

Shropshire Council

Local Plan Review 2016 - 2036

Preferred Strategic Sites

**Habitats Regulation Assessment
Screening Report
Summary**

July 2019

Local Plan Review Preferred Strategic Sites:
HRA Screening Report Summary

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is a legal requirement for Local Authorities to prepare a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for plans and projects that have the potential to impact on habitats of European importance. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Habitats Regulations), the purpose of an HRA is to ensure that the proposals from any plan or project, or the cumulative effect of a number of plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any International site.
- 1.2. Habitats Regulations Assessment plays an important role in protecting the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 network of sites. These sites, often referred to as 'European Sites', include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Candidate SACs (cSACs). Following UK government policy, potential SPAs (pSPAs), possible SACs (pSACs) and proposed and listed Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) designated under the Ramsar Convention are also treated as though covered by the HRA regulations. The term 'international sites' includes all the above designations and is used throughout HRA reports.

2. HRA Screening Report for the Preferred Strategic Sites

- 2.1. This Screening Report is the fourth phase of the HRA of the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review (LPR) 2016-2036.
- 2.2. It should be noted that the LPR is in the process of preparation. The Issues and Strategic Options document was published for public consultation between 23rd January and 20th March 2017. This set out options for the level and general distribution of housing growth and for economic growth.
- 2.3. The Preferred Options: Scale and Distribution of Development consultation document was published for consultation between 27th October and 22nd December 2017. It set out the preferred scale and distribution of housing and employment development in Shropshire 2016-36, identifying a settlement hierarchy of a Strategic Centre, Principal Centres, Key Centres, Community Hubs and Community Clusters. It also proposed draft policies for the management of development within Community Hubs and Community Clusters.
- 2.4. The Preferred Sites consultation document was published for consultation between 29th November 2018 and 8th February 2019. This identified preferred sites in the Strategic Centre, the Principal and Key Centres and Community Hubs for housing and employment use. It included the numbers of dwellings and the amount of employment land (in hectares) for each site. It also asked for comments on a cross subsidy exception sites policy.
- 2.5. The current strategic sites consultation document identifies three preferred strategic sites and asks for views on whether a fourth potential strategic site should be preferred. Strategic sites are individually more than 25ha in size and are not associated with meeting the needs of those settlements in the preferred sites document. Two brownfield sites (the former Ironbridge Power Station and Clive Barracks at Tern Hill) are proposed for mixed use development, whilst a third (RAF Cosford) would offer increased employment, education opportunities and housing to meet the needs of RAF personnel. The potential strategic site at Junction 3 of the M54 would provide employment and housing.

- 2.6. A review of policies in the adopted Local Plan has not yet been undertaken: this will be published for consultation later in the plan making process and will form the basis of subsequent HRA reports.
- 2.7. The purposes of this HRA Screening Report are to:
- identify which international sites could possibly be affected by the proposals in the strategic sites consultation document and which can be screened out at this stage,
 - determine potential pathways by which the international sites may be affected and, where possible, give recommendations for any avoidance or mitigation measures to be considered when drafting planning policies for later LPR documents. Comments on requirements for further information gathering are also provided.

3. Identifying international sites which could be affected by the Local Plan Review

- 3.1. All international sites within a precautionary buffer of 15km of the county boundary have been screened in for consideration. Additional sites at a greater distance have been added to this list due to possible effect pathways over greater distances, such as river connections or recreational impacts, or through recommendations by statutory agencies. The international sites considered in the Consultation on Preferred Sites HRA Screening Report are listed below. Those sites within Shropshire are shown in bold:

Berwyn SPA
Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountain SAC
Brown Moss SAC
Cannock Chase SAC
Downton Gorge SAC
Elenydd SAC
Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses SAC
Fens Pools SAC
Granllyn SAC
Johnstown newt sites SAC
Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar Phase 1
Berrington Pool
Betley Mere
Bomere and Shomere Pools
Brown Moss
Clarepool Moss
Fenemere
Marton Pool (Chirbury)
Quoisley Mere
White Mere
Wybunbury Moss
Midland Meres & Mosses Ramsar Phase 2
Aqualate Mere
Black Firs and Cranberry Bog
Brownheath Moss
Chapel Mere
Cole Mere
Cop Mere
Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses
Hanmer Mere
Hencott Pool
Llyn Bedydd
Morton Pool and Pasture

