

Maidstone Borough Council

**Maidstone Borough Local
Plan Review: Regulation
18b Preferred Approach
HRA Screening Report**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC has been commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review.

1.2 This iteration of the HRA assesses the impacts of the Regulation 18b Preferred Approach of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review and should be read in conjunction with this document.

Context for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan

1.3 Maidstone Borough Council adopted the Maidstone Borough Local Plan in October 2017. It covers the period 2011-31 and provides for an annual requirement of 883 homes, equating to 17,660 new dwellings over the 20-year plan period. The Local Plan meets its growth requirements through a dispersed spatial strategy; it focuses growth in and at the edge of Maidstone, the Borough's largest settlement, with lesser amounts at five rural service centres and five larger villages. The council is committed to an early review of the plan which will be adopted by April 2022.

The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

1.4 The requirement to undertake HRA of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in 2007¹; the currently applicable version is the Habitats Regulations 2017, as amended². When preparing its Local Plan, Maidstone Borough Council is therefore required by law to carry out an HRA. Maidstone Borough Council can commission consultants to undertake HRA work on its behalf and this (the work documented in this report) is then reported to and considered by Maidstone Borough Council as the 'competent authority'. Maidstone Borough Council will consider this work and may only progress the Local Plan if it considers that the Plan will not adversely affect the integrity³ of any European site. The requirement for authorities to comply with the Habitats Regulations when preparing a Local Plan is also

¹ The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (2007) SI No. 2007/1843.

² The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (2017) SI No. 2017/1012, as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579).

³ The integrity of a site is the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was designated. (Source: UK Government [Planning Practice Guidance](#))

noted in the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

1.5 HRA refers to the assessment of the potential effects of a development plan on one or more European sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):

- SACs are designated under the Habitats Regulations as amended and target particular habitat types (specified in Annex 1 to the Habitats Directive) and species (specified in Annex II to the Habitats Directive). These annexes to the Habitats Directive list habitat types and species (excluding birds) considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level. Designation of SACs also has regard to the threats of degradation or destruction to which the sites are exposed and, before EU exit day, to the coherence of the Natura 2000 network of European sites. After EU exit day, regard is had to the importance of such sites for the coherence of the national site network.
- SPAs are areas classified⁴ for rare and vulnerable birds or regularly occurring migratory species.
- Potential SPAs (pSPAs)⁵, candidate SACs (cSACs)⁶, Sites of Community Importance (SCIs)⁷ and Ramsar sites should also be included in the HRA.
- Ramsar sites support internationally important wetland habitats and are listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention, 1971).

1.6 For ease of reference during HRA, these designations can be collectively referred to as European sites⁸ despite Ramsar designations being at the international level.

1.7 The overall purpose of the HRA is to conclude whether or not a proposal or policy, or the whole development plan, would adversely affect the integrity of the European site in

question either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. This is judged in terms of the implications of the plan for the 'qualifying features' for which the European site was designated, i.e.:

- SACs – Annex I habitat types and Annex II species⁹;
- SPAs – Annex I birds and regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I¹⁰;
- Ramsar sites – the reasons for listing the site under the Convention¹¹.

1.8 Significantly, HRA is based on the precautionary principle meaning that where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse impact should be assumed.

Stages of HRA

1.9 The HRA of development plans is undertaken in stages (as described below) and should conclude whether or not a proposal would adversely affect the integrity of the European site in question.

1.10 The HRA should be undertaken by the 'competent authority', in this case Maidstone Borough Council, and LUC has been commissioned to do this on the Council's behalf. The HRA also requires close working with Natural England as the statutory nature conservation body¹² in order to obtain the necessary information, agree the process, outcomes and mitigation proposals. The Environment Agency, while not a statutory consultee for the HRA, is also in a strong position to provide advice and information throughout the process as it is required to undertake HRA for its existing licences and future licensing of activities.

Requirements of the Habitats Regulations

1.11 In assessing the effects of a Local Plan in accordance with Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, there are potentially two tests to be

⁴ Classified (a) before the day of the UK's exit from the EU (31 January 2020) in accordance with Article 4(1) or 4(2) of the European Union Wild Birds Directive for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed in Annex I of the Directive), and under Article 4(2) for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I, or (b) after exit day under the retained transposing regulations.

⁵ Potential SPAs are sites that have been approved by the Minister for formal consultation but not yet proposed to the European Commission, as listed on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/special-protection-areas).

⁶ Candidate SACs are sites that have been submitted to the European Commission, but not yet formally adopted, as listed on the JNCC's [SAC list](#).

⁷ SCIs are sites that had been adopted by the European Commission before the day of the UK's exit from the EU (31 January 2020) but not yet formally designated as SACs by the UK Government.

⁸ The term 'Natura 2000 sites' can also be used interchangeably with 'European sites' in the context of HRA, although the latter term is used throughout this report.

⁹ As listed in the site's citation on the JNCC website (all features of European importance, both primary and non-primary, need to be considered).

¹⁰ As identified in sections 3.1, 3.2 and 4.2 of the SPA's standard data form on the JNCC website; species for which the site assessment of population (abbreviated to 'Pop.' in table at section 3.1 and 3.2) is 'D' (non-significant population) are not qualifying features and are only relevant to the HRA if qualifying features are dependent on them. Information from SAC and Spa Standard Data Forms is also published by the JNCC in the [Natura 2000 site details - spreadsheet](#). At sites where there remain differences between species listed in the [2001 SPA Review](#) and the extant site citation in the standard data form, the relevant country agency (Natural England or Natural Resources Wales) should be contacted for further guidance.

¹¹ As set out in section 14 of the relevant 'Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands' available on the JNCC website.

¹² Regulation 5 of the Habitats Regulations 2017.

applied by the competent authority: a 'Significance Test', followed if necessary by an Appropriate Assessment which would inform the 'Integrity Test'. The relevant sequence of questions is as follows:

- Step 1: Under Reg. 105(1)(b), consider whether the plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites. If not, as is the case for the Forest Heath SIR and SALP, proceed to Step 2.
- Step 2: Under Reg. 105(1)(a) consider whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects (the 'Significance Test'). If yes, proceed to Step 3.
- Step 3: Under Reg. 105(1), make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the European site in view of its current conservation objectives (the 'Integrity Test'). In so doing, it is mandatory under Reg. 105(2) to

consult Natural England, and optional under Reg. 105(3) to take the opinion of the general public.

- Step 4: In accordance with Reg. 105(4), but subject to Reg. 107, give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that the plan would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
- Step 5: Under Reg. 107, if Step 4 is unable to rule out adverse effects on the integrity of a European site and no alternative solutions exist then the competent authority may nevertheless agree to the plan or project if it must be carried out for 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI).

Typical Stages

1.12 Table 1.1 summarises the stages and associated tasks and outcomes typically involved in carrying out a full HRA of a development plan, based on various guidance documents^{13, 14, 15, 16}.

Table 1.1 Stages of HRA

Stage	Task	Outcome
Stage 1: HRA Screening	Description of the development plan. Identification of potentially affected European sites and factors contributing to their integrity. Review of other plans and projects. Assessment of likely significant effects of the development plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects.	Where effects are unlikely, prepare a 'finding of no significant effect report'. Where effects judged likely, or lack of information to prove otherwise, proceed to Stage 2.
Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment (where Stage 1 does not rule out likely significant effects)	Information gathering (development plan and European Sites). Impact prediction. Evaluation of development plan impacts in view of conservation objectives. Where impacts are considered to affect qualifying features, identify how these effects will be avoided or reduced.	Appropriate assessment report describing the plan, European site baseline conditions, the adverse effects of the plan on the European site, how these effects will be avoided or reduced, including the mechanisms and timescale for these mitigation measures. If effects remain after all alternatives and mitigation measures have been considered proceed to Stage 3.

¹³ UK Government Planning Practice Guidance, available from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

¹⁴ European Commission (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting European Sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

¹⁵ DCLG (2006) Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment

¹⁶ RSPB (2007) The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England. A guide to why, when and how to do it.

Stage	Task	Outcome
Stage 3: Assessment where no alternatives exist, and adverse impacts remain taking into account mitigation	Identify 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI). Demonstrate no alternatives exist. Identify potential compensatory measures.	This stage should be avoided if at all possible. The test of IROPI and the requirements for compensation are extremely onerous.

1.13 It is normally anticipated that an emphasis on Stages 1 and 2 of this process will, through a series of iterations, help ensure that potential adverse effects are identified and eliminated through the inclusion of mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce effects. The need to consider alternatives could imply more onerous changes to a plan document. It is generally understood that so called 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI) are likely to be justified only very occasionally and would involve engagement with the Government.

Recent Case Law Changes

1.14 This HRA has been prepared in accordance with recent case law findings, including most notably the recent 'People over Wind' and 'Holohan' rulings from the Court of Justice for the European Union (CJEU).

1.15 The recent 'People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta' judgment ruled that Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive should be interpreted as meaning that mitigation measures should be assessed as part of an Appropriate Assessment, and should not be taken into account at the screening stage. The precise wording of the ruling is as follows:

"Article 6(3)must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out, subsequently, an appropriate assessment of the implications, for a site concerned, of a plan or project, it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site."

1.16 In light of the above, the HRA screening stage for the Local Plan as not relied upon avoidance or mitigation measures to draw conclusions as to whether the Local Plan would result in likely significant effects on European sites, with any such measures being considered at the Appropriate Assessment stage as appropriate. This is discussed in more detail in **Section 3** below.

1.17 This HRA also fully considers the recent Holohan v An Bord Pleanala (9 Nov 2018) CJEU judgement which stated that:

"Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora must be interpreted as meaning that an 'appropriate assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site."

Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 must be interpreted as meaning that the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site."

Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 must be interpreted as meaning that, where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'appropriate assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned."

1.18 In undertaking this HRA, LUC has fully considered the potential for effects on species and habitats, including those not listed as qualifying features, to result in secondary effects upon the qualifying features of European sites, including the potential for complex interactions and dependencies. In addition, the potential for offsite impacts, such as through impacts to functionally linked land, and or species and habitats located beyond the boundaries of European site, but which may be important in supporting the ecological processes of the qualifying features, has also been fully considered in this HRA.

1.19 In addition to this, the HRA will take into consideration of the ‘*Wealden*’ judgement and the ‘*Dutch Nitrogen Case*’ judgement from the Court of Justice for the European Union.

1.20 *Wealden District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority* (2017) ruled that it was not appropriate to scope out the need for a detailed assessment for an individual plan or project based on AADT figures detailed in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges or the critical loads used by DEFRA or Environmental Agency without considering the in-combination impacts with other plans and projects.

1.21 In light of this judgement, the HRA will therefore consider traffic growth based on the effects of development provided for by the Plan in combination with other drivers of growth such as development proposed in neighbouring districts and demographic change.

1.22 The ‘*Coöperatie Mobilisation for the Environment and Vereniging Leefmilieu (Dutch Nitrogen)*’ judgement stated that “*May the positive effects of the autonomous decrease in the nitrogen deposition ... be taken into account in the appropriate assessment..., it is important that the autonomous decrease in the nitrogen deposition be monitored and, if it transpires that the decrease is less favourable than had been assumed in the appropriate assessment, that adjustments, if required, be made*”

1.23 The judgement states that according to previous case law “*...it is only when it is sufficiently certain that a measure will make an effective contribution to avoiding harm to the integrity of the site concerned, by guaranteeing beyond all reasonable doubt that the plan or project at issue will not adversely affect the integrity of that site, that such a measure may be taken into consideration in the ‘appropriate assessment’ within the meaning of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive*”

1.24 The HRA will therefore only consider the existence of conservation and/or preventative measures if the expected benefits of those measures are certain at the time of the assessment. The HRA will also ensure that if a threshold approach is applied it will consider the risk of significant effects being produced even if below the threshold values to ensure that there is no adverse effect on integrity of the European sites.

Structure of this report

1.25 This chapter (**Chapter 1**) has described the background to the production of the Local Plan and the requirement to undertake HRA. The remainder of the report is structured into the following sections:

- **Chapter 2: The Local Plan** summarises the content of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review Regulation 18b, which is the subject of this report.
- **Chapter 3: HRA Method** sets out the approach used, and the specific tasks undertaken during the screening of the HRA.
- **Chapter 4: HRA Screening Assessment** describes the findings of the screening stage of the HRA.
- **Chapter 5: Conclusions** summarises the HRA screening conclusions for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review Regulation 18b and describes the next steps to be undertaken.

Chapter 2

Maidstone Borough Local Plan

2.1 The Council's vision for the borough is set out in the 2019 Strategic Plan:

Maidstone: A vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential.

Local Plan Review Spatial Vision

2.2 Having regard to the Borough's Strategic Plan, as well as the other matters and strategic issues that the LPR will address, the proposed spatial vision for the LPR is as follows:

By 2037: Embracing growth which provides improved infrastructure, economic opportunity, services, spaces, and homes for our communities, while protecting our heritage, natural and cultural assets, and addressing the challenges of climate change.

Spatial Objectives

2.3 The following spatial options were identified as part of the Local Plan Review, which will help to deliver the vision as detailed above.

To provide for a balance of new homes and related retail and employment opportunities in the borough across the Local Plan Review across the plan period across the borough

2.4 By 2037 prosperity set out in the vision will be achieved through the strategic direction of growth set out in the LPR. The emphasis will be on increasing developing skilled employment opportunities in the borough alongside developing learning opportunities, having regard to the roles of centres across the borough and existing and improved accessibility patterns:

- Principally within the Maidstone urban area with a particular focus on the renewal of the town centre and within two new garden communities at Heathlands and Lidsing;
- With significant employment locations at the former Syngenta Works and Woodcut Farm;
- To a lesser extent at the five rural service centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst consistent with their range of services and role; and

- Limited development at the five larger villages of Boughton Monchelsea, Coxheath, Eythorne Street (Hollingbourne), Sutton Valence and Yalding,
- To support smaller villages and hamlets where appropriate.

Maintenance of the distinct character and identity of villages and the urban area

2.5 The roles of the rural service centres and larger villages will be strengthened through the retention of existing services, the addition of new infrastructure where possible, and the regeneration of employment sites including the expansion of existing employment sites where appropriate. Development throughout the borough will be required to provide a mix of housing tenures to allow for the creation of sustainable communities and be of high-quality using design that responds to the local character of areas and that incorporates sustainability principles.

Protection of the built and natural heritage, including the Kent Downs AONB and its setting, the setting of the High Weald AONB and areas of local landscape value

2.6 Development will have regard to safeguarding and maintaining the character of the borough's landscapes including the Kent Downs and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their setting, as well as the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Kent Downs AONB. Development will also have regard to, as well as other distinctive landscapes of local value and heritage designations whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas, including the diversification of the rural economy.

Provision of strategic and local infrastructure to support new development and growth including a sustainable Integrated Transport Strategy, adequate water supply, sustainable waste management, energy infrastructure, and social infrastructure such as health, schools and other educational facilities

2.7 The Council will seek to ensure that key infrastructure and service improvements needed to support delivery of the Maidstone Borough LPR are brought forward in a co-ordinated and timely manner, and that new development makes an appropriate contribution towards any infrastructure needs arising as a result of such new development. The Council will achieve this through close working with infrastructure providers.

2.8 Through the delivery of the Integrated Transport Strategy, Maidstone will seek a transport network that supports a prosperous economy and provides genuine

transport choices to help people make more journeys by modes such as public transport, walking and cycling.

2.9 The infrastructure will support the growth projected by the local plan to 2031 and LPR by 2037 with a focus on large scale developments, such as proposals at the new garden communities at Heathlands and Lidsing, with an aspiration for self-sufficiency.

Improve the quality of air within the air quality management area (AQMA)

2.10 Developments within, and with the potential to adversely impact the boroughs AQMA will be required to mitigate their impact, having regard to both on-site design and travel patterns and modes of travel.

