

# Liss Village Neighbourhood Plan

## Habitats Regulations Assessment

Final

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM was appointed by Liss Parish Council to assist the Council in undertaking a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of its Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The objective of the assessment was to:
- identify any aspects of the housing allocations and distributions within the emerging NP that would cause an adverse effect on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, otherwise known as European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites), either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects; and
  - to advise on appropriate policy mechanisms for delivering mitigation where such effects were identified.
- 1.1.2 AECOM (was URS) has undertaken a HRA of the adopted East Hampshire and South Downs National Park Joint Core Strategy, the South Downs National Park Local Plan, and also the East Hampshire Local Plan.
- 1.1.3 Liss is geographically located within the district of East Hampshire, and also geographically and administratively within the South Downs National Park. Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in conformity with the relevant Core Strategy or Local Plan. In this case, that is the East Hampshire District Council and South Downs National Park Authority Joint Core Strategy (adopted June 2014) until such time as the South Downs National Park Local Plan is adopted. The South Downs National Park Local Plan has recently completed a preferred options consultation. It must be noted that Neighbourhood Plans do not determine housing numbers for their areas. This is determined strategically for the relevant Local Plan or Core Strategy. Neighbourhood Plans do determine the preferred specific locations for such development and details regarding how that development should be delivered to best meet the needs of the neighbourhood.
- 1.1.4 The Joint Core Strategy (June 2014) and emerging South Downs National Park Local Plan (latest consultation in 2015) have both been subjected to their own Habitats Regulations Assessments, which examined development (particularly in terms of quantum) strategically across East Hampshire and the National Park, in combination with relevant surrounding authorities such as Waverley. The HRA of the Liss Village NP has been informed by the policies and strategies adopted within these Local Plans regarding avoidance and mitigation of any likely significant effects on European sites. As such the Liss Village NP should be in-line with these Local Plans with regards to ensuring no likely significant effects result upon European designated sites.
- 1.1.5 The overall quantum of development to be allocated in Liss, a minimum<sup>1</sup> of 150 dwellings, is set by the adopted Joint Core Strategy (and the same quantum is also identified in the emerging South Downs National Park Local Plan). The number of windfall dwellings and dwellings with existing planning permission mentioned in the Neighbourhood Plan (136 dwellings) is also consistent with the Joint Core Strategy, although because these are either already permitted or expected windfalls the Neighbourhood Plan makes no provision to allocate them to sites. The development management policies that govern assessment and mitigation for impacts on European sites are also set by the Joint Core Strategy. Therefore, these cannot be considered an impact of the Neighbourhood Plan (since they would arise whether the Neighbourhood Plan existed or not). The HRA of the Neighbourhood Plan does not therefore reinvestigate strategic issues associated with the amount of development. Rather, it focusses on scrutinising the individual sites proposed for development and considering their effects.

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'minimum' is consistent with the Joint Core Strategy and is used in order to avoid any interpretation of an automatic moratorium on development once permission for 150 dwellings is granted, rather than to reflect an expectation that more than 150 dwellings would be preferred. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate more than 150 dwellings. If applications totalling more than 150 dwellings are made for the sites identified in the Neighbourhood Plan it will be necessary for the proponents of those schemes to undertake an assessment to confirm that any additional dwellings do not undermine the conclusions of the Joint Core Strategy HRA or South Downs National Park Local Plan HRA (whichever plan is in force at the time).

## 1.2 Legislation

- 1.2.1 The need for Habitats Regulations Assessment is set out within Article 6 of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, and interpreted into British law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. The ultimate aim of the Directive is to “maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest” (Habitats Directive, Article 2(2)). This aim relates to habitats and species, not the European sites themselves, although the sites have a significant role in delivering favourable conservation status.
- 1.2.2 The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to European sites. Plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site(s) in question. Plans and projects with predicted adverse impacts on European sites may still be permitted if there are no alternatives to them and there are Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation would be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.
- 1.2.3 In order to ascertain whether or not site integrity will be affected, a Habitats Regulations Assessment should be undertaken of the plan or project in question.