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Oakhanger Moss
Oss Mere
Sweat Mere and Crose Mere
Vicarage Moss
Montgomery Canal SAC
Mottey Meadows SAC
Rhos Goch SAC
River Clun SAC
River Dee & Bala Lake SAC
River Severn SPA/SAC/Ramsar
River Wye SAC
Tanat & Vrynwy Bat Sites SAC
The Stiperstones & the Hollies SAC
West Midlands Mosses SAC
Clarepool Moss
Wybunbury Moss

- 3.2. Two of these sites were screened out in the Initial Screening Report, as it was considered the LPR will not have an effect on their Conservation Objectives. These sites are Mottey Meadows SAC and Fens Pools SAC. The remaining sites have been considered in this HRA. Due to the size and location of one of the strategic sites, Mottey Meadows SAC was re-screened.

4. Possible mechanisms for significant effects (effect pathways)

- 4.1. The potential effect pathways identified have been combined under four main headings for the current screening exercise, namely
- Air pollution
 - Water pathways
 - Recreation
 - Light pollution.
- 4.2. Biosecurity effects as a result of development are likely to be related to access by people or their pets and have been included under Recreation.
- 4.3. Further details of these effect pathways and the international sites that could be affected by them are given in the full HRA Screening Report for the LPR Consultation on Strategic Sites document.

5. In-Combination Effects

- 5.1. The Habitats Directive requires Local Authorities to assess 'in-combination' effects alongside direct effects. 'In-combination' effects occur when otherwise non-significant proposals combine and cumulatively lead to a significant effect. This interaction can occur from proposals within the LPR or between the LPR and other plans or projects.
- 5.2. The strategic sites have been screened for effects alone, in-combination with each other and in combination with other preferred site allocations. However, no policy wording is available at this stage for the Shropshire LPR and a systematic in-combination assessment will be carried out as the LPR progresses and more specific information becomes available. The LPR will be screened against other Shropshire plans and projects, and those of surrounding local authorities for adverse in-combination effects. Any significant in-combination effects must be avoided or sufficiently mitigated for in the final LPR document.

6. Summary of Findings

6.1. Of the 23 international sites which have been identified for consideration in this HRA Screening Report the following have been screened out, as they will not be affected, or there will be no significant effects alone or in combination, as a result of strategic sites in the LPR, without recourse to mitigation measures:

- Brown Moss SAC
- Downton Gorge SAC
- Elenydd SAC
- Fenn's etc SAC
- Fens pool SAC
- Granlyln SAC
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Berrington Pool
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Betley Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Bomere and Shomere Pools
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 - Brown Moss
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Fenemere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Marton Pool Chirbury
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 1 – Quoisley Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Aqualate Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Brownheath Moss
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Chapel Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Cole Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Cop Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Cadney and Wem Mosses
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Llyn Bedydd
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Morton Pool and Pasture Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Oss Mere
- Meres and Mosses Ramsar Phase 2 – Vicarage Moss
- Mottey Meadows SAC
- Rhos Goch SAC
- River Clun SAC

6.2. Of the international sites initially screened in to this assessment, 9 SACs and 17 component sites of the Meres and Mosses Phase 1 and 2 Ramsar Sites have now been screened out for Strategic Sites alone. The remaining international sites will be carried forward for consideration in subsequent Habitats Regulations Assessments of the LPR documents in relation to strategic sites and overall in-combination assessments (including site allocations and policies).

6.3. All the strategic sites in the LPR Strategic Sites consultation document have been considered in this HRA Screening Report and recommendations made. However, none of the strategic sites have been screened out at this stage as final reports for key areas of investigation have yet to be submitted. Recommendations have been made for further information gathering and potential avoidance/mitigation measures for preferred sites where possible significant effects on international sites have been identified. The majority of these recommendations are for policy wording to be considered whilst drafting policies for the next stage of the LPR.

6.4. Key areas for consideration in the next stages of LPR preparation are:

- Taking into account the final results of an updated water cycle study, road traffic investigations and recreational assessment for possible impacts on Cannock Chase SAC. Dependant on the outcome of these studies, policy wording and avoidance of certain locations for strategic sites may be needed

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to ensure development will only start if sufficient resources, mitigation measures and infrastructure are in place.

- Policy wording must avoid any likely significant adverse effects, or adverse effects on international site integrity, either alone or in-combination.
- HRA Screening of proposed policy wording.
- Screening for in-combination effects with other plans or projects.