Renewal of Maidstone Urban Area with particular focus on Maidstone the Town Centre and areas of social and environmental deprivation

2.11 To transform the offer, vitality and viability of Maidstone town centre including its office, retail, residential, leisure, cultural and tourism functions together with significant enhancement of its public realm and natural environment including the riverside. As the County Town of Kent, Maidstone's urban area will be revitalised by the regeneration of key commercial and residential sites and areas of existing deprivation. supported by the creation of employment opportunities, the regeneration of key sites, continued investment in the town centre and improvements to access. The town centre will be a first-class town centre that will enable Maidstone to retain its role in the retail hierarchy of Kent by the creation of a distinctive, accessible, safe high-quality environment for the community to live, work and shop in. The town centre will be regenerated by encouraging a wide range of new development including shops, businesses, residential development, cultural and tourism facilities, and enhanced public spaces for people to enjoy and for activities that will attract residents and visitors. There will also be focus on provision of appropriate social infrastructure as well as accessibility, permeability and sustainability of the town centre.

Redressing the low wage economy by expanding the employment skills base to target employment opportunities

2.12 The plan aims to provide for investment in employment space across the borough and in the town centre in a manner which maximises choice and flexibility as a mechanism to attract a more diverse range of employment with increased levels of higher added value jobs. However, if this is to be both economically and environmentally sustainable, it is important that local residents and communities are equipped with the

skills to compete for the employment and training opportunities that result from this investment, and to continue to develop their skills base throughout their careers and beyond.

2.13 In achieving this, the plan will need to work in parallel with other documents such as the boroughs Economic Development Strategy, and with other agencies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, Invest in Kent and both local and sub regional Higher Education and Further Education providers to ensure that these links are made and that opportunities are created at the best locations for the delivery of this education and training.

Meeting housing needs by delivering affordable housing, local needs housing, accommodation for the elderly, accommodation to meet Gypsy and Traveller needs, and accommodation to meet rural housing needs

2.14 To support new housing in villages that meets local needs and is of a design, scale, character and location appropriate to the settlement and which supports the retention of existing services and facilities; A better mix and balance of housing will be provided, and the density and location of development will be carefully considered.

2.15 To provide for future housing that meets the changing needs of the borough's population including provision for an increasingly ageing population and family housing, an appropriate tenure mix, affordable housing and accommodation to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community; and

Protection and promotion of the multi-functional nature of the borough's open spaces, rivers and other watercourses

2.16 To retain and enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and to promote linkages between areas of environmental value;

2.17 The delivery of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will develop and enhance a high-quality network of green and blue spaces building on the assets that already exist.

Ensuring that all new development is built to a high standard of sustainable design and construction

2.18 To ensure that new development is of high-quality design, making a positive contribution to the area including protection of built and natural heritage and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity; Development will be required to take account of the impact of climate change. To ensure that new development takes account of the need to mitigate its impact on and respond to climate change, implementing

sustainable construction standards for both residential and non-residential schemes;

Ensuring that applications for development adequately seeks to reduce its impact on and mitigates against climate change, the issues of flooding and water supply; and the need for dependable infrastructure for the removal of sewage and waste water.

2.19 To ensure that development supports the council's ambition of becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2030 by delivering sustainable and where possible low carbon growth which protects the boroughs natural environment. The council will, through Local Plan policy, seek to facilitate the necessary infrastructure to enable residents and businesses to minimise their impact on and respond to climate change. Developments will have considered the potential for the site to be delivered in a low carbon way, the incorporation of zero or low carbon technologies, and will include provision to enable future technologies and climate change adaptation. Additionally, development will give high regard to protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

Chapter 3

Method

3.1 This chapter describes the method that will be taken in the HRA of the Local Plan Review throughout its development including the specific tasks that will be undertaken and the assumptions that will underpin the HRA judgements made.

Screening Assessment

3.2 HRA Screening of the plan has been undertaken in line with current available guidance and seeks to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. The tasks that have been undertaken during the screening stage of the HRA and the conclusions reached are described in detail below. This section sets out policies and impact types for which likely significant effects are predicted or cannot be ruled out prior to mitigation and avoidance measures.

3.1 The purpose of the screening stage is to:

- Identify all aspects of the plan which would have no effect on a European site, so that they can be eliminated from further consideration in respect of this and other plans;
- Identify all aspects of the plan which would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site (i.e. would have some effect, because of links/connectivity, but which are not significant), either alone or in combination with other aspects of the same plan or other plans or projects, which therefore do not require 'appropriate assessment'; and
- Identify those aspects of the plan where it is not possible to rule out the risk of significant effects on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This provides a clear scope for the parts of the plan that will require appropriate assessment.

Identification of European sites which may be affected by the Plan

3.2 In order to initiate the search of European sites that could potentially be affected by the Local Plan Review, it is established practice in HRAs to consider European sites within the local planning authority areas covered by a Plan, and also within a buffer distance from the boundary of the Plan area.

3.3 A distance of 15km was used to identify European sites likely to be affected by impacts relating to development in

Maidstone. In addition to this, consideration was also given to European sites connected to the plan area beyond this distance, for example through hydrological pathways or recreational visits by residents of Maidstone.

3.4 European sites identified for inclusion in the HRA are listed below in **Table 3.1** below and **Figure 3.1** in **Appendix A**. Detailed information about each site is provided in **Appendix B**:

Table 3.1: European sites within 15km of Maidstone Borough

European site	Closest Distance / Location from Maidstone Borough
<u>SACs</u>	
North Downs Woodlands	Within the Borough
Peters Pit	3.7km / North
Queendown Warren	Adjacent / North
Wye and Crundale	12.3km / East
Stodmarsh SAC	23km / East
<u>SPAs</u>	
Medway Estuary and Marshes	4.1km / North
The Swale	7km / North
Thames Estuary & Marshes	12.5km / North
Stodmarsh	23km / East
<u>Ramsar sites</u>	
Medway Estuary and Marshes	4.1 / North
The Swale	7km / North
Thames Estuary & Marshes	11.5km / North
Outer Thames Estuary	14.6km / North
Stodmarsh Ramsar	23km / East

3.5 The designated features and conservation objectives of the European sites, together with current pressures and potential threats, was established using Data Forms for SACs and SPAs¹⁷ and Information Sheets for Ramsar Wetlands published on the JNCC website¹⁸, as well as Natural England's Site Improvement Plans¹⁹, Supplementary Advice Notes²⁰ and the most recent conservation objectives

published on the Natural England website (most were published in 2014)²¹. This analysis enabled European site interest features to be identified, along with the features of each European site which determine site integrity and the specific sensitivities and threats facing the site. This information was then used to inform an assessment of how the potential impacts of the Local Plan Review may result in likely significant effects on each of the European sites in question, either alone or in-combination.

Assessment of 'Likely Significant Effect'

3.6 As required under Regulation 105 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), an assessment has been undertaken of the 'likely significant effects' of the Plan. The assessment has been prepared in order to identify which policies or site allocations would be likely to have a significant effect on European sites. The screening assessment has been conducted without taking pre-embedded mitigation into account, in accordance with the 'People over Wind' judgment.

3.7 Consideration will be given to the potential for the development proposed to result in significant effects associated with:

- Physical loss of/damage to habitat;
- Non-physical disturbance (noise, vibration and light);
- Non-toxic contamination;
- Air pollution;
- Recreation pressure; and
- Changes to hydrology including water quality and quantity.

3.8 This approach also allows for consideration to be given to the cumulative effects of the site allocations rather than focussing exclusively on individual developments provided for by the Local Plan Review.

3.9 A risk-based approach involving the application of the precautionary principle is adopted in the assessment, such that a conclusion of 'no significant effect' will only been reached where it is considered very unlikely, based on current knowledge and the information available, that a proposal in the Local Plan Review would have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site. The screening assessment

¹⁷ These were obtained from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Natural England websites (www.jncc.gov.uk and www.naturalengland.org.uk)

¹⁸ www.jncc.defra.gov.uk

¹⁹ Natural England is in the process of compiling Site Improvement Plans for all Natura 2000 sites in England as part of the Improvement programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS).

²⁰ Supplementary Advice Notes, Natural England, <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216>

²¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216>

identifies assumptions that have been applied to enable specific impacts on European sites to either be scoped in or out.

Screening Assumptions

3.10 For many types of impacts, screening for likely significant effects will be determined on a proximity basis, using GIS data to determine the proximity of potential development locations to the European sites that are the subject of the assessment. However, there are many uncertainties associated with using set distances as there are very few standards available as a guide to how far impacts will travel. Therefore, the following section applies a number of precautionary assumptions to enable specific impacts on European Sites to be either scoped in or out of the subsequent HRA screening.

Physical damage and loss

3.11 Any development resulting from the plan would take place within Maidstone; therefore, only European sites within the boundary could be affected directly by physical damage or loss of habitat within the site boundaries. North Downs Woodlands SAC is the only site located within Maidstone and therefore with the potential to be directly affected by physical damage and/or loss from development.

3.12 Habitat loss from development in areas outside of the European site boundaries may also result in likely significant effects where that habitat contributes towards maintaining the interest feature for which the European site is designated. This includes land which may provide offsite foraging and roosting habitat for birds. Natural England has advised that their recognised distance for the consideration of offsite functionally linked land is generally 2km, but for certain species, including most notably golden plover and lapwing, a much greater distance of up to 15km may be appropriate.

3.13 In light of these guidelines, all European sites that support wetland bird species (excluding golden plover and lapwing) with potential to be affected by indirect physical damage and/or loss to offsite habitat were situated over 2km from the local authority boundary and were therefore scoped out of the assessment. This included Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, The Swale SPA and Ramsar, Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, Outer Thames Estuary SPA and Stodmarsh SPA and Ramsar.

3.14 All other European sites, including Queendown Warren SAC, Peter's Pit SAC, Wye and Crundale SAC and Stodmarsh SAC lie outside of the Borough boundary and do not support qualifying features which are reliant on off-site functionally linked habitat affected by the LPR. Therefore, these sites were scoped from the assessment.

Therefore, the potential for likely significant effects as a result of physical damage and loss needs to be considered further in relation to North Downs Woodlands SAC.

Non-physical disturbance

3.15 Noise and vibration effects, e.g. during the construction of new housing or employment development, are most likely to disturb bird species and are thus a key consideration with respect to European sites where birds are the qualifying features. Artificial lighting at night (e.g. from streetlights, flood lighting and security lights) has the potential to affect species where it occurs in close proximity to key habitat areas, such as key roosting sites of SPA birds.

3.16 It has been assumed that the effects of noise, vibration and light are most likely to be significant within a distance of 500 metres. There is also evidence of 300 metres being used as a distance up to which certain bird species can be disturbed by the effects of noise; however, it has been assumed (on a precautionary basis) that the effects of noise, vibration and light pollution are capable of causing an adverse effect if development takes place within 500 metres of a European site with qualifying features sensitive to these disturbances.

3.17 The qualifying features of North Downs Woodlands SAC and Queendown Warren SAC, which lie within and adjacent to the Borough, do not support features that are susceptible to impacts from non-physical disturbance and were therefore scoped out of the assessment.

3.18 All other European sites were scoped out of the assessment because they occur over 500 metres from the Maidstone local authority boundary.

Therefore, the potential for likely significant effects as a result of non-physical disturbance does not need to be considered further.

Non-toxic contamination

3.19 Habitats can be subject to non-toxic contamination, such as nutrient enrichment, changes in salinity and smothering from dust, due to industrial action, agriculture, construction and water abstraction and discharge. European sites with potential to be affected by non-toxic contamination are likely to be sites that lie within close proximity, or those that are hydrologically connected to areas of development provided for by the plan but potential changes to water quantity and quality are separately considered below.

3.20 North Downs Woodland SAC and Queendown Warren SAC are the only European sites which lie within or adjacent to Maidstone and have potential to be susceptible to impacts from non-toxic contamination. Due to the distance, all other European sites have been scoped out of the assessment.

Therefore, the potential for likely significant effects as a result of non-toxic contamination needs to be considered further in relation to North Downs Woodlands SAC and Queensdown Warren SAC.

Air pollution

3.21 Air pollution is most likely to affect European sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying features, but some qualifying animal species may also be affected, either directly or indirectly, by deterioration in habitat as a result of air pollution. Deposition of pollutants to the ground and vegetation can alter the characteristics of the soil, affecting the pH and nitrogen levels, which can then affect plant health, productivity and species composition.

3.22 In terms of vehicle traffic, nitrogen oxides (NO_x, i.e. NO and NO₂) are considered to be the key pollutants. Deposition of nitrogen compounds may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification, and NO_x can cause eutrophication of soils and water.

3.23 Based on the Highways Agency Design Manual for Road and Bridges (DMRB) Manual Volume 11, Section 3, Part 114 (which was produced to provide advice regarding the design, assessment and operation of trunk roads including motorways), it is assumed that air pollution from roads is unlikely to be significant beyond 200m from the road itself. Where increases in traffic volumes are forecast, this 200m buffer needs to be applied to the relevant roads in order to make a judgement about the likely geographical extent of air pollution impacts.

3.24 The DMRB Guidance for the assessment of local air quality in relation to highways developments provides criteria that should be applied at the Screening Stage of an assessment of a plan or project, to ascertain whether there are likely to be significant impacts associated with routes or corridors. Based on the DMRB guidance, affected roads which should be assessed are those where:

- Daily traffic flows will change by 1,000 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) or more; or
- Heavy duty vehicle (HDV) flows will change by 200 AADT or more; or

- Daily average speed will change by 10 km/hr or more; or
- Peak hour speed will change by 20 km/hr or more; or
- Road alignment will change by 5 m or more.

3.25 Where significant increases in traffic are possible on roads within 200m of European sites, traffic forecast data may be needed to determine if increases in vehicle traffic are likely to be significant. In line with the Wealden judgment²², the traffic growth considered by the HRA should be based on the effects of development provided for by the Plan in combination with other drivers of growth such as development proposed in neighbouring districts and demographic change.

3.26 It has been assumed that only those roads forming part of the primary road network (motorways and 'A' roads) are likely to experience any significant increases in vehicle traffic as a result of development (i.e. greater than 1,000 AADT). As such, where a site is within 200m of only minor roads, no significant effect from traffic-related air pollution is considered to be the likely outcome.

3.27 The key commuting corridor for new housing and employment development will likely include the M2, M11, A20, A26, A249, A274 and A229, which are highlighted in **Figure 3.1 in Appendix A**. European sites within 15km of the Maidstone boundary and also within 200m of a strategic road to the Borough include North Downs Woodlands SAC (A249, A229), Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar (A249) and The Swale SPA and Ramsar (A249).

3.28 In addition to this, there are proposals to develop a Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) to the east of Gravesend and to the west of East Tilbury which will provide an alternative route to the existing Dartford Crossing.

3.29 The LTC will link up with the M2 and A2 in Kent and as a result, will have potential to increase levels of traffic in Maidstone. In particular, there is potential that increased traffic as a result of the LTC will increase the potential for air pollution to affect the North Downs Woodlands SAC, which lies within 200m of the A229.

3.30 The current location of the proposed route has been selected to reduce the impact on the Thames Estuary SPA and Ramsar as a result of air quality changes, with the SPA located over 200m from the proposed route. However, given that proposed design will be subject to further iterations and given the close proximity of the European site in relation to the LTC a precautionary approach has been applied. The LTC as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) will be subject to its own HRA but this HRA considers the potential for in-combination effects through changes in air quality. This will be reliant on plans for the LTC being sufficiently advanced to

²² Wealden v SSCLG [2017] EWHC 351 (Admin)

allow such an assessment. If the plan is submitted before the NSIP and accompanying HRA, the HRA of the LTC will need to assess its effects in combination with those of the plan.

3.31 All other sites were situated over 200m from key strategic roads to the Borough and were therefore scoped out.

Therefore, likely significant effects relating to increased air pollution as a result of road traffic need to be considered further in relation to North Downs Woodlands SAC, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, The Swale SPA and Ramsar and Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar.

Recreational disturbance

3.32 Recreational activities and human presence can result in significant effects on European sites as a result of erosion and trampling, associated impacts such as fire and vandalism or disturbance to sensitive features, such as birds through both terrestrial and water-based forms of recreation.

3.33 The plan will result in housing growth, and associated population increase within Maidstone. Where increases in population are likely to result in significant increases in recreation at a European site, either alone or in-combination, the potential for likely significant effects will require assessment. At this stage, there is no definitive figure of the number and location of dwellings the plan will make provision for over the plan period.

3.34 European sites with qualifying bird species are likely to be particularly susceptible to recreational disturbances from walking, dog walking, angling, illegal use of off-road vehicles and motorbikes, wildfowling, and water sports. An increase in recreational pressure from development therefore has the potential to disturb bird populations of SPA and Ramsar sites as a result of both terrestrial and water-based recreation.

3.35 In addition, recreation can physically damage habitat as a result of trampling and also through erosion associated with boat wash and terrestrial activities such as use of vehicles.

3.36 Each European site will typically have a 'Zone of Influence' (ZOI) within which increases in population would be expected to result in likely significant effects. ZOIs are usually established following targeted visitor surveys and the findings are therefore typically specific to each European site (and often to specific areas within a European site). The findings are likely to be influenced by a number of complex and interacting factors and therefore it is not always appropriate to

apply a generic or non-specific ZOI to a European Site. Particularly in relation to coastal European sites, which have the potential to draw large number of visitors from areas much further afield.

3.37 At this stage, there is limited information available for the non-coastal European sites within 15km of Maidstone to determine a specific ZOI. Although, these sites are unique, they do not have the same draw as coastal sites and with recreational activities more easily managed and directed to alternative greenspace in the area. Using a precautionary approach and based on the findings of the Thames Basin Heath Delivery Framework²³, a ZOI of 7km was applied to all non-coastal European sites. Given the sensitivities of the Thames Basin Heath SPA to recreational pressure, it was deemed appropriate to use the same ZOI in this assessment. A more specific ZOI may be defined following targeted visitor surveys and discussions with land managers.

3.38 A review of the European sites within 7km of the Borough identified the following European sites:

- North Downs Woodlands SAC;
- Peter's Pit SAC; and
- Queendown Warren SAC.

3.39 In relation to the coastal European sites, previous visitor and bird disturbance studies were undertaken in 2011 and 2012 of the North Kent Coast, which included Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, The Swale SPA and Ramsar and Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA, and is currently being used to inform North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS). These studies identified that development within 6km of the coastline is particularly likely to lead to an increase in recreational use to these European sites. Based on this the SAMMS has applied a Zone of Influence of 6km, which is considered appropriate and will be applied to in this assessment. As part of an ongoing commitment to undertake monitoring for the SAMMS, it is understood that updated surveys will be undertaken by BirdWise in January 2022, which may refine the existing ZOI of 6km. This will be reviewed and will be used to inform future iterations of the HRA.

3.40 The Medway Estuary SPA and Ramsar is located approximately 4km from the Borough boundary and based on the 6km ZOI at this stage will require further consideration at the screening assessment. The Swale SPA and Ramsar is located 7km and Thames Estuary SPA and Ramsar is located 11km from the Borough boundary and were therefore scoped out of the assessment.

²³ Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board, (2009), Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Delivery Framework.

Therefore, likely significant effects relating to recreational pressure need to be considered further in relation to North Downs Woodlands SAC, Peter's Pit SAC, Queendown Warren SAC and Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar.

Water quantity and quality

3.41 An increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment resulting from the growth proposed in the Strategic Plan could result in changes in hydrology at European sites. Depending on the qualifying features and particular vulnerabilities of the European sites, this could result in likely significant effects; for example, due to changes in environmental or biotic conditions, water chemistry and the extent and distribution of preferred habitat conditions. To fully understand the potential impacts of proposed development on European sites a review of relevant Water Cycle Studies (WCS) and liaison with the Environment Agency and relevant water companies will be required.

3.42 Given the proximity and potential hydrological connectivity between Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, The Swale SPA and Ramsar and Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar and water sources in the Borough, these sites were considered likely to be affected by impacts from changes in water quantity and quality. These sites therefore need to be considered further at the screening assessment.

3.43 In addition to this, Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar site supports qualifying features, which are reliant on water resources. Although, this European site is situated 23km away from the Borough at the nearest point, there is potential for this European site, which is fed by the Great Stour River and Lampen Stream to be affected by potential impacts from water quantity and quality as a result proposed development within the Local Plan Review. Further assessment is required at the screening assessment.

3.44 North Downs Woodlands SAC, Queendown Warren and Wye and Crundale SAC were scoped out because the qualifying features were not considered susceptible to changes in water quantity and quality which could be affected as a result of the plan.

3.45 Peter's Pit SAC supports qualifying features, which rely on water resources within and in close proximity to the designated site. However, due to the distance and lack of hydrological connectivity to this site as the ponds used by the qualifying species is entirely rain-fed, this site was not considered susceptible to changes in water quantity and quality changes in Maidstone and was therefore scoped out of the assessment.

3.46 The Outer Thames Estuary SPA lies approximately 14km from the Borough and is located away from the coastline, extending for over 12 nautical miles into the North Sea, and comprises an extensive area of 3,924km². As a result, the potential for changes in water quality and quantity to result in likely significant effects on the sites wintering bird species is negligible. This site was therefore scoped out of the assessment.

Therefore, likely significant effects relating to water quantity and quality needs to be considered further in relation to Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, The Swale SPA and Ramsar, Thames Estuary and Ramsar and Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar.

Summary of Screening Assumptions

3.47 Table 3.1 below summarises the results of scoping and identifies those potential impacts on European sites which will require further consideration at the HRA Screening stage or can be scoped out from further assessment. Where certain types of effects are scoped out in Table 3.1, they do not need to be considered further.

Table 3.2: Summary of Screening Assumptions

European Site	Physical Damage/Loss	Non-physical disturbance	Non-toxic Contamination	Air Pollution	Recreational Disturbance	Water Quantity and Quality
North Downs Woodlands SAC	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped out
Peter's Pit SAC	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out
Queendown Warren SAC	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out

European Site	Physical Damage/Loss	Non-physical disturbance	Non-toxic Contamination	Air Pollution	Recreational Disturbance	Water Quantity and Quality
Wye and Crundale SAC	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out
Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in
The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped in
Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped in
Outer Thames Estuary SPA	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out
Stodmarsh SAC	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in
Stodmarsh SPA and Ramsar	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in

Interpretation of 'Likely Significant Effect'

3.48 Relevant case law helps to interpret when effects should be considered as a Likely Significant Effect, when carrying out HRA of a land use plan.

3.49 In the Waddenzee case²⁴, the European Court of Justice ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (translated into Reg. 102 in the Habitats Regulations), including that:

3.50 An effect should be considered 'likely', *"if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on the site"* (para 44). An effect should be considered 'significant', *"if it undermines the conservation objectives"* (para 48). Where a plan or project has an effect on a site *"but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned"* (para 47).

3.51 An opinion delivered to the Court of Justice of the European Union²⁵ commented that:

"The requirement that an effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on the site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill."

3.52 This opinion (the 'Sweetman' case) therefore allows for the authorisation of plans and projects whose possible effects, alone or in combination, can be considered 'trivial' or de minimis; referring to such cases as those *"which have no appreciable effect on the site"*. In practice such effects could be screened out as having no Likely Significant Effect; they would be 'insignificant'.

Mitigation provided by the Local Plan Review

3.53 Some of the potential effects of the Local Plan Review could be mitigated through the implementation of other policies in the plan itself, such as the provision of green

²⁴ ECJ Case C-127/02 "Waddenzee" Jan 2004.

²⁵ Advocate General's Opinion to CJEU in Case C-258/11 Sweetman and others v An Bord Pleanala 22nd Nov 2012.

infrastructure within new developments (which could help mitigate increased pressure from recreation activities at European sites). Nevertheless, in accordance with the recent 'People over Wind' judgement, avoidance and mitigation measures cannot be relied upon at the Screening Stage, and therefore, where such measures exist, they will be considered at the Appropriate Assessment stage for impacts and policies where likely significant effects, either alone or in-combination, cannot be ruled out.

In-combination Effects

3.54 Regulation 102 of the Amended Habitats Regulations 2017 requires an Appropriate Assessment where *"a land use plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site"*. Therefore, it will be necessary to consider whether any impacts identified from the Local Plan Review may combine with other plans or projects to give rise to significant effects in combination.

3.55 This exercise will be carried out as part of the screening stage of the HRA. The potential for in-combination effects will only be considered for those Plan components identified as unlikely to have a significant effect alone, but which could act in combination with other plans and projects to produce a significant effect. This approach accords with recent guidance on HRA.

3.56 The first stage in identifying 'in-combination' effects involves identifying which other plans and projects in addition to the Local Plan Review

3.57 may affect the European sites that will be the focus of this assessment. This exercise will seek to identify those components of nearby plans that could have an impact on the European sites considered as part of this HRA, e.g. areas or towns where additional housing or employment development is proposed near to the same European sites (as there could be effects from the transport, water use, infrastructure and recreation pressures associated with the new developments).

3.58 The potential for in-combination impacts has been focussed on these authorities and any authorities that overlap with European sites considered within this HRA. The findings of any associated HRA work for those plans will be reviewed where available. With help from the Council, any strategic projects in the area that could have in-combination effects with the Local Plan Review will also be identified and reviewed, if applicable.

3.59 Should any other plans or projects be identified throughout the HRA process that could lead to in-combination effects on European sites with the Local Plan Review, they will be included in the review.

3.60 The HRA Screening will identify and review other plans and projects for consideration of in-combination effects and will outline the components of each plan or project that could have an impact on nearby European sites and considering the findings of the accompanying HRA work (where available). This information will be updated as the HRA work for the Local Plan Review progresses. The local plans and associated HRAs of the following authorities will be included as a minimum:

- Swale
- Medway
- Tonbridge and Malling
- Ashford
- Tunbridge Wells

3.61 The Government's National Infrastructure Planning website²⁶ will also be reviewed for major projects that could have significant effects in combination with those of the Local Plan Review.

3.62 A review of these plans and projects are presented in **Appendix C**.

Appropriate Assessment

3.63 Should it not be possible at the screening stage to conclude that there will be no significant effects on European sites as a result of the Local Plan Review, it will be necessary to undertake an Appropriate Assessment.

3.64 The Appropriate Assessment stage of the HRA focuses on those impacts judged likely at the screening stage to have a significant effect, and seeks to conclude whether they would result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the qualifying features of a European site(s), or where insufficient certainty regarding this remains. The integrity of a site depends on the site being able to sustain its 'qualifying features' across the whole of the site and ensure their continued viability.

3.65 An Appropriate Assessment will be prepared for each of those European sites where significant effects from the Local Plan Review could not be ruled out. The Appropriate Assessment would set out each European site's qualifying features and conservation objectives, standards and factors which are needed to maintain the site's integrity, existing

²⁶ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-east/>

trends and pressures at the site including the use of areas of off-site functional land (where data are available), as well as the conservation objectives, and the site vulnerabilities identified during the screening stage. For each European site and likely significant effect identified we would aim to distinguish between direct and indirect effects, short- or long-term effects, construction, operational or decommissioning effects, isolated, interactive or cumulative effects and permanent, intermittent or temporary effects. The impacts will vary, depending on the habitat or species in question for each site.

3.66 As stated in HRA Guidance²⁷, assessing the effects on the site(s) integrity involves considering whether the predicted impacts of the plan policies and site allocations (either alone or in combination) have the potential to:

- Cause delays to achieving the conservation objectives of the site.
- Interrupt progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site.
- Disrupt those factors that help to maintain favourable condition of the site.
- Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of favourable condition of the site.
- Cause changes to the vital defining aspects (e.g. nutrient balance) that determine how the site functions as a habitat or ecosystem.
- Change the dynamics of relationships that define the structure or function of the site (e.g. Relationships between soil and water, or animals and plants).
- Interfere with anticipated natural changes to the site.
- Reduce the extent of key habitats or the population of key species.
- Reduce the diversity of the site.
- Result in disturbance that could affect the population, density or balance between key species.
- Result in fragmentation.
- Result in the loss of key features

3.67 The latest available data sources will be drawn on to inform the Appropriate Assessment. The results of this analysis should enable a conclusion to be reached regarding whether the integrity of any European site would be affected. If this were the case, an assessment of alternative solutions or

the provision of avoidance and mitigation measures which would avoid adverse effects on integrity would be undertaken. In the context of the Local Plan Review, such measures may include the clarification of policies to remove areas of uncertainty leading to predicted impacts or to include avoidance and mitigation measures such as conditions or restrictions relating to their implementation, the modification of policies to include alternative solutions or locations for particular developments or the omission of policies where no alternatives exist.

²⁷ Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting European sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and

(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission Environment DG, November 2001.

Chapter 4

Screening Assessment

4.1 As described in **Chapter 4**, a screening assessment was carried out in order to identify the likely significant effects of the Local Plan Review on the European sites within 20km. The full screening matrix, which sets out the decision-making process used for this assessment can be found in **Appendix C** and the findings are summarised below.

HRA Screening of Policies

No 'Likely Significant Effect' Predicted

4.2 The following policies are not expected to result in development and therefore will not result in significant effects on European sites:

- Policy SP4: Garden Settlements
- Policy SP5: (Potential) Strategic Development Locations
- Policy SP5a: Potential Development of Leeds-Langley Corridor
- Policy SP6: Rural Service Centres
- Policy SP7: Larger Villages
- Policy SP9: Development in the Countryside
- Policy SP10a: Housing Mix
- Policy SP10b: Affordable Housing
- Policy SP11: Economic Development
- Policy SP11a: Retention of Employment Sites
- Policy SP11c: District and Local Centres
- Policy SP13a: Infrastructure Delivery
- Policy SP14b: Historic Environment
- Policy SP15: Principles of Good Design

4.3 The following policies will not result in development and will contribute to ensuring the safeguarding of European sites:

- Policy SP12: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP13b: Open Space Development
- Policy SP14a: Natural Environment
- Policy SP14c: Climate Change

Policies resulting in development or with potential pathways to European Sites where the scale and location of the impact is negligible, or the effect is insignificant.

4.4 The following policies could result in some development, but the development arising would be either located away from sensitive European sites within the urban area or would be small in scale so would not be expected to contribute significantly to increased vehicle traffic, recreation pressure or changes to water quantity and quality:

- Policy SP8: Smaller Villages
- Policy SP10d: Gypsy and Travel Site Allocations

Likely Significant Effects predicted

4.5 The following policies are highlighted as having potential impact pathways to European sites and Likely Significant Effects cannot be ruled out:

- Policy SS1: The Borough Spatial Strategy
- Policy SP1: Maidstone Town Centre
- Policy SP2: Maidstone Urban Area
- Policy SP3: Development at the Edge of Maidstone
- Policy SP4a: Heathlands Garden Settlement
- Policy SP4b: Development North of M2/Lidsing
- Policy SP5b: Development at Invicta Barracks
- Policy SP5c: Lenham Broad Location for Housing Growth
- Policy SP6a: Harrietsham
- Policy SP6a: Headcorn
- Policy SP6c: Lenham
- Policy SP6d: Marden
- Policy SP6e: Staplehurst
- Policy SP7a: Boughton Monchelsea
- Policy SP7b: Coxheath
- Policy SP7c: Eythorne Street (Hollingbourne)
- Policy SP7d: Sutton Valence
- Policy SP7e: Yalding
- Policy SP11c: Employment Allocations

HRA Screening of Impacts

4.6 For some types of impacts, screening for likely significant effects has been determined on a proximity basis, using GIS data to determine the proximity of potential

development locations to the European sites that are the subject of the assessment. However, there are many uncertainties associated with using set distances as there are very few standards available as a guide to how far impacts will travel. Therefore, during the screening stage a number of assumptions have been applied in relation to assessing the likely significant effects on European sites that may result from the plan, as described below.

Physical Damage and Loss

North Downs Woodlands SAC

4.7 North Downs Woodlands SAC is located within the borough to the north of Maidstone. The SAC is designated for its beech and yew woodlands and calcareous grassland. Therefore, impacts to this SAC are restricted to direct damage or loss of these habitats within the SAC boundary.

4.8 No site allocations were proposed within the boundary of the SAC and **therefore no likely significant effect is predicted as a result of direct physical damage and loss either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.**

Non-toxic Contamination

North Downs Woodlands SAC

4.9 North Downs Woodlands SAC lies within the borough to the north of Maidstone and supports woodland and grassland habitat, which has potential to be susceptible to impacts from non-toxic contamination as a result of nutrient enrichment.

4.10 No site allocations were proposed adjacent or in close proximity to the SAC and therefore, **no likely significant effect is predicted as a result of non-toxic contamination either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.**

Queendown Warren SAC

4.11 Queendown Warren SAC borders the northern boundary of the borough. The SAC supports calcareous grassland habitat, which has potential to be susceptible to impacts from non-toxic contamination as a result of nutrient enrichment.

4.12 No site allocations were proposed adjacent or in close proximity to the SAC and therefore **no likely significant effect is predicted as a result of non-toxic contamination either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.**

Air Pollution

North Downs Woodlands SAC

4.13 The SAC lies adjacent to the A249 and 170m from the A229. A total proportion of 1.19% of the SAC was situated within 200m of the strategic roads.

4.14 Habitats present within 200m of the strategic roads comprised entirely of woodland habitat, which the SAC is designated for. Corresponding SSSI units identified habitats to be in favourable condition.

4.15 A review of APIS data identified nitrogen deposition for woodland habitat to be at a minimum of 24.9 kg N/ha/yr and a maximum of 28.8 kg N/ha/yr. This currently exceeds the critical loads for *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles and *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests, which have a critical load of 5-15 kg N/ha/yr and 10-20 kg N/ha/yr respectively. As no grassland habitat was recorded within 200m of a strategic road, the critical loads for these habitat types were not considered as part of this assessment.

4.16 An increase in residential and employment sites in Maidstone Borough has potential to result in an increase in increased traffic along the A249 and A299. In addition to this, proposals to implement the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) to the east Gravesend and to the west of East Tilbury which will provide an alternative route to the existing Dartford Crossing and link up with the M2 and A2 in Kent, has the potential to result in increased levels of traffic along the A249 and A299 in-combination with proposed development in the borough.

4.17 To fully understand the potential impacts of the Local Plan Review on these strategic roads, road traffic AADT figures will be required to determine whether thresholds are exceeded in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of the Local Plan Review. If these figures exceed the threshold of 1000 AADT for daily traffic flows or 200 AADT for HDV, an air quality assessment will be required to understand whether the plan will result in an adverse effect on integrity (AEol) and whether avoidance and mitigation measures can be applied which would prevent AEol.

4.18 There is potential for likely significant effects to occur in relation to air pollution and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar

4.19 The SPA and Ramsar lies 200m of the A249, A288 and A289. The A288 and A289 lies within 200m of the SPA and Ramsar, however due to the location of these roads in relation to the borough, these were not considered to be strategic roads for Maidstone borough. A total proportion of 0.95% of the SPA and Ramsar was situated within 200m of the A249.

4.20 Habitats present included grassland, restored saltmarsh and mudflats, which are key habitats that the qualifying bird species of the SPA and Ramsar rely on. It should be noted that saltmarsh and mudflats are likely to be less susceptible to impacts from air pollution as these are flushed twice daily by tidal waters. In addition, the effect of air pollution would not expect to noticeably affect the feeding resource of benthic invertebrates upon which SPA and Ramsar birds depend. Corresponding SSSI units identified the SPA and Ramsar to be in unfavourable – recovering condition.

4.21 A review of APIS data identified nitrogen deposition to be at a minimum of 10.6 kg N/ha/yr and a maximum of 26.6 kg N/ha/yr. For all habitat types, the nitrogen deposition levels exceeded at least the lower threshold for critical level loads as detailed in **Table 4.1**. As advised by Natural England “for the purpose of assessing air quality impacts to designated sites the lower critical load limit of the APIS range should be applied.” It can therefore be concluded that existing levels for habitat types that are present within 200m of the A249 exceed critical levels.

Table 4.1: Critical level loads for each habitat type

Habitat	Critical Level Load (kg N/ha/yr)
Raised and blanket bogs	6-10
Pioneer, low-mid, mid-upper saltmarshes	20-30
Shifting coastal dunes	10-20
Coastal stable dune grasslands - acid type	8-10
Coastal stable dune grasslands - calcareous type	10-15
Moist and wet oligotrophic grasslands: Heath (<i>Juncus</i>) meadows and humid (<i>Nardus stricta</i>) swards	10-20
Low and medium altitude hay meadows	20-30
Northern wet heath: <i>Calluna</i> -dominated wet heath (upland moorland)	10-20
Dry heaths	10-20
Northern wet heath: <i>Calluna</i> dominated wet heath (upland moorland)	10-20
Rich fens	15-30

4.22 An increase in residential and employment sites in Maidstone Borough has potential to result in an increase in increased traffic along the A249 and A299. In addition to this,

proposals to implement the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) to the east Gravesend and to the west of East Tilbury which will provide an alternative route to the existing Dartford Crossing and link up with the M2 and A2 in Kent, has the potential to result in increased levels of traffic along the A249 and A299 in-combination with proposed development in the borough.

4.23 To fully understand the potential impacts of the Local Plan Review on these strategic roads, road traffic AADT figures will be required to determine whether thresholds are exceeded in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of the Local Plan. If these figures exceed the threshold of 1000 AADT for daily traffic flows or 200 AADT for HDV, an air quality assessment will be required to understand whether the plan will result in an adverse effect on integrity (AEol) and whether avoidance and mitigation measures can be applied which would prevent AEol.

4.24 There is potential for likely significant effects to occur in relation to air pollution and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

The Swale SPA and Ramsar

4.25 The SPA and Ramsar lies adjacent to the A249. A total proportion of 1.23% of the SSP and Ramsar was situated within 200m of the SAC.

4.26 Habitat present within 200m of the strategic roads comprised of grassland, restored saltmarsh and mudflats, which are key habitats that the qualifying bird species of the SPA and Ramsar rely on. It should be noted that saltmarsh and mudflats are likely to be less susceptible to impacts from air pollution as these are flushed twice daily by tidal waters. In addition, the effect of air pollution would not be expected to noticeably affect the feeding resource of benthic invertebrates upon which SPA and Ramsar birds depend. Corresponding SSSI units identified the SPA and Ramsar to be in favourable condition.

4.27 A review of APIS data identified nitrogen deposition to be at a minimum of 9.9 kg N/ha/yr and a maximum of 26.6 kg N/ha/yr. For all habitat types, the nitrogen deposition levels exceeded at least the lower threshold for critical level loads as detailed in **Table 4.1** above. The same habitats were present for both The Swale SPA and Ramsar and Medway Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

4.28 An increase in residential and employment sites in Maidstone Borough has potential to result in an increase in increased traffic along the A249. In addition, proposals to implement the LTC has the potential to result in increased levels of traffic along the A249 and A299 in-combination with proposed development in the borough.

4.29 To fully understand the potential impacts of the Local Plan Review on these strategic roads, road traffic AADT

figures will be required to determine whether thresholds are exceeded in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of the Local Plan Review. If these figures exceed the threshold of 1000 AADT, an air quality assessment will be required to understand whether the plan will result in an adverse effect on integrity (AEol) and whether avoidance and mitigation measures can be applied which would prevent AEol.

4.30 There is potential for likely significant effects to occur in relation to air pollution and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar

4.31 The SPA and Ramsar lies over 200m from a strategic road and therefore increased traffic as a result of proposed development in Maidstone is unlikely to result in a likely significant effect.

4.32 In addition to this, there are proposals to implement the LTC to east of Gravesend and to the west of East Tilbury, which will provide an alternative route to the existing Dartford Crossing. Based on the current location of the proposed route, which has been altered to reduce the impact on the Thames Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the SPA lies over 200m from the proposed route. Therefore, no likely significant effect is currently predicted as a result of air pollution either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. However, given that proposed design will be subject to further iterations and given the close proximity of the European site in relation to the LTC, the potential impacts will be reviewed as proposals develop as part of future iterations of the HRA. This will be reliant on plans for the LTC being sufficiently advanced to allow such an assessment. If the plan is submitted before the NSIP and accompanying HRA, it is assumed that the HRA of the LTC will assess its effects in combination with those of the plan.

4.33 Therefore, no likely significant effect is currently predicted as a result of air pollution either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

Recreational Disturbance

North Downs Woodlands SAC

4.34 The SAC is designated for its woodland and calcareous grassland habitat with important orchid species, which is susceptible to recreational disturbance from recreational activities, which result in compaction of soil, particularly around mature and veteran trees and damage to woodland habitat from off-road vehicles and all terrain bikes and from physical damage and loss through trampling, removal of orchids and nutrient enrichment of grassland associated with dog walkers.

4.35 Previous survey data²⁸, which was collected in 2012, found that the majority of visitors travelled to the SAC from Maidstone Town and Chatham and Gillingham in the adjacent borough to visit this SAC. The survey data found that 75% of visitors to the site travelled up to 7km to visit the SAC. This is broadly in line with similar visitor surveys undertaken in southern England, including Thames Basin Heaths and Burnham Beeches Visitor Studies. A precautionary ZOI of 7km has therefore been applied in this assessment. Site allocations identified a number of site allocations within 7km of the SAC as detailed in **Table 4.2** below.

Table 4.2: Site allocations within 7km of the SAC

Site Allocation	Number of Residential Units
Garden Settlement	
Lidsing/North of M2	2000
Site Allocations	
LPR SA009	18
LPR SA053	3
LPR SA144	42
LPR SA145	265
LPR SA147	71
LPR SA148	650
LPR SA150	15
LPR SA151	84
LPR SA152	4
LPR SA156	3
LPR SA 712	139
LPR SA 196	45
LPR SA 203	10
LPR SA 216	39
LPR SA 235	23
LPR SA 246	25
LPR SA 303	14

Site Allocation	Number of Residential Units
LPR SA 266	67
LPR SA 270	196
LPR SA 298	16
LPR SA 146	210
LPR SA 149	130
LPR SA 265	240
LPR SA 366	145
LPR SA 217	300
Total	4754

4.36 Given that the SAC lies within the borough and lies within 7km of a number of proposed site allocations, there is potential for increased recreational pressure as a result of proposed development in the borough to result in a likely significant effect on the SAC and will require appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures to ensure no adverse effect on the SAC.

4.37 To inform the HRA assessment it is recommended further investigation is undertaken and that there is engagement with Natural England and site managers for this SAC to further understand the impacts of recreation to this site and to understand the existing management in place to avoid and mitigate for impacts from recreation.

4.38 There is potential for likely significant effects to occur in relation to impacts from recreation and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Peter's Pit SAC

4.39 The SAC is designated for breeding great crested newt (GCN) population, which rely on a combination of breeding and terrestrial habitats. This species is not considered to be particularly susceptible to impacts from recreation and is more likely to be affected by changes in habitat management, which can cause fragmentation of terrestrial habitat preventing GCN from dispersing to breeding ponds. There is potential for recreational activities to result in minor impacts to terrestrial habitat used by this species, through trampling and erosion of habitat from walking and dog walking and loss of localised sections of habitat from antisocial behaviour, such as fires. No impacts were considered in relation to breeding ponds due to the limited access to these features.

²⁸ J11092 Boxley Warren Local Nature Reserve Visitor Survey (October 2012)

4.40 There is no specific survey data available, which can be drawn to inform a ZOI for this SAC. Therefore, based on visitor surveys completed in southern England and in line with a precautionary approach, a ZOI of 7km was applied in this assessment. A review of site allocations within 7km of the SAC identified three sites allocated, including LRP SA 196, 216 and 366, which are proposed in the north of the borough and include the provision of 45, 39 and 145 new residential units respectively. The nearest allocation is located at 5.2km from the SAC.

4.41 Given that this species is not considered to be susceptible to impacts from recreation and due to the size and distance of the development proposed in Maidstone, no likely significant effects are considered in relation to the SAC as a result of increased recreational pressure in the borough.

4.42 Therefore, no likely significant effect is currently predicted as a result of air either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

Queendown Warren SAC

4.43 The SAC is designated for its calcareous grassland and is an orchid rich site. This habitat is susceptible to recreational activities, such as walking and dog walking, which can result in physical damage and loss through trampling, removal of orchids, vandalism or fire and nutrient enrichment.

4.44 There is no specific survey data available, which can be drawn to inform a ZOI for this SAC. Therefore, based on similar visitor surveys undertaken in southern England, including Thames Basin Heaths and Burnham Beeches Visitor Studies, a precautionary ZOI of 7km has been applied in this assessment.

4.45 A review of site allocation within 7km of the SAC identified the Lidsing/North of M2 Garden Settlement at 2.2km west, which proposes an additional 2000 residential units and LPR SA 246 site allocation at 6.8km to the south-west are proposed within 7km of the SAC, which proposes 25 residential units.

4.46 Due to the size and extent of development proposed within 7km of the SAC, there is potential for increased recreational pressure as a result of proposed development in the borough to result in a likely significant effect on the SAC and will require appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures to ensure no adverse effect on the SAC.

4.47 To inform the HRA assessment it is recommended that further investigation is undertaken and there is engagement with Natural England and site managers for this SAC to further understand the impacts of recreation to this site and to understand the existing management in place to avoid and mitigate for impacts from recreation. In addition, where there is

existing visitor survey information it is recommended that this is drawn on to determine a more specific ZOI.

4.48 There is potential for likely significant effects to occur in relation to impacts from recreation and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar

4.49 The SPA and Ramsar are designated for a range of qualifying wetland bird species. These species are particularly susceptible to terrestrial and water-based activities, which can result in physical damage and loss of habitat, which they rely on through trampling and erosion, and increased nutrient enrichment, which can alter the soil chemistry and the prevalence of competitive plant species, and disturbance of bird species affecting the foraging and roosting patterns of these species.

4.50 Based on previous visitor and bird disturbance surveys for the North Kent Coast, including Medway Estuary SPA and Ramsar, which was completed in 2011 and 2012, to inform the North Kent Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS), a ZOI of 6km was applied in this assessment. This ZOI was identified following visitor surveys, which recorded 75% to travel of people to travel within 6km of the North East Coast European Sites. As part of an ongoing commitment to undertake monitoring for the SAMMS, it is understood that updated surveys will be undertaken by BirdWise in January 2022, which may refine the existing ZOI of 6km. This will be reviewed and will be used to inform future iterations of the HRA.

4.51 A review of site allocations within 6km of the SPA and Ramsar was undertaken, which identified no site allocations and one garden settlement at Lidsing/North of M2. This settlement was located 5.4km from the SPA and Ramsar and includes the provision of 2000 new homes. There is potential for increased recreational pressure as a result of proposed development in the borough to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA and Ramsar alone and in-combination with other plans and projects and will require appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures to ensure no adverse effect on the SPA and Ramsar.

4.52 There is potential for likely significant effects to occur in relation to impacts from recreation and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Water Quantity and Quality

Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar

4.53 The SPA and Ramsar supports qualifying bird species, which are reliant on coastal and estuarine habitat. These habitats are hydrological connected to watercourses within the

district and are therefore susceptible to changes in water quality and quantity as a result of increased demand in water abstraction and treatment from proposed growth within the borough.

4.54 A review of the Environment Agency's water catchment data explorer identified the borough to be hydrologically connected to the Medway Estuary via the River Medway, which runs through the Borough. The borough lies within the Medway Catchment area, which is influenced by three key aquifers, including Chalk, Lower Greensand and Hastings. These aquifers comprised 97% of the groundwater resources and just over half of the total resource for the catchment. The Medway Abstraction Licencing Strategy (CAMS) identify that this SPA and Ramsar is influenced by freshwater flows and may be vulnerable to groundwater abstraction. As the CAMS identifies that there is restricted water available for licencing at low flow rate and no water available at higher flow rates, for areas within the borough, there is potential for increased demand for water abstraction to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA and Ramsar.

4.55 In addition to this, the River Medway, which is connected to the SPA and Ramsar site has previously been identified in the Maidstone Water Cycle Study²⁹ to have high nutrient levels as a result of sewage treatment works to be a key issue. The Aylesford Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW), which is the main wastewater treatment works in Maidstone borough, discharges directly into the River Medway. The previous WCS identified this treatment works to have sufficient capacity for the proposed development at the time of the assessment. However, it was highlighted that there was limited sewage capacity for flows from Maidstone town, which need to flow through the Allington Pumping Station. The WCS recommends the requirement for upgraded infrastructure to resolve this issue. In addition, there was also concern raised with regards to capacity in relation to the Watlington WwTW at Yalding, which also discharges into the Medway River. An increase in demand in treatment of wastewater as a result of increased development in the borough has the potential to result in likely significant effects on the SPA and Ramsar.

4.56 To fully understand and determine the impacts of increased demand for water treatment in relation to SPA and Ramsar as a result of proposed development within the Local Plan Review alone and in-combination with other plans and policies, further investigation to determine how growth requirements can be met in-combination with existing and additional pressures from neighbouring plans and projects and in consideration of alternative options to limit and if possible, reduce levels of abstraction and wastewater treatment through water efficiency measures, to ensure no adverse effects to the

natural environment and deterioration in condition of European sites. It is recommended that there is engagement with Natural England and the Environment Agency to inform the HRA assessment.

4.57 There is potential for likely significant effects from changes in water quantity and quality in-combination with other plans and policies to occur and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

The Swale SPA and Ramsar

4.58 The SPA and Ramsar supports qualifying bird species, which are reliant on coastal and estuarine habitat. These habitats are hydrological connected to watercourses within the district and are therefore susceptible to changes in water quality and quantity as a result of increased demand in water abstraction and treatment from proposed growth within the borough.

4.59 A review of Environment Agency's water catchment data explorer did not identify any direct hydrological connectivity between the SPA and Ramsar and waterbodies within the borough. However, the North Kent catchment area, which is connected to the SPA and Ramsar is not characterised by a distinctive river but by spring-fed and surface-fed streams, which flow across the Medway/Swale Marshes and into the Swale Estuary³⁰. Although, the catchment area does not fall within the borough, there is potential for likely significant effects in-combination with increased development proposed as part of neighbouring boroughs, such as the Medway as a result of abstraction of the Chalk aquifer, which lies in both Medway and North Kent Catchment areas.

4.60 A review of the previous WCS does not identify any WwTW to discharge into the SPA and Ramsar. Given the lack of hydrological connectivity and separation of the SPA and Ramsar from the borough by land and the adjacent Medway Estuary and Marshes, it is considered unlikely for impacts to occur in relation to the Swale SPA and Ramsar as a result of proposed development in the borough. Therefore, no likely significant effect is predicted in relation to changes in water quality as a result of proposed development in the Local Plan Review.

4.61 To fully understand and determine the impacts of increased demand for water treatment in relation to SPA and Ramsar as a result of proposed development within the Local Plan Review alone and in-combination with other plans and policies, further investigation to determine how growth requirements can be met in-combination with existing and additional pressures from neighbouring plans and projects and in consideration of alternative options to limit and if possible,

²⁹ Halcrow Ltd, (2010), Water Cycle Study - Outline Report Non-Technical Summary

³⁰ Environment Agency, (2013), North Kent & Swale Abstraction Licensing Strategy

reduce levels of abstraction and wastewater treatment through water efficiency measures, to ensure no adverse effects to the natural environment and deterioration in condition of European sites. It is recommended that there is engagement with Natural England and the Environment Agency to inform the HRA assessment.

4.62 There is potential for likely significant effects from changes in water quantity in-combination with other plans and policies to occur and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment. No likely significant effects were predicted in relation to water quality either alone or in-combination with other plans and policies.

Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar

4.63 The SPA and Ramsar supports qualifying bird species, which are reliant on coastal and estuarine habitat. These habitats are hydrological connected to watercourses within the district and are therefore susceptible to changes in water quality and quantity as a result of increased demand in water abstraction and treatment from proposed growth within the borough.

4.64 A review of the Environment Agency's water catchment data explorer did not identify any direct hydrological connectivity between the SPA and Ramsar and waterbodies within the borough. However, the SPA and Ramsar does fall adjacent to the Medway Catchment, which identifies that this European site is influenced by freshwater flows and may be vulnerable to groundwater abstraction³¹. As the CAMS identifies that there is restricted water available for licencing at low flow rate and no water available at higher flow rates, for areas within the borough, there is potential for increased demand for water abstraction to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA and Ramsar.

4.65 As discussed above, the River Medway has previously been identified to have high nutrient levels as a result of sewage treatment works to be a key issue. The Aylesford WwTW, which is the main wastewater treatment works in Maidstone borough, and the Watlington WwTW at Yalding discharges directly into the River Medway. These WwTW works were previously identified as part of the WCS to have potential issues in relation to limited capacity of the sewage network at Allington pumping station, which flows water to Aylesford and at Watlington WwTW. Due to the hydrological connectivity of the SPA and Ramsar to the River Medway, there is potential for likely significant effects to occur.

4.66 To fully understand and determine the impacts of increased demand for water treatment in relation to SPA and Ramsar as a result of proposed development within the Local Plan Review alone and in-combination with other plans and policies, further investigation to determine how growth requirements can be met in-combination with existing and additional pressures from neighbouring plans and projects and in consideration of alternative options to limit and if possible, reduce levels of abstraction and wastewater treatment through water efficiency measures, to ensure no adverse effects to the natural environment and deterioration in condition of European sites. It is recommended that there is engagement with Natural England and the Environment Agency to inform the HRA assessment.

4.67 There is potential for likely significant effects from changes in water quantity and quality in-combination with other plans and policies to occur and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar

4.68 The SAC, SPA and Ramsar site support qualifying species, Desmoulin's whorl snail, invertebrates and wetland bird species, which are reliant on wetland habitat. Therefore, these European sites susceptible to changes in water quality and quantity as a result of increased demand in water abstraction and treatment from proposed growth within the district.

4.69 There is evidence showing that these European sites are currently subject to high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous input to its water environment, which are causing eutrophication of these designated sites. A key contributor to these high levels of nutrients is from wastewater from existing housing and agricultural sources. Therefore, any increase in demand for wastewater treatment is likely to result in a significant effect to the European sites.

4.70 Maidstone Borough partially lies in the Stour Upper catchment area, which has been identified by Natural England to be hydrologically connected to the Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar site. Therefore, any development proposed within or that will discharge into wastewater treatment works (WwTW) in this catchment will need to demonstrate no additional adverse effects to these European sites by achieving nutrient neutrality. This should be calculated using the Natural England methodology³² and will require appropriate mitigation measures to achieve this.

4.71 A review of the Local Plan Review identified Policy SP5c: Lenham broad location for housing growth and Policy

³¹ Environment Agency, (2013), Medway Abstraction licensing strategy

³² Natural England, (2020), Advice on Nutrient Neutrality for New Development in the Stour Catchment in Relation to Stodmarsh Designated Sites - For Local Planning Authorities

SP5a: Heathlands Garden Settlement to proposed development within the Stour Upper catchment area and therefore require further consideration in relation to whether these schemes can achieve nutrient neutrality. It should be noted that additional site allocations may also need to be considered, which lie outside of the catchment area but will discharge to WwTW in the catchment.

4.72 The borough lies within the Medway Catchment area, which is influenced by three key aquifers, including Chalk, Lower Greensand and Hastings. These aquifers comprised 97% of the groundwater resources and just over half of the total resource for the catchment. The Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar is not hydrologically connected to these aquifers and are therefore not considered susceptible to impacts from water abstraction. No likely significant effect is predicted in relation to impacts from water quantity in relation to the Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar.

4.73 To fully understand and determine the impacts of increased demand for water treatment in relation to Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar as a result of proposed development within the Local Plan Review along and in-combination with other plans and policies, the calculation of a nutrient budget for relevant site allocations is required. This is required to identify site allocations that may contribute to increased nutrient levels in relation to the Europeans sites and

Table 4.3: Summary of Screening Assessment

to ensure no further impact to the natural environment and deterioration in condition of European sites. It is recommended that there is engagement with Natural England and the Environment Agency to inform the HRA assessment.

4.74 There is potential for likely significant effects from changes in water quantity and quality in-combination with other plans and policies to occur and therefore requires further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Summary of Screening Assessment

4.75 Table 4.3 below summaries the conclusions of the Screening Assessment. The European sites that are shown as screened out with no colour indicate sites that were considered to have no likely significant effect and were screened as part of the screening assumptions. The European sites highlighted as have no likely significant effect (LSE) in grey were found to have likely significant effect at the screening assessment. For the remaining European sites in orange were considered to have potential to result in an LSE and would need further consideration at the Appropriate Assessment to determine whether, in light of avoidance and mitigation measures, they would result in adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites.

European Site	Physical Damage/Loss	Non-physical disturbance	Non-toxic Contamination	Air Pollution	Recreational Disturbance	Water Quantity and Quality
North Downs Woodlands SAC	No LSE	Screened out	No LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE	Screened out
Peter's Pit SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No LSE	Screened out
Queendown Warren SAC	Screened out	Screened out	No LSE	Screened out	Potential LSE	Screened out
Wye and Crundale SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out
Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Potential LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE
The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Potential LSE	Screened out	Potential LSE (water quantity only)
Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No LSE	Screened out	Potential LSE

European Site	Physical Damage/Loss	Non-physical disturbance	Non-toxic Contamination	Air Pollution	Recreational Disturbance	Water Quantity and Quality
Outer Thames Estuary SPA	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out
Stodmarsh SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Potential LSE (Water quality only)
Stodmarsh SPA and Ramsar	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Potential LSE (Water quality only)

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Next Steps

Conclusions

Screening Assessment

5.1 At the Screening stage, Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) on European sites, either alone or in combination with other policies and proposals, were predicted, or could not be ruled out, for the following Local Plan Review policies:

- Policy SS1: The Borough Spatial Strategy
- Policy SP1: Maidstone Town Centre
- Policy SP2: Maidstone Urban Area
- Policy SP3: Development at the Edge of Maidstone
- Policy SP4a: Heathlands Garden Settlement
- Policy SP4b: Development North of M2/Lidsing
- Policy SP5b: Development at Invicta Barracks
- Policy SP5c: Lenham Broad Location for Housing Growth
- Policy SP6a: Harrietsham
- Policy SP6a: Headcorn
- Policy SP6c: Lenham
- Policy SP6d: Marden
- Policy SP6e: Staplehurst
- Policy SP7a: Boughton Monchelsea
- Policy SP7b: Coxheath
- Policy SP7c: Eythorne Street (Hollingbourne)
- Policy SP7d: Sutton Valence
- Policy SP7e: Yalding
- Policy SP11c: Employment Allocations

5.2 The findings of the HRA screening determined that impacts from air pollution, recreation and water quantity and quality could result in a likely significant effect in relation to:

- **Air Pollution:** in relation to North Downs Woodlands SAC, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar and The Swale SPA and Ramsar.

- **Recreation:** North Downs Woodlands SAC, Queendown Warren SAC, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar.
- **Water Quantity and Quality:** Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar, The Swale SPA and Ramsar, Thames Estuary SPA and Ramsar and Stodmarsh SPA and Ramsar.

Next Steps and Recommendations

5.3 An Appropriate Assessment will be required to assess each European site, which could not be ruled out at the Screening stage, to determine whether the Local Plan Review will result in an adverse effect on integrity (AEol) on European sites alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. This stage of the assessment would seek to identify mitigation measures, which would avoid or mitigate for impacts to ensure no AEol.

5.4 Following the HRA Screening of the Maidstone Local Plan Review, the following key steps and recommendations were identified:

- **Air Pollution:** Road traffic AADT figures will be required for A249 and A299 in relation to the North Downs Woodlands SAC, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar and The Swale SPA and Ramsar to determine whether thresholds are exceeded in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of the Local Plan Review. If these figures exceed the threshold of 1000 AADT for cars or 200 for HDVs, a more detailed air quality assessment will be required to understand whether the plan will result in an adverse effect on integrity (AEol) and whether avoidance and mitigation measures can be applied which would prevent AEol.
- **Recreation:** It is recommended that there is further investigation and that there is engagement with Natural England and site managers to further understand the impacts of recreation at European sites and to understand the existing management in place to avoid and mitigate for impacts from recreation.
- **Water Quantity and Quality:** To fully understand and determine the impacts of increased demand for abstraction and wastewater treatment alone and in-combination with other plans and policies further investigation is required. This will need to identify how growth requirements can be met and provide consideration of alternative options to limit and, if

possible, reduce levels of abstraction, to ensure no further impact to the natural environment and deterioration in condition of European sites. In addition to this, specific consideration is required in relation to the Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar, which will require any site allocation proposed within the Stour Upper Catchment or which discharges into a WwTW in this catchment to demonstrate nutrient neutrality. This should be calculated using the Natural England methodology³³ and may require appropriate mitigation measures to achieve this. It is recommended that Natural England and the Environmental Agency are engaged with throughout this process.

³³ Natural England, (2020), Advice on Nutrient Neutrality for New Development in the Stour Catchment in Relation to Stodmarsh Designated Sites - For Local Planning Authorities

Appendix A

Figures

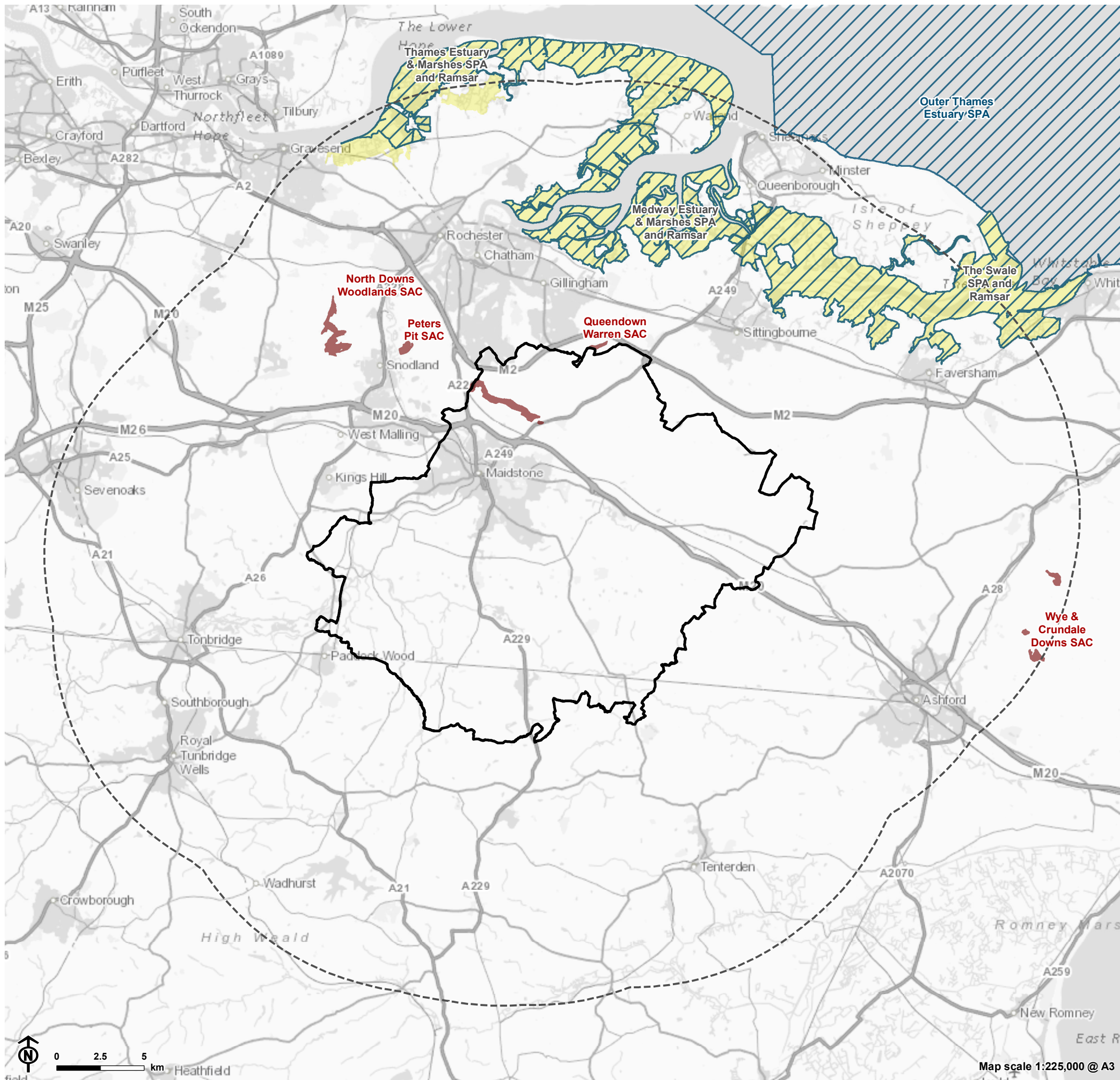


Figure 3.1: European Sites within 15km of Maidstone Borough

- Maidstone Borough
- Maidstone Borough 15km buffer
- Ramsar
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)

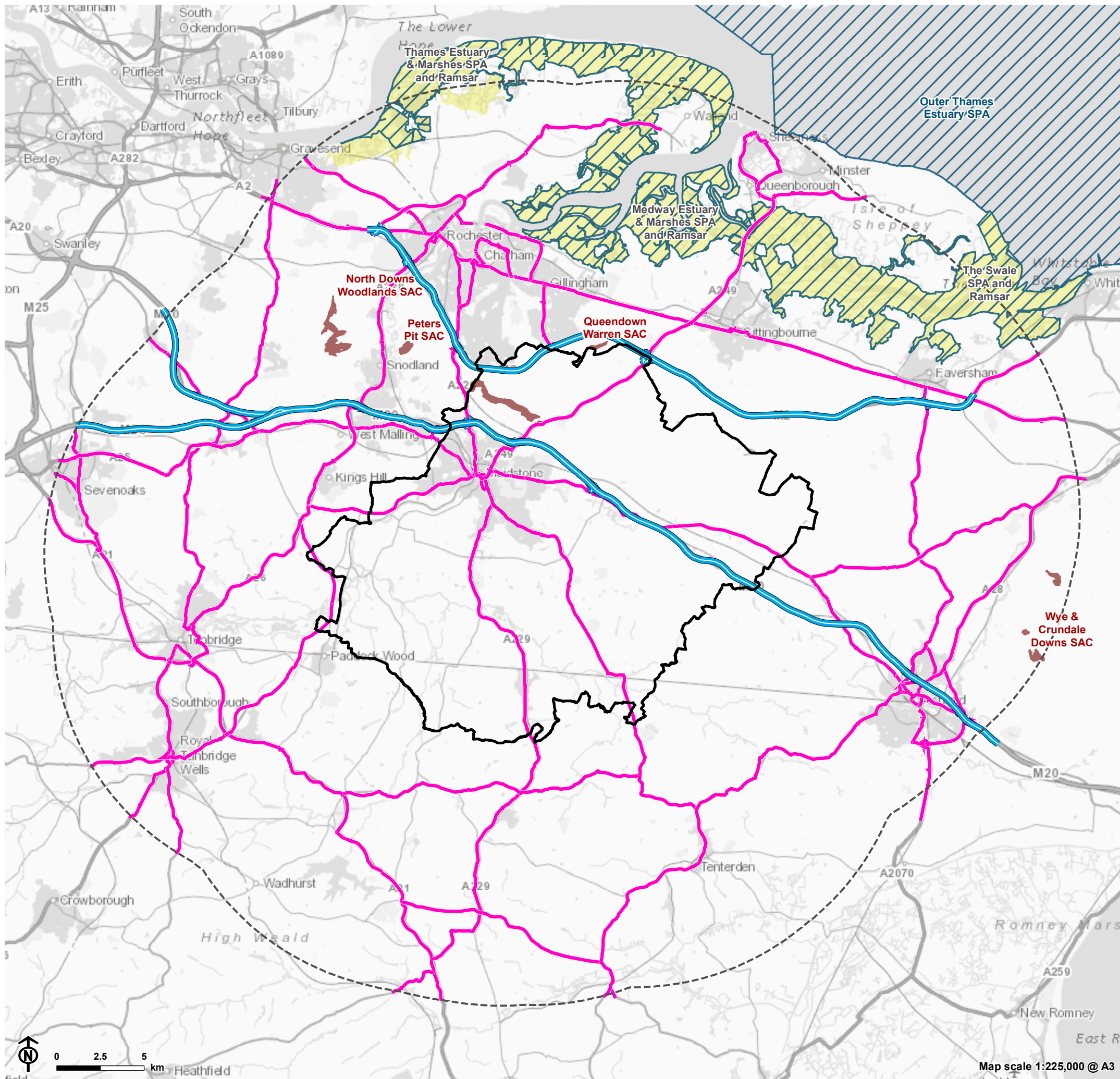


Figure 3.2: Strategic roads within Maidstone Borough

Appendix B

European Site Information

This appendix contains information about the European sites scoped into the HRA. Information about each site's area, the site descriptions, qualifying features and pressures and threats are drawn from Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIPs)³⁴, Standard Data Forms or Ramsar Information Sheets available from the JNCC website³⁵ and Supplementary Advice Notes³⁶, which advise on the sites features and how to implement the conservation objectives. Site conservation objectives are drawn from Natural England's website and are only available for SACs and SPAs³⁷.

³⁴ Site Improvement Plans: East of England, Natural England, <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/4873023563759616>

³⁵ JNCC Data Forms <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4>

³⁶ Supplementary Advice Notes, Natural England, <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216>

³⁷ European Site Conservation Objectives, Natural England, <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/sac/conservationobjectives.aspx>

European Site	Summary of reasons for designation	European site pressures and threats	Conservation objectives	Non-qualifying habitats and species on which the qualifying habitats and/or species depend
This site consists of mature Beech forests and Yew woods on steep slopes. The stands lie within a mosaic of scrub and other woodland types and are the most easterly of the Beech woodland sites selected. Parts of the woods were affected by the storm of 1987. Small areas of unimproved chalk grassland are also present.				
North Downs Woodlands SAC	<p>H9130. <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests; Beech forests on neutral to rich soils</p> <p>H6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>); Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone</p> <p>H91J0. <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles; Yew-dominated woodland</p>	<p>Public Access/Disturbance - Off-road vehicles as well as all-terrain bikes are having an impact on parts of the woodland. Vehicle damage is associated with vehicles coming off the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) into the woodland. All-terrain bikes favour Yew woodland where there is no understorey and the creation of tracks by bikes is eroding soil around the roots of Yews.</p> <p>Forestry and woodland management – Beech regeneration is insufficient to retain canopy cover in the long term. In addition, Beech saplings are susceptible to squirrel damage.</p> <p>Invasive Species – Invasive Sycamore has the potential to regenerate in woodland gaps reducing overall extent of SAC feature. This is more of an issue in Beech stands than in Yew woodland where Yew tends to eventually succeed in dominating the canopy.</p>	<p>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;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the qualifying natural habitats ■ The structure and function (including typical species) of the qualifying natural habitats, and, ■ The supporting processes on which the qualifying natural habitats rely 	<p>In general, qualifying habitats of the SAC rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Key species to maintain the structure, function and quality of habitat. ■ Natural vegetation transitions to create diversity and support a range of species. ■ Habitat connectivity to the wider landscape to allow for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species typical of this habitat. ■ Active and ongoing conservation management to protect, maintain or restore these habitats. <p>More specific information has been provided for each qualifying habitat as follows:</p> <p>H6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>)</p>

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		Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition – Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grazing and pollination plays a key role in maintaining areas of typical grassland species, including orchids. <p>H9130. <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests; Beech forests on neutral to rich soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light grazing and browsing from herbivores, such as deer to promote diverse woodland structure and continuous seedling establishment. <p>H91J0. <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles; Yew-dominated woodland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light grazing and browsing from herbivores, such as deer to promote diverse woodland structure and continuous seedling establishment.
Peter's Pit SAC	<i>Triturus cristatus</i> : Great crested newt	No current issues affecting the European site's feature(s) have been identified on this site.	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:	<p>In general, the qualifying species of the SAC rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below).

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species ■ The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely ■ The populations of qualifying species, and, ■ The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below). ■ Habitat connectivity to between breeding and terrestrial habitat to sustain metapopulations. <i>Triturus cristatus</i>: Great crested newt ■ Habitat – Large ponds situated amongst grassland, scrub and woodland. The ponds have widely fluctuating water levels and large great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i> populations have been recorded breeding here. ■ Diet – primarily of invertebrates including insects, worms, water snails, larvae and sometimes tadpoles.
This site hosts the priority habitat type "orchid rich sites". Queendown Warren contains an important assemblage of rare and scarce species, including Early Spider-orchid <i>Ophrys sphegodes</i> , Burnt orchid <i>Orchis ustulata</i> and Man orchid <i>Aceras anthropophorum</i> .				
Queendown Warren SAC	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)	Species Decline – Numbers of Early Spider-orchid have declined from 10 years ago. Trials are underway to assess the impact of rabbit grazing on the orchid population. There is also a	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	<p>In general, qualifying habitats of the SAC rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Key species to maintain the structure, function and quality of habitat.

		<p>concern with potential effects of air pollution, climate change, lack of genetic diversity or lack of pollinating insects.</p> <p>Habitat fragmentation – The small size and relative isolation of the site raises concern for the long-term genetic viability of some of the orchid populations.</p> <p>Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition – Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site. This requires further investigation.</p>	<p>of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats ■ The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and ■ The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural vegetation transitions to create diversity and support a range of species. ■ Habitat connectivity to the wider landscape to allow for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species typical of this habitat. ■ Active and ongoing conservation management to protect, maintain or restore these habitats. <p>More specific information has been provided for each qualifying habitat as follows:</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Thin, well-drained, lime-rich soils. Most of these agriculturally unimproved calcareous grasslands are maintained by grazing.
<p>This site hosts the priority habitat type "orchid rich sites". Wye and Crundale Downs has an important assemblage of rare, scarce and uncommon orchids, including Early Spider-orchid <i>Ophrys sphegodes</i>, Late Spider-orchid <i>Ophrys fuciflora</i>, Burnt orchid <i>Orchis ustulata</i> and Lady orchid <i>Orchis purpurea</i>.</p>				
Wye and Crundale Downs SAC	H6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (important orchid sites)	<p>Overgrazing – Grazing pressure from livestock and rabbits is only partially controlled and parts of the site are overgrazed resulting in too short a sward height and</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>In general, qualifying habitats of the SAC rely on:</p>

		<p>inhibiting flowering plants. A programme of rabbit control is underway, but effectiveness needs to be monitored.</p> <p>Inappropriate scrub control – Scrub encroachment on the steep slopes of the Devil's Kneading Trough and other areas of the NNR is only partially controlled by grazing, which is leading to a reduction in the extent of grassland feature.</p> <p>Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition – Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site.</p>	<p>of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats ■ The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and ■ The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Key species to maintain the structure, function and quality of habitat. ■ Natural vegetation transitions to create diversity and support a range of species. ■ Habitat connectivity to the wider landscape to allow for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species typical of this habitat. ■ Active and ongoing conservation management to protect, maintain or restore these habitats. <p>More specific information has been provided for each qualifying habitat as follows:</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid sites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This habitat is maintained by grazing and is reliant on key pollinator species.
<p>The Medway Estuary feeds into and lies on the south side of the outer Thames Estuary in Kent, south-east England. It forms a single tidal system with the Swale and joins the Thames Estuary between the Isle of Grain and Sheerness. It has a complex arrangement of tidal channels, which drain around large islands of saltmarsh and peninsulas of grazing marsh.</p>				
Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA	Breeding bird assemblage	Public Access/Disturbance – Breeding and overwintering	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as	In general, the qualifying bird species of the SPA rely on:

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	<p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>: Pied avocet</p> <p><i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover</p> <p><i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>: Dark-bellied brent goose</p> <p><i>Tadorna tadorna</i>: Common shelduck</p> <p><i>Anas acuta</i>: Northern pintail</p> <p><i>Calidris canutus</i>: Red knot</p> <p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover</p> <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p> <p>Waterbird assemblage</p> <p><i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank</p> <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p>	<p>waterbirds are susceptible to human disturbance from a range of land- and water-based activities, including boating and watersports; walking; bait-digging; fishing, and wildfowling. Some activities such as powerboating, may produce physical disturbance to habitats. Public access, (especially dog walking and recreational boating) was identified as a medium risk during the 2009 EMS risk review project and this activity is still occurring. Moderate levels of disturbance in less sensitive locations may have no significant effect on the numbers of birds using the SIP area but the types, levels and locations of potentially disturbing activities are constantly changing. Managing the changes to minimise the risk of disturbance impacts will require a better understanding of which species and habitats are most susceptible, which types of activity are most disturbing, and which locations and times of year are most sensitive. There is inadequate information to provide appropriate management.</p>	<p>appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely ■ The population of each of the qualifying features, and, ■ The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below). ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below). ■ Off-site habitat, which provide foraging habitat for these species. ■ Open landscape with unobstructed line of sight within nesting, foraging or roosting habitat. <p>The individual qualifying species of the SPA also rely on the following habitats and species:</p> <p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>: Pied avocet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Mudflats, lagoons and sandy beaches. ■ Diet - Aquatic insects and their larvae, crustaceans and worms. <p><i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Tundra, and on migration pasture and estuaries.
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		<p>Invasive species – Freshwater non-native invasive species such as pennywort, crassula, parrots feather etc. can engulf ditches, leading to loss of habitat for diving ducks. Although there are some mechanisms in place to ensure ditch management, more baseline information is needed, particularly on those species for which ditch management is not the solution.</p> <p>Changes in species distributions – There is a decline in population size for some of the bird species on some of the SPAs (Cook et al. 2013*). A greater understanding of the relative importance of site-based and wider influences is required in order to identify the potential for further actions that might halt declines, restore populations or identify scenarios where it is thought unlikely that site-based measures will reverse population declines.</p> <p>Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine – The extent and impacts of fisheries on private grounds, particularly in the Swale Estuary, needs to be better understood. There are particular</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diet - In summer, invertebrates and in winter primarily marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs. <p><i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>: Dark-bellied brent goose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Tundra, and on migration marshes and estuaries. ■ Diet - Vegetation, especially eel-grass. <p><i>Tadorna tadorna</i>: Common shelduck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Coasts, estuaries and lakes. ■ Diet - Mostly invertebrates, especially insects, molluscs and crustaceans. <p><i>Anas acuta</i>: Northern pintail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Lakes, rivers, marsh & tundra. ■ Diet - A variety of plants and invertebrates. <p><i>Calidris canutus</i>: Red knot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Tundra, and on migration coastal habitat.
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		<p>concerns regarding the dredging of shellfish within the SPAs which are a food source for the protected birds.</p> <p>Commercial fishing activities categorised as ‘amber or green’ under Defra’s revised approach to commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites require assessment and (where appropriate) management. This assessment will be undertaken by Kent & Essex IFCA. For activities categorised as ‘green’, these assessments should take account of any in-combination effects of amber activities, and/or appropriate plans or projects, in the site.</p> <p>Vehicles: illicit – The illicit use of motor vehicles (often bikes) occurs across the area. This can cause disturbance to SPA birds. This activity was identified as a medium risk during the 2009 EMS risk review project and is still occurring. Whilst various mechanisms are in place to prevent the use of vehicles they are clearly not entirely effective.</p> <p>Air pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diet - In summer, insects and plant material, and in winter inter-tidal invertebrates, esp molluscs. <p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Sandy areas with low vegetation, and on migration estuaries. ■ Diet - In summer, invertebrates and in winter primarily marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs. <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Tundra, moor, heath, and on migration estuaries and coastal habitat. ■ Diet - Insects, snails and worms. <p><i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Rivers, wet grassland, moors and estuaries. ■ Diet - Invertebrates, especially earthworms, crane fly larvae (inland)
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		deposition – Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads		<p>crustaceans, molluscs, marine worms (estuaries).</p> <p><i>Sterna albifrons</i>: Little tern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference – Seacoasts, rivers and lakes. Diet - Small fish and invertebrates. <p>Waterbird Assemblage –</p> <p>At the time of classification, the site supported internationally or nationally important wintering populations of the migratory waterfowl.</p>
Medway Estuary & Marshes Ramsar	<p><u>Ramsar criterion 2</u></p> <p>The site supports a number of species of rare plants and animals. The site holds several nationally scarce plants, including sea barley <i>Hordeum marinum</i>, curved hard-grass <i>Parapholis incurva</i>, annual beard-grass <i>Polypogon monspeliensis</i>, Borrer's saltmarsh-grass <i>Puccinellia fasciculata</i>, slender hare's-ear <i>Bupleurum tenuissimum</i>, sea clover <i>Trifolium squamosum</i>, saltmarsh goose-foot <i>Chenopodium chenopodioides</i>, golden samphire <i>Inula crithmoides</i>, perennial glasswort <i>Sarcocornia perennis</i> and one-flowered glasswort</p>	Similar to Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA above.	None available.	<p>Plants -</p> <p>Plant communities are reliant on the coastal habitats within the Ramsar site. These habitats are dependent on a range of coastal factors and processes, including salinity, sedimentation, sea level, turbidity and elevation.</p> <p>Invertebrates -</p> <p>These species are reliant on the saltmarsh habitat and characteristic flora and fauna present within the European site. Key sources of food range from flowering plants, organic matter and other invertebrate species.</p> <p>Birds -</p>

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	<p><i>Salicornia pusilla</i>. A total of at least twelve British Red Data Book species of wetland invertebrates have been recorded on the site. These include a ground beetle <i>Polistichus connexus</i>, a fly <i>Cephalops perspicuus</i>, a dancefly <i>Poecilobothrus ducalis</i>, a fly <i>Anagnota collini</i>, a weevil <i>Baris scolopacea</i>, a water beetle <i>Berosus spinosus</i>, a beetle <i>Malachius vulneratus</i>, a rove beetle <i>Philonthus punctus</i>, the ground lackey moth <i>Malacosoma castrensis</i>, a horsefly <i>Atylotus latistriatus</i>, a fly <i>Campsicnemus magius</i>, a soldier beetle, <i>Cantharis fusca</i>, and a crane fly <i>Limonia danica</i>. A significant number of non-wetland British Red Data Book species also occur.</p> <p><u>Ramsar criterion 5</u></p> <p>Assemblages of international importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 47637 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003) <p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.</p>			Refer to Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA above.
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	<p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ■ Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dark-bellied brent goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> ■ Common shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> ■ Northern pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> ■ Ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> ■ Red knot <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> ■ Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> 			
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The Swale is an estuarine area that separates the Isle of Sheppey from the Kent mainland and joins the Medway to the west. This site forms part of the Greater Thames complex, which support a wide diversity of coastal habitats, such as grazing marsh, saltmarsh and mud/sandflat and eelgrass beds that support important numbers of waterbirds throughout the year. Wintering birds that use these estuaries include grebes, geese, ducks and waders whilst in summer breeding birds can be found, such as waders and terns. The area is also important for spring and autumn migration periods.

<p>The Swale SPA</p>	<p>Breeding Bird Assemblage</p> <p><i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover</p> <p><i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>: Dark-bellied brent goose</p> <p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover</p> <p>Waterbird Assemblage</p> <p><i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank</p> <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p>	<p>Similar to Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA above.</p> <p>Invasive species – Non-native invasive species such as sea squirt and pacific oyster are spreading along the Kent coast and could begin to impact on the Swale. Sea squirt has been found in the Medway, and Pacific oysters are regarded as increasing in the Essex-Southend area. These species threaten habitats due to their ability to smother substrate and other sessile organisms. There is no good understanding of the overall distribution of these species in this site. Assessment is needed in key areas of ports and marinas, where introductions tend to first occur.</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely ■ The population of each of the qualifying features, and, ■ The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<p>In general, the qualifying bird species of the SPA rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below). ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below). ■ Off-site habitat, which provide foraging habitat for these species. ■ Open landscape with unobstructed line of sight within nesting, foraging or roosting habitat. <p>The individual qualifying species of the SPA also rely on the following habitats and species:</p> <p><i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference – Tundra, and on migration pasture and estuaries. ■ Diet - In summer, invertebrates and in winter
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				<p>primarily marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs.</p> <p><i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>: Dark-bellied brent goose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference – Tundra, and on migration marshes and estuaries. Diet - Vegetation, especially eelgrass. <p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference – Sandy areas with low vegetation, and on migration estuaries. Diet - In summer, invertebrates and in winter primarily marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs. <p><i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference – Rivers, wet grassland, moors and estuaries. Diet - Invertebrates, especially earthworms, crane fly larvae (inland) crustaceans, molluscs, marine worms (estuaries). <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference – Tundra, moor, heath, and on migration estuaries and coastal habitat. Diet - Insects, snails and worms. <p>Breeding Bird Assemblage –</p> <p>The grazing marshes support a typical assemblage of breeding species.</p> <p>Waterbird Assemblage –</p> <p>The mudflats also support smaller numbers of wintering migratory waterfowl.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The grazing marshes support internationally and nationally important numbers of several waterbirds.
The Swale Ramsar	<p><u>Ramsar criterion 2</u></p> <p>The site supports nationally scarce plants and at least seven British Red data book invertebrates.</p> <p><u>Ramsar criterion 5</u></p> <p>Assemblages of international importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Species with peak counts in winter: 77501 waterfowl 	Similar to Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA above.	None available.	<p>Plants -</p> <p>Plant communities are reliant on the coastal habitats within the Ramsar site. These habitats are dependent on a range of coastal factors and processes, including salinity, sedimentation, sea level, turbidity and elevation.</p> <p>Invertebrates -</p>

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	<p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dark-bellied brent goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> ■ Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eurasian wigeon <i>Anas Penelope</i> ■ Northern pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> 			<p>These species are reliant on the coastal habitat and characteristic flora and fauna present within the European site. Key sources of food range from flowering plants, organic matter and other invertebrate species.</p> <p>Birds -</p> <p>Refer to The Swale SPA above.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Northern shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> ■ Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> 			
<p>This site forms part of the Greater Thames Complex, which supports a wide diversity of coastal habitats, such as grazing marsh, saltmarsh and mud/sandflat and eelgrass beds that support important numbers of waterbirds throughout the year. Wintering birds that use these estuaries include grebes, geese, ducks and waders whilst in summer breeding birds can be found, such as waders and terns. The area is also important for spring and autumn migration periods.</p>				
Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA	<p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>: Pied avocet</p> <p><i>Circus cyaneus</i>: Hen harrier</p> <p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover</p> <p><i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover</p> <p><i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>: Black-tailed godwit</p> <p><i>Calidris canutus</i>: Red knot</p> <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p> <p><i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank</p>	Similar to Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring: ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely <p>The population of each of the qualifying features, and,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<p>In general, the qualifying bird species of the SPA rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below). ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below). ■ Off-site habitat, which provide foraging habitat for these species. ■ Open landscape with unobstructed line of sight within nesting, foraging or roosting habitat. <p>The individual qualifying species of the SPA also rely on the following habitats and species:</p> <p><i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>: Pied avocet</p>

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference - Mudflats, lagoons and sandy beaches. ■ Diet - Aquatic insects and their larvae, crustaceans and worms. <p><i>Circus cyaneus</i>: Hen harrier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference - Moor, marsh, steppe and fields. ■ Diet - Mainly small birds and mammals. <p><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>: Ringed plover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference - Sandy areas with low vegetation, and on migration estuaries. ■ Diet - In summer, invertebrates and in winter primarily marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs. <p><i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>: Grey plover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference - Tundra, and on migration pasture and estuaries. ■ Diet - In summer, invertebrates and in winter primarily marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs.
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				<p><i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>: Black-tailed godwit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference - Marshy grassland and steppe, and on migration mudflats. Diet - Insects, worms and snails, but also some plants, beetles, grasshoppers and other small insects during the breeding season. <p><i>Calidris canutus</i>: Red knot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference - Tundra, and on migration coastal habitat. Diet - In summer, insects and plant material, and in winter inter-tidal invertebrates, esp molluscs. <p><i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>: Dunlin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat Preference - Tundra, moor, heath, and on migration estuaries and coastal habitat. Diet - Insects, snails and worms. <p><i>Tringa totanus</i>: Common redshank</p>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat Preference - Rivers, wet grassland, moors and estuaries. ■ Diet - Invertebrates, especially earthworms, crane fly larvae (inland) crustaceans, molluscs, marine worms (estuaries).
Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar	<p>Ramsar criterion 2</p> <p>The site supports one endangered plant species and at least 14 nationally scarce plants of wetland habitats. The site also supports more than 20 British Red Data Book invertebrates.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 5</p> <p>Assemblages of international importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 45118 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003) <p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p>	Similar to Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA above.	None available	<p>Plants – Plant communities are reliant on the coastal habitats within the Ramsar site. These habitats are dependent on a range of coastal factors and processes, including salinity, sedimentation, sea level, turbidity and elevation.</p> <p>Birds – Refer to Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA above.</p>

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	<p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> ■ Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ■ Red knot <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> ■ Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> ■ Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> 			
<p>The Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area was designated to protect the red-throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i> population and its supporting habitats (subtidal sands) in favourable condition. The main part of the site is the outer part of the estuary (east of a line north from Sheerness, Kent to Shoebury Ness, Essex); a separate area extending south along the coast of E Norfolk (from Caister-on-Sea) to Woodbridge, Suffolk and lying mainly within the 12 nautical mile zone, except for two small areas which extend slightly into the 12 nm zone offshore from about Lowestoft; and a third area lying slightly further north and partly within 12 nm, but also with a larger area extending well beyond the 12 nm zone).</p>				
Outer Thames Estuary SPA	<i>Gavia stellata</i> : Red-throated Diver	<p>Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine – The gear types being assessed are towed demersal gear and dredges, and suction dredges for cockles as well as static/passive fishing gear methods such as set gillnets and drift netting represent potentially the most serious direct risk from fishing activity to the birds</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features 	<p>In general, the qualifying bird species of the SPA rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below). ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below).

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		<p>themselves. Disturbance and displacement effects may arise from boat movements associated with fishing activities. Removal of fish and larger molluscs can have a significant impact on the structure and functioning of benthic communities.</p> <p>Entanglement in static fishing nets is an important cause of death for red-throated divers in the UK waters. Netting is widespread across the sandbanks but is seasonal and occurs primarily when the Red-throated diver population is not at its peak. The scale of by-catch within the site has been assessed by the Kent & Essex IFCA and was not found to be problematic and so can be deemed to be low-risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely 	<p><i>Gavia stellata</i>: Red-throated Diver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat preference - Shallow ponds & lakes. ■ Diet - Primarily fish, captured by seizing in the bill, also frogs and large invertebrates.
<p>Stodmarsh SPA is a wetland comprising open water bodies, reedbeds, grazing marshes and alder-carr. The site provides wintering and breeding habitats for important assemblages of wetland bird species, particularly wildfowl and waders. It regularly supports nationally important over-wintering populations of bittern and hen harrier. It supports over 1% of the national breeding population of gadwall, bearded tit and shovler. It regularly supports a diverse assemblage of breeding birds including great crested grebe, lapwing, redshank, snipe, grasshopper warbler, savi's warbler, sedge warbler and reed warbler. It also regularly supports a diverse assemblage of over-wintering birds including white-fronted goose, wigeon, mallard, pochard, tufted duck, water rail, lapwing and snipe.</p> <p>Stodmarsh SAC supports the UKBAP species Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> which occurs within the site on emergent vegetation in fen areas and along ditches in the grazing marsh</p>				
Stodmarsh SAC	Desmoulin's Whorl Snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>	None specifically identified within the Site Improvement Plan.	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the	In general, the qualifying bird species of the SAC rely on:

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			<p>site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species ■ The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely ■ The populations of the qualifying species, and, ■ The distribution of the qualifying species within the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below). ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below). <p>Desmoulins's Whorl Snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Habitat preference – permanently wet, usually calcareous, swamps, fens and marshes, bordering rivers, lakes and ponds, or in river floodplains ■ Diet – fungi, micro-algae and bacteria.
Stodmarsh SPA	<p><i>Botaurus stellaris</i>: Great bittern</p> <p><i>Anas strepera</i>: Gadwall</p> <p><i>Anas clypeata</i>: Northern shoveler</p> <p><i>Circus cyaneus</i>: Hen harrier</p>	<p>Water pollution - Poor water quality has been recorded in the NNR lake (Unit 10) and associated reedbeds. The Lampen stream and Great Stour which feeds into the lake have fairly high nitrogen levels, and orthophosphate levels regularly over 100ug/L, especially since 2009. This leads to a reduction in fish stocks and macrophytes,</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features 	<p>In general, the qualifying bird species of the SAC rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The sites ecosystem as a whole (see list of habitats below). ■ Maintenance of populations of species that they feed on (see list of diets below). <p><i>Botaurus stellaris</i>: Great bittern</p>

		<p>which impacts on food availability for SPA birds (bittern, gadwall).</p> <p>Invasive Species - Crassula is present within several areas of the NNR and potentially elsewhere within the site. Crassula forms a blanket of vegetation which can reduce food source and hinder birds finding food.</p> <p>Inappropriate scrub control - Scrub cover is too high in the reedbed and around the lakes (approximately 12 ha). Development of scrub can reduce habitat suitability for SPA birds.</p> <p>Air pollution - Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features ■ The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely ■ The population of each of the qualifying features, and, ■ The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. 	<p>Habitat preference – Reedbed and marshes.</p> <p>Diet – Mostly fish, amphibians, insects but wide variety, mostly in shallow water in or near cover.</p> <p><i>Anas strepera</i>: Gadwall</p> <p>Habitat preference – Marshes, lakes, on migration also rivers, estuaries</p> <p>Diet – Leaves, shoots, mostly while swimming with head under water</p> <p><i>Anas clypeata</i>: Northern shoveler</p> <p>Habitat preference – Shallow lakes, marsh, reedbed & wet meadow</p> <p>Diet – Omnivorous, esp. small insects, crustaceans, molluscs, seeds; filters particles with sideways sweeping of bill</p> <p><i>Circus cyaneus</i>: Hen harrier</p> <p>Habitat preference – Moor, marsh, steppe and fields</p> <p>Diet – Mostly, small birds, nestlings and small rodents</p>
Stodmarsh Ramsar	Ramsar criterion 2	Similar to Stodmarsh SPA above.	None available	Similar to Stodmarsh SPA above.

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	<p>Six British Red Data Book wetland invertebrates. Two nationally rare plants, and five nationally scarce species. A diverse assemblage of rare wetland bird:</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species regularly supported during the breeding season:</p> <p>Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i></p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <p>Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i></p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <p>Great bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i></p> <p>Northern shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i></p> <p>Hen harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i></p>			
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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
Borough Spatial Strategy				
Policy SS1: The Borough Spatial Strategy	<p>None – this policy sets out the requirement for the plan to deliver 18,210 residential units, 101,555 m² of employment floorspace and 10,838 m² retail space.</p> <p>Increased in vehicle use</p> <p>Increase in recreational activities</p> <p>Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment</p>	<p>Increased air pollution</p> <p>Disturbance from recreation.</p> <p>Change in water quantity and increased water pollution</p>	<p>North Downs Woodlands SAC</p> <p>Queendown Warren SAC</p> <p>Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>The Swale SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar</p>	Uncertain
Spatial Strategic Policies				
Policy SP1: Maidstone Town Centre	<p>Yes – this policy will result in the development of 700 additional new homes, and 9,667m² employment and retail floorspace in Maidstone Town Centre.</p> <p>Increased in vehicle use</p> <p>Increase in recreational activities</p> <p>Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment</p>	<p>Increased air pollution</p> <p>Disturbance from recreation.</p> <p>Change in water quantity and increased water pollution</p>	<p>North Downs Woodlands SAC</p> <p>Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>The Swale SAC, SPA and Ramsar</p>	Uncertain
Policy SP2: Maidstone Urban Area	<p>Yes – this policy will result in the development of 182 additional new housing in the urban area of Maidstone.</p> <p>Increased in vehicle use</p>	<p>Increased air pollution</p> <p>Disturbance from recreation.</p> <p>Change in water quantity and increased water pollution</p>	<p>North Downs Woodlands SAC</p> <p>Queendown Warren SAC</p> <p>Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>The Swale SPA and Ramsar</p>	Uncertain

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
	Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment		Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	
Policy SP3: Development at the Edge of Maidstone	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 1,084 additional new housing at the edge of Maidstone. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Queendown Warren SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP4: Garden Settlements	No – this policy sets out the requirements for new garden settlements in the borough and will not directly result in development.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP4a: Heathlands Garden Settlement	Yes – this policy makes provision for 5000 new homes and 5000 new jobs. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP4b: Development North of M2/Lidsing	Yes – this policy makes provision for 2000 new homes and 2000 new jobs.	Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation.	North Downs Woodlands SAC Queendown Warren SAC	Uncertain

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
	Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	
Policy SP5: (Potential) Strategic Development Locations	Yes – this policy sets out the spatial provision of housing and will not directly result in development.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP5a: Potential Development of Leeds-Langley Corridor	Yes – this policy will result in a new highway linking the M20 junction 8 with the A274. Increased in vehicle use	Increased air pollution	No European sites were recorded within 200m of the proposed safeguarded area.	No
Policy SP5b: Development at Invicta Barracks	Yes – this policy sets out the provision of 1,300 new homes within the Local Plan Review. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Queendown Warren SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP5c: Lenham Broad Location for Housing Growth	Yes – this policy sets out the provision of 1,00 new homes within the Local Plan Review. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
	Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment			
Policy SP6: Rural Service Centres	No – this policy sets out the spatial strategy for development in rural centres and will not directly result in development/	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP6a: Harrietsham	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 149 new homes over the plan period. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP6a: Headcorn	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 402 new homes and 5,500m ² employment space. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP6c: Lenham	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 145 new homes	Loss and/or damage of habitats.	North Downs Woodlands SAC	Uncertain

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
	<p>alongside 1000 new homes as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Loss and Damage of habitats.</p> <p>Increased in vehicle use</p> <p>Increase in recreational activities</p> <p>Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment</p>	<p>Increased air pollution</p> <p>Disturbance from recreation.</p> <p>Change in water quantity and increased water pollution</p>	<p>Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>The Swale SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>Stodmarsh SPA and Ramsar</p>	
Policy SP6d: Marden	<p>Yes – this policy will result in the development of 145 new homes alongside 1000 new homes as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Increased in vehicle use</p> <p>Increase in recreational activities</p> <p>Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment</p>	<p>Increased air pollution</p> <p>Disturbance from recreation.</p> <p>Change in water quantity and increased water pollution</p>	<p>North Downs Woodlands SAC</p> <p>Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>The Swale SPA and Ramsar</p>	Uncertain
Policy SP6e: Staplehurst	<p>Yes – this policy will result in the development of 837 new homes and one employment allocation.</p> <p>Loss and Damage of habitats.</p> <p>Increased in vehicle use</p> <p>Increase in recreational activities</p> <p>Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment</p>	<p>Loss and/or damage of habitats.</p> <p>Increased air pollution</p> <p>Disturbance from recreation.</p> <p>Change in water quantity and increased water pollution</p>	<p>North Downs Woodlands SAC</p> <p>Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar</p> <p>The Swale SPA and Ramsar</p>	Uncertain
Policy SP7: Larger Villages	No – this policy sets out the spatial location of development in larger	N/A	N/A	No

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
	villages and will not directly result in development.			
Policy SP7a: Boughton Monchelsea	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 92 new homes. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP7b: Coxheath	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 285 new homes. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP7c: Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne)	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 26 new homes. Loss and Damage of habitats. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Loss and/or damage of habitats. Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
Policy SP7d: Sutton Valence	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 100 new homes. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP7e: Yalding	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 100 new homes. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain
Policy SP8: Smaller Villages	Yes – this policy will result in the small-scale development in existing villages. Increased in vehicle use Increase in recreational activities Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment	Increased air pollution Disturbance from recreation. Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Queensdown Warren SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	No – this policy will result in small scale development that will not result in likely significant effect on European sites.
Policy SP9: Development in the Countryside	No – this policy sets out the requirements for development to meet if proposed in the countryside.	N/A	N/A	No
Thematic Strategic Policies				

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
Policy SP10a: Housing Mix	No – this policy sets out requirements for proposed development to ensure the delivery of sustainable mixed communities.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP10b: Affordable Housing	No – this policy sets out the requirement for the delivery of affordable housing.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP10d: Gypsy and Travel Site Allocations	Yes – this policy ensures the provision of Gypsy and Traveller allocations as per allocations in policies in the Local Plan Review.	N/A	N/A	No – this policy will result in small scale development that will not result in likely significant effect on European sites.
Policy SP11: Economic Development	No – this policy sets out the requirement to ensure economic development within the plan and will not directly result in development.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP11a: Retention of Employment Sites	No – this policy sets out the requirement to retain specific employment sites and will not directly result in development.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP11c: District and Local Centres	No – this policy sets out the requirement to maintain and enhance existing retail sites.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP11c: Employment Allocations	Yes – this policy will result in the development of 146,967m ² employment floorspace. Increased in vehicle use	Increased air pollution Change in water quantity and increased water pollution	North Downs Woodlands SAC Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar The Swale SPA and Ramsar	Uncertain

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
	Increase in demand for water abstraction and treatment		Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar	
Policy SP12: Sustainable Transport	No – this policy sets out the requirement for sustainable transport.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP13a: Infrastructure Delivery	No – this policy sets out the requirement for new and improved infrastructure and will not directly result in development.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP13b: Open Space Development	No – this policy sets out the requirement for the creation and enhancement of open spaces and will not directly result in development/	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP14a: Natural Environment	No – this policy sets out the requirement to ensure new development protects and enhances the natural environment and for new development to provide biodiversity net gain.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP14b: Historic Environment	No – this policy sets out the requirement to protect the historic environment and will not result in development.	N/A	N/A	No
Policy SP14c: Climate Change	No – this policy sets out the requirement for development to mitigate and adapt to climate change.	N/A	N/A	No

Appendix C
Screening Matrix

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Plan Policy	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the proposal	Likely effect if proposal is implemented	European site/s potentially affected	Could the proposal have likely significant effects
Policy SP15: Principles of Good Design	No – this policy sets outs the requirement for new development to be of high-quality design and to meet specific criteria.	N/A	N/A	No

Appendix C
Screening Matrix

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Appendix D

Review of other plans and projects for in-combination effects

District level Local Plans (strategic issues/'core strategies') providing for development

The Swale Local Plan ³⁸	
Plan Owner/Competent Authority	The Swale Borough Council
Related work HRA/AA	Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening of Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan Part 1: Submission Version ³⁹
Notes on Plan documents	<p>The Local Plan adopted in July 2017 sets out the vision, policies and proposals for the future development and land use in The Swale between 2014 and 2031.</p> <p>The plan proposes the provision of 13,192 new homes and 130,000sqm of employment land.</p>
<p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Maidstone Local Plan.</p> <p>The HRA considered the following European sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Medway SPA and Ramsar – recreation, loss of supporting habitat, air quality and water quality ■ The Swale SPA and Ramsar – recreation, loss of supporting habitat, air quality and water quality ■ Outer Thames Estuary SPA – recreation ■ Queendown Warren SAC – recreation ■ Blean Complex SAC – recreation <p>The HRA concluded no likely significant effects to any European sites and therefore no further consideration was required at the Appropriate Assessment.</p>	

Medway Local Plan ⁴⁰	
Plan Owner/Competent Authority	Medway Borough Council
Related work HRA/AA	Interim Consideration of the Implications of Development Strategy Scenarios on European Sites of the Medway Local Plan ⁴¹
Notes on Plan documents	<p>The council consulted on the emerging Local Plan 'Issues and Options' in 2016 and the second formal stage of the preparation of the new Local Plan Development Options in 2017.</p> <p>The plan proposes the provision of 29,463 new homes and 369,954sqm of employment land.</p>
<p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Maidstone Local Plan.</p> <p>Impacts were considered in relation to habitat fragmentation and loss, disturbance, reduced water levels and quality and reduced air quality for the following European sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA and Ramsar ■ Thames Estuary & Marshes SPA and Ramsar ■ North Downs Woodlands SAC 	

³⁸ <http://services.swale.gov.uk/media/files/localplan/adoptedlocalplanfinalwebversion.pdf>

³⁹ https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200149/planning_policy/519/new_medway_local_plan

⁴⁰ https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/215/final_issues_and_options_public_consultation_copy

⁴¹ https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/2202/medway_local_plan_habitats_regulation_assessment_issue_appendices

Medway Local Plan ⁴⁰	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Peter's Pit SAC ■ Queendown Warren SAC ■ The Swale SPA/Ramsar <p>The HRA Screening concluded that further consideration was required at the Appropriate Assessment in relation to Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA and Ramsar and Thames Estuary & Marshes SPA and Ramsar for all impact pathways, The Swale for habitat fragmentation and loss and disturbance, and North Downs Woodlands SAC and Peter's Pit SAC for air quality.</p> <p>The Appropriate Assessment concluded that providing mitigation measures, including further assessment as required through project level HRAs, are implemented no adverse effects were considered in relation to the above European sites. However, the HRA did stipulate that further air quality assessment is required to inform selection of the preferred option and establish whether likely significant effects associated with predicted increases in the deposition of nitrogen at Medway and Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar sites and North Downs Woodlands SAC would lead to adverse impacts on integrity is required.</p>	

Tonbridge and Malling New Local Plan ⁴²	
Plan Owner/Competent Authority	Tonbridge and Malling Council
Related work HRA/AA	<p>Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment of Tonbridge and Malling New Local Plan⁴³</p> <p>Habitat Regulations Assessment: Stage 1 (Air Quality Screening) of Tonbridge and Malling New Local Plan⁴⁴</p>
Notes on Plan documents	<p>The Local Plan was submitted to the Inspector for Examination in January 2019.</p> <p>The plan sets out the vision, policies and proposals for the future development and land use for the plan up to 2031. The plan makes provision for at least 6,834 dwellings and 38ha of additional employment land.</p>

Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Maidstone Local Plan.

The Habitat Regulations Screening Assessment of the Local Plan identified the following European sites with potential to be affected by likely significant effects as a result of the Local Plan. This included:

- North Downs Woodlands SAC – air pollution, recreational pressure
- Peter's Pit SAC – none.
- Queendown Warren SAC – air pollution
- Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar – recreational pressure

The HRA concluded that no likely significant effects were considered in relation to recreation for all of the European sites, however further work was required in relation to air quality.

Habitat Regulations Assessment: Stage 1 (Air Quality Screening) was undertaken for North Downs Woodlands SAC, Peter's Pit SAC, Queendown Warren SAC, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar and Ashdown Forest SAC. The HRA was able to screen out impacts from air pollution in relation to Queensdown Warren SAC, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar and Ashdown Forest SAC due to the low increases in traffic flows expected around the site.

⁴² https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/618890/Local_Plan_Submission_January_2019.pdf

⁴³ [tmbc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/618900/Habitats_Regs_Assessment_revised.pdf](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/618900/Habitats_Regs_Assessment_revised.pdf)

⁴⁴ https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/583623/TMBC-HabitatRegsStage1_July2018.pdf

Tonbridge and Malling New Local Plan ⁴²	
The assessment was able to demonstrate that impacts from air quality in relation to Peter's Pits and North Downs Woodland SAC would not be significant. However, the report suggested that options should be considered to reduce the predicted traffic impacts and thus improve air quality across the study area. This includes the following mitigation: modal shift, the provision of electric vehicle charging points, junction improvements, encouraging more cycling and walking as well as sustainable transport plans and habitat management plan of the North Downs Woodlands SAC.	

Ashford Local Plan ⁴⁵	
Plan Owner/Competent Authority	Ashford Borough Council
Related work HRA/AA	Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan ⁴⁶
Notes on Plan documents	<p>The Ashford Local Plan 2030 was adopted in February 2019 and now forms the main statutory development plan for the Borough.</p> <p>The plan makes provision for 16,872 new houses between 2011 and 2030 and 63ha of employment land between 2014 and 2030.</p>
<p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Maidstone Local Plan.</p> <p>The HRA conserved the impacts of the Local Plan for a number of European sites including Wye and Crundale SAC and The Swale SPA and Ramsar. Due to the distance The Swale SPA and Ramsar from the Borough at 15km, this European site was scoped out of the assessment before screening stage.</p> <p>Impacts to Wye and Crundale SAC was considered in relation to habitat loss, disturbance, recreational activities, air pollution, water quantity and quality. The HRA concluded no likely significant effects in relation to these impacts on the SAC.</p>	

Tunbridge Wells New Local Plan ⁴⁷	
Plan Owner/Competent Authority	Tunbridge Wells District Council
Related work HRA/AA	Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Regulation 18 Tunbridge Wells Local Plan
Notes on Plan documents	<p>The Local Plan is to set out the spatial vision and strategic objectives for the Borough, as well as the development strategy needed to meet those objectives until 2036. Consultation took place on 'Issues and Options' for the new Local Plan in 2017 and on a Draft Local Plan in Autumn 2019.</p> <p>The plan makes provision for 13,560 new houses and at least 14ha of employment land up to 2036.</p>
<p>Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Maidstone Local Plan.</p> <p>The HRA considers the impacts of the New Local Plan from air pollution and recreational pressure in relation to Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA. No adverse effects upon the integrity of Ashdown Forest SPA / SAC as a result of increased atmospheric pollution and recreational pressure resulting from the Borough of Tunbridge Wells Local Plan.</p>	

⁴⁵ <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/7542/adopted-ashford-local-plan-2030-2.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/5412/hra-december-2017.pdf>

⁴⁷ https://beta.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/300770/HRA.pdf

Major Infrastructure Projects

Lower Thames Crossing	
Plan Owner/Competent Authority	Highways England
Related work HRA/AA	Not yet carried out.
Notes on project	Proposals to construct a new connecting road system within the counties of Kent and Essex. The new road system includes a new crossing of the River Thames to the east of London and the existing Dartford Crossing and Queen Elizabeth II Bridge. The Proposed Development will connect the A2 east of Gravesend to the M25 in Essex.
Conclusions on potential effects of relevance to European sites within scope of HRA of Maidstone Local Plan. None available.	

Appendix D

Review of other plans and projects for in-combination effects

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