### **Habitats Directive 1992**

Article 6 (3) states that:

*“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.”*

### **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)**

The Regulations state that:

*“A competent authority, before deciding to ... give any consent for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site ... shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that sites conservation objectives... The authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site”.*

### **Box 1. The legislative basis for HRA**

- 1.2.4 Over the years the phrase ‘Habitats Regulations Assessment’ has come into wide currency to describe the overall process set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations from screening through to Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI). This has arisen in order to distinguish the process from the individual stage described in the law as an ‘appropriate assessment’. Throughout this report we use the term Habitats Regulations Assessment for the overall process.

## 1.3 Scope of the Project

- 1.3.1 There is no pre-defined guidance that dictates the physical scope of a HRA of a Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, in considering the physical scope of the assessment, we were guided primarily by the identified impact pathways rather than by arbitrary ‘zones’. Current guidance suggests that the following European sites be included in the scope of assessment:
- All sites within the NP area boundary; and
  - Other sites shown to be linked to development within the boundary through a known ‘pathway’.
- 1.3.2 Briefly defined, pathways are routes by which a change in activity within the NP area can lead to an effect upon a European site. In terms of the second category of European site listed above, guidance from the former Department of Communities and Local Government states that the HRA should be ‘proportionate to the geographical scope of the [plan policy]’ and that ‘an AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose’ (CLG, 2006, p.6).
- 1.3.3 There is one European designated site that lies partly within the Liss Neighbourhood Plan boundary: the Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA). The East Hampshire Hangers Special Area of Conservation (SAC) adjoins Liss Parish to the west, whilst Woolmer Forest SAC lies, at its

closest point, approximately 1.3km to the north. However, the Joint Core Strategy HRA concluded that no likely significant effects on the East Hampshire Hangers SAC. The March 2016 HRA of the Neighbourhood Plan concluded that the scale of development in the Liss Neighbourhood Plan is in line with that set out in the Joint Core Strategy HRA and that the same conclusion could therefore be drawn. As such, this report only considers Wealden Heaths Phase 2 SPA, incorporating Woolmer Forest SAC.

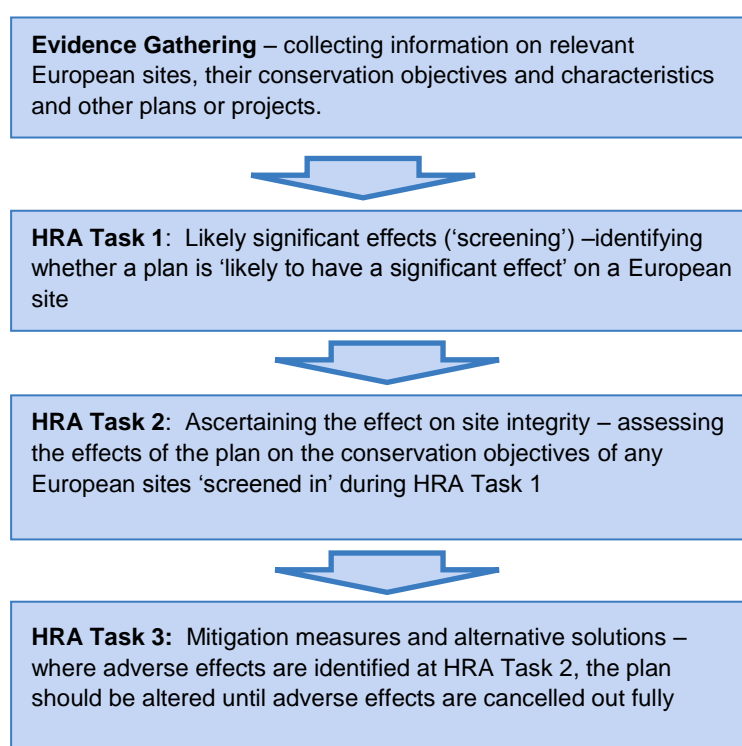
## **1.4 This Report**

- 1.4.1 Chapter 2 of this report explains the process by which the HRA has been carried out. Chapter 3 explores the relevant pathways of impact. Chapter 4 considers emerging site allocations within the NP and undertakes a screening exercise to determine if likely significant effects on any European sites would occur. The key findings are summarised in Chapter 5: Conclusions. The interest features and ecological condition of the European sites and the environmental processes essential to maintain site integrity are outlined in Appendix A.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The HRA has been carried out in the continuing absence of formal central Government guidance, although general EC guidance on HRA does exist<sup>2</sup>. The former Department for Communities and Local Government released a consultation paper on the Appropriate Assessment of Plans in 2006<sup>3</sup>. As yet, no further formal guidance has emerged. However, Natural England has produced its own internal guidance<sup>4</sup> as has the RSPB<sup>5</sup>. Both of these have been referred to alongside the guidance outlined in section 1.2 in undertaking this HRA.
- 2.1.2 Figure 1 below outlines the stages of HRA according to current draft CLG guidance. The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information, recommendations and any relevant changes to the plan until no significant adverse effects remain.



**Figure 1 - Four-Stage Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment**

Source: CLG, 2006

### 2.2 HRA Task One – Likely Significant Effects (LSE) Screening

- 2.2.1 Following evidence gathering, the first stage of any Habitats Regulations Assessment is a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) test - essentially a risk assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as Appropriate Assessment is required. The essential question is:

*"Is the Plan, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon European sites?"*

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2001): Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

<sup>3</sup> CLG (2006) Planning for the Protection of European Sites, Consultation Paper

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ukmpas.org/pdf/practical\\_guidance/HRGN1.pdf](http://www.ukmpas.org/pdf/practical_guidance/HRGN1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Dodd A.M., Cleary B.E., Dawkins J.S., Byron H.J., Palframan L.J. and Williams G.M. (2007) *The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England: a guide to why, when and how to do it*. The RSPB, Sandy.



- 2.2.2 The objective is to 'screen out' those plans and projects that can, without any detailed appraisal, be said to be unlikely to result in significant adverse effects upon European sites, usually because there is no mechanism for an adverse interaction with European sites. This stage is the subject of Chapter 4 of this report.
- 2.2.3 In evaluating significance, AECOM have relied on our professional judgement as well as the results of previous stakeholder consultation regarding development impacts on the European sites listed in 1.3.3.
- 2.2.4 The level of detail in land use plans concerning developments that will be permitted under the plans will never be sufficient to make a detailed quantification of adverse effects. Therefore, we have again taken a precautionary approach (in the absence of more precise data) assuming as the default position that if an adverse effect cannot be confidently ruled out, avoidance or mitigation measures must be provided. This is in line with the former Department of Communities and Local Government guidance that the level of detail of the assessment, whilst meeting the relevant requirements of the Habitats Regulations, should be 'appropriate' to the level of plan or project that it addresses (see Appendix B for a summary of this 'tiering' of assessment).

### 2.3 Other Plans and Projects

- 2.3.1 It is a requirement of the Regulations that the impacts of any land use plan being assessed are not considered in isolation but in combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the European site(s) in question. The Regulations do not stipulate how this should be done. In this case, impacts were examined 'in combination' for the Joint Core Strategy HRA which sets the quantum of housing that the Neighbourhood Plan should allocate. That assessment considered development across East Hampshire and the relevant parts of the South Downs National Park and Waverley District. The Neighbourhood Plan is in conformity with the Joint Core Strategy and there is thus no scope for in combination effects beyond those already identified in the HRA of the Joint Core Strategy. Since the Joint Core Strategy was adopted the following relevant plans have arisen or are in development:
- The East Hampshire District Local Plan Part 2: Housing & Employment Allocations (Examination in Public in 2015) – This document is in alignment with the Joint Core Strategy and its HRA. The Joint Core Strategy HRA allowed for East Hampshire District Council to allocate 175 dwellings within 5km of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA (other than the Whitehill-Bordon development). The allocations Plan actually allocates 194 dwellings in this zone, but additional mitigation has also been agreed with Natural England for the Lowsley Farm allocated site due to the number of dwellings this site proposes to allocate (175) and the fact it lies just over 400m from the SPA. This more than offsets the minor increase in allocated dwellings;
  - The South Downs National Park Local Plan (in development; preferred options consultation in 2015) – The Local Plan is in line with the Joint Core Strategy, allocating 150 dwellings at Liss, albeit to be delivered over a slightly longer timescale than is given in the Joint Core Strategy: by 2032 rather than 2028;
  - The Chichester Site Allocation Development Plan (2016, not yet adopted) – a small part of Chichester district lies within 5km of the Wealden Heaths SPA; the plan allocates 10 dwellings within this zone; and
  - The Waverley Local Plan (in development) – this plan is still in development. However, Waverley Council has recently (February 2016) confirmed that they do not expect to significantly change the amount of development proposed within 5km of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA from that assumed in the 'in combination' assessment of the Joint Core Strategy HRA. If housing numbers do change significantly, this will need to be taken into account in the HRA of the Waverley Local Plan.
- 2.3.2 Given the information above regarding other plans and projects around the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and other relevant European sites in East Hampshire it is concluded that no additional 'in combination' effects arise beyond those already identified in the Joint Core Strategy HRA. Effects 'in combination' are not therefore discussed further in this document.

### 3 Pathway of Impact – Recreational Pressure and Disturbance

- 3.1.1 In carrying out an HRA it is important to determine the various ways in which land use plans can impact on European sites by following the pathways along which development can be connected with European sites, in some cases many kilometres distant. Briefly defined, pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a European site. In the case of housing delivery through the Liss Village NP, given the proximity of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, the pathway of impact considered of relevance to this HRA is recreational pressure and disturbance. Since the number of dwellings to be allocated in Liss is set by the Joint Core Strategy, potential impacts associated with pure quantum (e.g. water quality and air quality pathways) have already been addressed at the Joint Core Strategy level and will not arise from the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.1.2 East Hampshire District has extensive semi-natural green infrastructure as identified in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy 2011 – 2028, particularly in the area around Liphook and Liss (even if the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA is discounted). The GI Strategy identifies that the district's green infrastructure could be improved in areas of deficit by taking a strategic approach to deliver a range of benefits. The details will be set out in the East Hampshire Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan but conceptually it is presented in the GI Strategy. The overall context for the Joint Core Strategy is therefore one of increasing accessible semi-natural green infrastructure.
- 3.1.3 More detailed analysis of Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA visitor data undertaken for the Preferred Options Joint Core Strategy draft HRA in 2009 indicated that the SPA has a 'core catchment' of 5km (in that this is the zone within which the majority of visitors, particularly dog-walkers, to the SPA derive). This comes from two separate studies – the Whitehill & Bordon visitor surveys undertaken by UE Associates and a separate piece of work undertaken by Footprint Ecology for The National Trust in relation to the Hindhead Common/Devil's Punchbowl section of the SPA. As such, any residential development beyond 5km from the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA can be screened out as it is considered that these allocations will have no likely significant effect (LSE) upon the European site.
- 3.1.4 The East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy HRA concluded that provided the strategic Whitehill & Bordon development entirely addressed its potential impacts on Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA there would be no adverse 'in combination' effect arising from the remaining quantum of development planned for East Hampshire, the South Downs National Park and Waverley district provided it was located appropriately. To ensure this, it was agreed with Natural England that each subsequent development within 5km of the SPA was to be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account distance from the SPA and the number of dwellings proposed.
- 3.1.5 As part of the case-by-case analysis process East Hampshire District Council and Natural England concluded that the Lowsley Farm development in Liphook was considered to require a bespoke mitigation solution to avoid site-specific adverse effects due to a combination of the number of dwellings proposed (175) and the proximity to the SPA (slightly in excess of 400m). For other sites located within 5km of the SPA, East Hampshire District Council and Natural England agreed that due to a combination of small numbers of dwellings per site (typically around 12 dwellings) and distance (over 1km from the SPA) no other sites allocated in the East Hampshire Housing & Employment Allocations Plan would need to deliver mitigation. Although Liss is within the town planning remit of South Downs National Park Authority rather than East Hampshire District Council these decisions establish precedent for the HRA of the allocations made in the Liss Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.1.6 Policy SD13: (International Sites) of the emerging South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan reflects the need for site specific HRA for each application within 5km by stating that '*Proposals resulting a net increase in residential units within 5km of the boundary of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA will be required to submit a screening opinion to the SDNPA for a project-specific Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) which, in consultation with Natural England, will determine whether a likely significant effect on the integrity of the site will result. Likely significant effects will be assessed through the HRA and any requirement for mitigation identified.*' Although the Local Plan will not replace the Joint Core Strategy until it is adopted, ultimately, this policy will ensure that no adverse effect on the SPA will arise.
- 3.1.7 In addition to the need for HRA of all applications within 5km of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, there is also a limit on the number of net new dwellings within 400m of the SPA, agreed with Natural England. The Liss Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any housing sites within 400m of the SPA.

It was determined during the Examination of the East Hampshire/South Downs Joint Core Strategy that a strategic prohibition on development within 400m of the SPA was not required due to the small number of housing proposals expected within that zone. However, there is a limit agreed with Natural England on the scale of net new development within 400m of the SPA. It is therefore advised that the National Park authority should keep a record of permissions granted within 400m of the SPA in liaison with East Hampshire District Council, on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan body and their own organisations.

## 4 Liss Neighbourhood Plan Policies

4.1.1 Following the analysis of the draft Liss Neighbourhood Plan, **Table 1** provides a HRA screening assessment of the policies included within the submitted Liss Neighbourhood Plan. Green shading in the final column indicates that the policy has been screened out as not requiring further HRA consideration. Amber shading indicates that the policy cannot be screened out as not being likely to lead to a likely significant effect (LSE) on European sites, and therefore further HRA is required.

**Table 1: HRA Screening of Liss NP Draft Policies**

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
Liss 1 – The Settlement Policy Boundary	<p>1. Within the settlement policy boundary shown on the Proposals Map development will be permitted, subject to other policies of the development plan.</p> <p>2. Development in the plan area outside the settlement boundary will be permitted only if there is a genuine and proven need for a countryside location in accordance with countryside policies of the development plan or is residential development in accordance with Policy Liss 10.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>Although the policy considers opportunity for development generally within the settlement boundary, compliance with other NP policies and law is still required, which include a fixed quantum of new residential development (150 dwellings) at defined locations (Policy Liss 8).</p>
Liss 2 – Protected Gaps	<p>1. The open and undeveloped nature of the gaps shown on the Policies Map will be protected to prevent coalescence, retain the identity of the separate settlements, protect their landscape setting and protect designated views. Gaps will also protect the SPA from the impact of development. The gaps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The two parts of Liss Forest</li> <li>b. Liss Forest and the centre of Liss</li> <li>c. The settlement of Liss and low density development along the Hill Brow ridge</li> <li>d. The settlement of Liss and the A3</li> <li>e. West Liss and development along Station Road.</li> </ul> <p>2. Development will only be permitted within gaps if it is acceptable under development</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This policy provides protection from coalescence within protected gaps. Development will only be permitted within these protected gaps if in accordance with other development plan policies.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
	<p>plan policies and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. it would not undermine the physical or visual separation of settlements; and</li> <li>b. it would not compromise the integrity of the gap, either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development; and</li> <li>• c. it meets essential needs and cannot be located elsewhere.</li> </ul>	
Liss 3 – Local Green Space, and informal open space	<p>1. Local Green Spaces shown on the Open Spaces Map will be protected and enhanced for their biodiversity, and, where appropriate, for public access and informal recreational use. Development proposals that would have an unacceptable adverse impact on Local Green Spaces will not be permitted other than in very special circumstances, such as essential services that cannot be provided elsewhere.</p> <p>2. Other informal open space and connections to local open spaces must be provided to support allocated residential development, normally through suitable on-site provision. Provision must be in advance of developments being occupied and must be accessible to people with disabilities.</p> <p>3. Development proposals that would impact on informal open spaces, and connecting networks must demonstrate that the impact can be mitigated or suitable alternative provision can be made</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a positive policy as it requires residential development to provide or contribute to open space provision, in advance of occupation of developments.</p>
Liss 4 – Landscape and views	<p>1. Development must reflect the principles of the Liss Landscape Character Assessment and the Village Design Statement.</p> <p>2. Development that increases the prominence of the settlement within the landscape will not be permitted. In particular, development will not be permitted above the 75 m contour unless it is demonstrated that it will not impinge on the wider landscape, can be hidden within existing tree cover. Development close to Andlers Ash Road will be permitted provided it is low rise and is appropriately landscaped.</p> <p>3. Development will not be permitted that is visually prominent from the viewpoints listed in Appendix 2 and shown on the Policies Map.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a development management policy relating to landscapes and views. It does not provide for any type, quantum or location of development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
Liss 5 - Biodiversity	<p>1. Development will not be permitted within 400m of the SPA except in exceptional circumstances such as essential utilities provision which cannot be met elsewhere.</p> <p>2 Development within 5km of the SPA will only be permitted if it is demonstrated that</p>	<p>Potential LSE</p> <p>Point 1 of this policy provides for development within 400m of the SPA in</p>

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
	<p>its layout, design and construction minimises any potential disturbance to the SPA</p> <p>3 Development will not normally be permitted on a site which is designated as a SINC unless it is demonstrated that this would not harm the biodiversity of the site.</p> <p>4 Residential development included in the development briefs set out in Section 4 should provide measures to encourage wildlife including the creation of biodiversity buffer areas and the maintenance and improvement of existing wildlife corridors and habitats on the sites. Informal open space should be provided to restrict any increased pressures on the SPA.</p> <p>5 Improvements should be made to the network of rights of way, quiet roads and permissive routes as set out in Policy 15 in order to contribute to preventing any increase in pressures on the SPA.</p> <p>6 Development will not normally be permitted which would harm the biodiversity of The River Rother and the Riverside Railway walk LNR and their surrounds.</p>	<p>exceptional circumstances, such as where essential utilities cannot be provided elsewhere. However, this policy also makes it clear that such exceptional circumstances relates to development that literally could not be delivered elsewhere without compromising its function and paragraph 3.25 clarifies that any such development would require its own Habitat Regulations Assessment. The need for HRA of sites within 400m of the SPA is also made clear in Joint Core Strategy Policy CP20 and emerging South Downs Local Plan policy SD13: International Sites. Paragraph 3.25 of the Neighbourhood Plan specifically references this latter policy while paragraph 1.15 of the Neighbourhood Plan makes the primacy of this policy clear by stating that: <i>'If there is any conflict between the plans [i.e. the Neighbourhood Plan and the East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy or South Downs Local Plan] it will always be the strategic policies of the Joint Core Strategy and later the South Downs Local Plan which will prevail.'</i></p>
Liss 6 – Flood Risk	<p>1. Proposals for development must recognise that Liss has areas at risk from flooding, both from the River Rother and associated streams, and from surface water runoff and collection. Development will only be permitted if it meets the policies of the local plan on flood risk and sustainable drainage.</p> <p>2. Where land is allocated for residential development under Policy Liss 8, development will only be permitted if drainage requirements arising from the development are fully met and it is demonstrated that any existing problems from standing water and surface water runoff will be significantly reduced.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This policy details that development will only be permitted if it is in accordance with Local Plan policies relating to flooding and that it can demonstrate the reduction of existing standing water and surface runoff problems.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
Liss 7 – Local Housing Needs	<p>1. Affordable housing will be provided in accordance with the development plan. For the housing allocations provided in Policy Liss 7 affordable housing provision should be provided on-site and should be of a design and quality which blends in with other housing on the sites</p> <p>2. The mix of affordable housing will be agreed with the EHDC Housing Needs Officer on a site by site basis at the time a proposal is submitted. In agreeing the mix, however, there should be a predominance of one and two bedroom units, suitable for the elderly, or as starter homes. Priority will be given to people with a local connection to Liss or the immediate surrounding area.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This policy is a development management policy relating to the provision of housing type (i.e. affordable housing). It does not identify and quantum or location of housing.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome																					
	<p>3. Market housing will be expected to contribute to meeting the demand from older homeowners wishing to downsize, mainly to two bedroom dwellings.</p> <p>4. The development of a suitable small area of land for self-build or custom build dwellings within the settlement boundary will be encouraged.</p>																						
Liss 8 – The allocation of land for housing	<p>1. Provision is made for a minimum of 150 dwellings on greenfield sites in Liss.</p> <p>2. Planning permission will be granted for new residential development on the following sites within the areas shown on the Policies Map provided that the proposals conform to the development briefs set out in Section 4 and other relevant policies of the development plan for Liss.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site Ref.</th><th>Site Name</th><th>Indicative no. of dwellings</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>S1</td><td>Land at Inwood Road</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr> <td>S2</td><td>Land at Andlers Ash Rd central</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr> <td>S3</td><td>Land at Andlers Ash Rd south</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr> <td>S4</td><td>Land next to Brows Farm</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr> <td>S5</td><td>Upper Green</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr> <td>S5</td><td>Land Formerly part of The Grange</td><td>About 5</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Site Ref.	Site Name	Indicative no. of dwellings	S1	Land at Inwood Road	25	S2	Land at Andlers Ash Rd central	35	S3	Land at Andlers Ash Rd south	35	S4	Land next to Brows Farm	15	S5	Upper Green	35	S5	Land Formerly part of The Grange	About 5	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This policy does not provide for any new quantum of development within Liss beyond that identified within the adopted Joint Core Strategy. It does identify locations of residential development within 5km of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, but the HRA of the draft Neighbourhood Plan in March 2016 (analysis presented in Appendix A for ease of reference) examined all these sites and concluded that due to the quantum and location of development they would not, based on the information available at this stage in the planning process, have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and do not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation. .</p>
Site Ref.	Site Name	Indicative no. of dwellings																					
S1	Land at Inwood Road	25																					
S2	Land at Andlers Ash Rd central	35																					
S3	Land at Andlers Ash Rd south	35																					
S4	Land next to Brows Farm	15																					
S5	Upper Green	35																					
S5	Land Formerly part of The Grange	About 5																					
Liss 9 – Design of Development	<p>1. Development must meet the highest standards of design and make a positive contribution to the character of Liss. Proposals must respect and enhance the diverse built character of the village and its high quality countryside setting. Innovative and contemporary designs must be complementary to their context.</p> <p>2. Development proposals will only be permitted if they demonstrate they have taken account of the guidelines in the Liss Village Design Statement 2014 and any design guidance or code issued by the South Downs National Park Authority. Development in accordance with the development briefs set out in Section 4 of this plan should take account of additional guidance at the beginning of that section.</p> <p>3. In using the Village Design Statement to determine proposals for planning permission account will be taken where appropriate of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The context of the site in relation to topography, landscape, setting, character, local distinctiveness and building types</li> <li>b) A density and scale that is appropriate to its context</li> <li>c) A layout that demonstrates how buildings, spaces and parking spaces relate to each other to create a coherent and legible structure</li> </ul>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is essentially a development management policy relating to the design of a development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>																					

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
	<p>d) Parking provision: a) hierarchy of linked routes and space that are permeable, linked and relate to local facilities and which provide parking provision that makes a positive contribution to the setting of buildings.</p> <p>e) The creation of a sense of place through massing and built form and sensitivity in respect of edge treatment, entrances, enclosures, active frontages, heights, detailing and rooflines</p> <p>f) Landscape design and green infrastructure that contributes to a sustainable sense of place, such as wild areas for outdoor play, shelters, biodiversity, and wildlife corridors, and which softens the impact of the built form.</p> <p>g) Materials and detailing relating to the design and context, including walls, roofs, openings, paved surfaces, and signage.</p> <p>h) Sustainable principles such as the curtilage storage of waste and recyclable material, cycle storage home-working and the durability and adaptability of buildings over time.</p> <p>i) Development forms and layouts that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and utilise energy efficiency measures and the use of renewable decentralised and low carbon energy generation.</p> <p>4. The Village Design Statement, 2014 is adopted as supplementary planning guidance to this plan.</p>	
Liss 10 – The Historic Environment	<p>1. Development within the Liss conservation areas or within their setting must make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the conservation areas. Proposals will only be permitted if they can demonstrate they reflect the proposals of the Village Design Statement, and the EHDC appraisals of the two conservation areas. Development within the retail area of the Liss Village Conservation area must respect and enhance the variety and character of the existing shop fronts.</p> <p>3. Proposals for development within the setting of buildings of local historic interest must respect their character and distinctiveness.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is essentially a development management policy relating to the historic environment.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
Liss 11 – Residential Development in the countryside	<p>1. In accordance with the development plan residential development within the countryside will only be permitted for replacement dwelling and extensions.</p> <p>2. In particular, in areas of low density housing within the countryside of Liss infilling, development within the grounds of houses, or development on sub-divided plots will not be permitted.</p> <p>2. Annexes providing separate accommodation to a dwelling in the countryside will be</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>In theory, this policy would have potential to result in an increase (albeit likely small) in residential development and population within 400m of the SPA resulting in an increase in potential impacts resulting from urbanisation within the SPA. However, in practice, any such development would be bound by the requirements of Policy Liss 5, which only allows development in exceptional circumstances, such as where essential utilities cannot be provided elsewhere, and paragraph 3.25 clarifies that</p>



Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
	<p>permitted if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extensions or adaptations to the main dwelling, and</li> <li>• their scale is significantly less than the main building,</li> <li>• their occupation and use is ancillary to the main dwelling and that use is secured by an appropriate occupancy condition or agreement,</li> <li>• when that use ceases or the occupancy condition is removed the use of the annex reverts to being part of the accommodation of the main dwelling,</li> <li>• adequate parking and amenity space is provided.</li> </ul>	<p>any such development would require its own Habitat Regulations Assessment.</p>
Liss 12 – