environment of Nuneaton. The Site Improvement Plan (2014) lists changes to species distribution as a priority issue with a requirement to investigate the reasons for the decline in the white-clawed crayfish population.

Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar

- 3.6 A large estuary with extensive intertidal mudflats and sandflats, rocky platforms and islands. Salt marsh fringes the coast backed by ditches and occasional brackish ditches. The seabed is rock and gravel with subtidal sandbanks. The estuary's classic funnel shape, unique in the UK, is a factor causing the Severn to have the second- highest tidal range in the world.
- 3.7 Qualifying features: The Severn Estuary SAC²⁸ hosts the following habitats: estuaries, mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Atlantic salt meadows (*GlaucoPuccinellietalia maritima*), sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, and reefs. The site also supports sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), river lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and twaite shad (*Alosa fallax*). The Severn Estuary SPA supports overwintering Bewick's swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*); on passage ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) and overwintering curlew (*Numenius arquata*), dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), redshank (*Tringa tetanus*), and shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*). It also regularly supports at least 20,000 waterfowl.
- 3.8 The Site Improvement Plan²⁹ priority issues relate to public access/disturbance, physical modification, development, coastal squeeze, changes in land management & species distributions, water pollution, air pollution (atmospheric nitrogen), fisheries (commercial & recreational), invasive species, and various marine issues. The Severn Estuary is underpinned by 36 SSSI Units through the estuary and the upper estuary.
- 3.9 The three key activities that may cause the greatest impact on the designated features within this site include paddle sports, powered flying and 'other' (dog walking). There is recent growing awareness of the potential for recreational pressures to impact on the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar site, particularly on the bird populations for which the SPA and Ramsar site are designated and including with regard to functionally linked habitat. The River Severn is functionally linked to the designated site of the estuary. The source of the Warwickshire River Avon is near Naseby, east of Rugby, with tributaries draining the CPLR area; it joins the River Severn at Tewkesbury.

²⁷ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5364843502632960>

²⁸ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6081105098702848>

²⁹ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4590676519944192>

4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACT PATHWAYS & SCREENING FOR LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS (LSEs)

Atmospheric Pollution (Nitrogen Deposition & Dust)

- 4.1 The main pollutants of concern for designated sites are oxides of nitrogen (NO & NO₂ = NO_x), ammonia (NH₃) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂)³⁰. Ammonia can have a directly toxic effect upon vegetation, particularly at close distances to the source such as near road verges. High levels of NO_x and NH₃ are likely to increase the total nitrogen (N) deposition to soils, potentially leading to further adverse effects in ecosystems. Increases in nitrogen deposition from the atmosphere can, if sufficiently great, enhance soil fertility and lead to eutrophication (excessive nitrification). This often has adverse effects on the community composition and quality of semi-natural, nitrogen-limited terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The UK Air Pollution Information System (APIS)³¹ provides data on whether concentrations of NO_x are currently exceeding critical loads at the designated sites.
- 4.2 Sulphur dioxide emissions overwhelmingly derive from power stations and industrial processes, and ammonia emissions originate mostly from agricultural practices (87% of total NH₃ emissions in the UK in 2022)³². NO_x emissions are dominated by the output of vehicle exhausts and fuel combustion in the energy industries – road transport contributed 30% of NO_x emissions in 2022³³. Housing development is likely to contribute most of its overall NO_x footprint through associated road traffic. Dust is only likely to be a potential issue during the construction stages of development projects and adverse effects are only at a very localised level – within 200m.
- 4.3 Emissions of NO_x can reasonably be expected to increase as a result of the plan, primarily due to an increase in the volume of traffic associated with housing growth – and this is the identified potential impact pathway. It is assumed that air pollution from roads is unlikely to be significant beyond 200m from the road itself (DMRB & NE guidance). Those roads forming part of the primary road network (motorways and A roads) might experience significant increases in traffic in combination with other plans or major projects in the vicinity. There may also be some minor roads that experience particular use. The Ensor's Pool SAC is within 200m of minor roads on the edge of Nuneaton, not within the CPLR area. Parts of the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar are within 200m of major roads but the habitats site is over 80km away from the CPLR area. Therefore, there are no impact pathways identified and habitats **sites screened out for appropriate assessment.**

³⁰ UK Air Pollution Information Service (APIS) <https://www.apis.ac.uk/>

³¹ Ibid

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/emissions-of-air-pollutants/emissions-of-air-pollutants-in-the-uk-ammonia-nh3>

³³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/emissions-of-air-pollutants/emissions-of-air-pollutants-in-the-uk-nitrogen-oxides-nox>

Loss or Damage to Habitats; Functionally Linked Land

- 4.4 **Physical Loss of Habitat:** None of the CLPR site allocations lie within the boundaries of the habitats sites and are, therefore, **screened out for appropriate assessment**.
- 4.5 **Functionally Linked Land:** Loss or damage to habitats from development outside of the habitats site boundaries may result in LSEs where that habitat contributes towards the qualifying features for which the site is designated. Such sustenance zones or functionally linked offsite land³⁴ includes movement corridors, feeding and sheltering habitat for mobile species such as bats, birds and fish. The Ensor's Pool SAC is isolated, fed from groundwater, and >5km distance from the CPLR boundary. Therefore, there are no impact pathways identified and habitats site **screened out for appropriate assessment**.
- 4.6 The Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar supports overwintering Bewick's Swan and various on passage birds. Loss or damage to functionally linked land may arise from direct landtake through site allocations or from increased recreational use arising from the increased population associated with the new development. Recreational use is considered later in this section of the HRA report. Migratory birds may extend some distance upstream on the River Severn and, for example, Bewick's Swan has been reported around Gloucester city and further north between Upton on Severn and Worcester city (NE, November 2022)³⁵. However, Coventry is located over 60km from the River Severn and impact pathways are unlikely due to this distance; therefore, habitats site **screened out for appropriate assessment**.

Disturbance from Noise, Vibration or Light to Sensitive Species

- 4.7 Noise and vibration from the construction of proposed development are most likely to affect bird species, and may also be an issue for some bat roosts. Current HRA practice often uses 500m as a suitable distance from the habitats site boundary to assess any LSEs. There are no impact pathways identified due to the distances of the habitats sites from the CPLR area boundary, and therefore, habitats sites **screened out for appropriate assessment**.

Recreational Pressures

- 4.8 Recreational activities, both terrestrial and water-based, can have significant effects on habitats sites such as from dog-walking, predation by pets, cycling, trampling (including soil/path erosion), littering, fire, vandalism, canoeing,

³⁴ Natural England (2016) NECR207. Functional linkage: How areas that are functionally linked to European sites have been considered when they may be affected by plans and projects - a review of authoritative decisions

³⁵ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5694125407207424#>

boating and other water activities. Habitats sites with qualifying bird species are likely to be particularly susceptible to recreational disturbances from walking, dog walking, illegal use of off-road vehicles and motorbikes, angling, wildfowling, and water sports.

- 4.9 The sensitivities of habitats sites to different types of recreational pressures vary and the likely impacts are complex, varying according to habitat type and species and recreational activity. Each tourism area has its own characteristics and usage, although some generic commonalities of activities and impacts may be identified for coastal, estuarine, river, and terrestrial habitats. Baseline information considers the sensitivities of relevant habitats and species, their current condition/improvement requirement, and numbers/types of visitors.
- 4.10 From this information, an assessment may be made for where increases of population would be expected to result in LSEs from recreational pressures. Zones of Influence (Zols) may be established from visitor surveys for each habitat site and beyond such a Zol it may be considered that there will be no LSEs. A standard 75% percentile of distances travelled by visitors is used to define a core recreational catchment. Particular concerns may arise from in-combination effects with increased populations from nearby local authority areas.
- 4.11 The Ensor's Pool SAC is isolated, >5km distance from the CPLR boundary and its use is unlikely to be under increasing recreational pressures from proposed development in the CPLR area. Therefore, there are no impact pathways identified and habitats site **screened out for appropriate assessment**.
- 4.12 The Severn Estuary supports a wide range of water-based activities including surfing, canoeing/kayaking, rafting and yachting/boating, as well as fishing. Land-based activities include walking/hiking, dog-walking and cycling, for example, the Severn Way Walk is a long distance trail of 210 miles. There are also diverse recreational and cultural/historic attractions near to the River Severn. The investigations of the recreational use³⁶ of the Severn Estuary continue for the Severn Estuary Partnership with a further survey undertaken in 2022³⁷, including 21 survey locations. It is likely that a Zol of 12.6km will be established and the CPLR area is far beyond this such that the habitats site **screened out for appropriate assessment**.

Changes in Water Quality & Water Quantity/Levels/Flow

- 4.13 Water supply and wastewater treatment is managed by Severn Trent Water (STW) for the CLPR area. The water company produces various plans³⁸ to manage the water resource: Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP); Drought Plan; Strategic Resource Options (SROs); and Drainage &

³⁶ <https://afallen.cymru/project-understanding-visitors-to-the-severn-estuary/>

³⁷ Caals, Z. & Liley, D. (2022). Severn Estuary Visitor Survey 2022. Report by Footprint Ecology

³⁸ <https://www.severntrent.com/about-us/our-plans/>

Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP). Some of these plans are subject to the HRA process.

- 4.14 The HRA (2024)³⁹ of the WRMP concluded that there would be no impacts to the qualifying habitat features for the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar (with the exception of estuaries and the migratory fish populations sub-feature) as there will be no change in volume of water downstream of the abstraction at Lickhill⁴⁰. It is noted that there is limited understanding of the distribution of the qualifying features within the wider River Severn catchment, passability of existing weirs, and therefore the extent of offsite functionally linked habitat. Information is provided to guide project level HRAs.
- 4.15 Lake Vyrnwy water from mid-Wales is currently operated by United Utilities and supplies water to north west England by pipeline. There are various SACs located near to the lake. There is a Strategic Transfer option⁴¹ being investigated whereby the lake water would be released into the River Vyrnwy/Severn, then abstracted and transferred (proposed Severn to Thames Transfer) via new infrastructure to provide resilience for water resources. The draft WRMP 2024⁴² from Severn Trent Water (STW) to cover the period 2025-2085 lists Strategic Resource Options for the water company. These include the Severn to Thames Transfer – water would be moved from Wales, the North West and other areas in the Midlands into the STW region. These options are still under review. It is understood that water supplies to Coventry are from local sources and will remain so such that any future strategic proposals are beyond the scope of this HRA. Therefore, habitats sites **screened out for appropriate assessment** with regard to **water quantity/flow/levels**.
- 4.16 The Drainage & Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP, March 2023)⁴³ provides information with 14 strategic planning areas (based on location of WwTWs and aligned with river basin management areas. Coventry is located within the Avon Strategic Planning Area (closely aligned with the Warwickshire Avon River Basin Management Catchment, and as managed by the Environment Agency).
- 4.17 Coventry lies within the catchment of the Severn River Basin⁴⁴ and within the Avon Warwickshire Management Catchment⁴⁵ for which there are 3 operational catchments - Coventry is within the Avon Urban Rivers & Lakes. Main River tributaries of the Warwickshire Avon run through Coventry – the River Sowe draining the eastern side of the city, and the River Sherbourne running through the city. There are also local brooks and some other watercourses that have been previously diverted into culverts for drainage⁴⁶.

³⁹ <https://www.severntrent.com/content/dam/dwrmp-st-v2/STdWRMP24-HRA-Issue-2-redacted.pdf>

⁴⁰ Near Stourport on Severn & over 45km west of the Coventry LP area and therefore, beyond the known functionally linked land

⁴¹ For example, please see: https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z_corporate-site/about-us-pdfs/gate-2-north-west-transfer-sro-documents/nwt-g02-001-000-nwt-sro-detailed-feasibility-and-concept-design-report-rev01.pdf

⁴² <https://www.severntrent.com/about-us/our-plans/water-resources-management-plan/>

⁴³ <https://www.severntrent.com/about-us/our-plans/drainage-wastewater-management-plan/document-library/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/severn-draft-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales>

⁴⁵ <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/ManagementCatchment/3007>

⁴⁶ <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/water-management-flooding/flooding-advice/3>

- 4.18 The Severn Estuary SAC/Ramsar site is hydrologically linked to the designated site through the River Avon in Warwickshire. The source of the River Avon is over 15km to the east of Coventry and the river runs to the south-west passing within about 5 km of the administrative boundary for Coventry. Whilst there are proposed site allocations for new development within the CPLR area, it is considered that there are no likely environmental pathways or LSEs due to the distances away from the habitats sites. Therefore, habitats sites **screened out for appropriate assessment** with regard to **water quality**.
- 4.19 The Coventry & Warwickshire Sub-Regional Water Cycle Study (WCS) Stage 1 (June 2024)⁴⁷ indicates that there is the capacity for the proposed development in the CPLR. Therefore, this further confirms that the habitats sites are **screened out for appropriate assessment** with regard to **water quality & quantity/flow/levels** – in consideration of the capacities for proposed development and the distances of the proposed development from the habitats sites.

In-Combination Effects

- 4.20 The HRA has considered the potential for likely significant effects on Ensor's Pool SAC and the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar. It has also given consideration to the SACs associated with the Lake Vyrnwy/River Severn water transfer. This HRA screening has found that there are no impact pathways and thus, no adverse effects alone from the Coventry LPR on the integrity of the SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. In the absence of any adverse effects alone, there will be no adverse effects in combination with other plans and projects.

⁴⁷ JBA Consulting (June 2024) for Coventry CC, north Warwickshire BC, Nuneaton & Bedworth BC, Rugby BC, Stratford-on-Avon DC, and Warwick DC

5.0 HRA SCREENING CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In consideration of the current information, it is concluded that there will be no adverse effects, alone or in combination, from the draft Coventry Local Plan Review on the integrity of the SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites that have been investigated as potentially relevant to the plan and its proposed development.
- 5.2 This HRA Screening Report is being sent to the nature conservation regulator, Natural England, and any comments received will be taken into account in the preparation of the final Local Plan and the final HRA Report. The draft CPLR is being published for public consultation Regulation 19 during the autumn 2024.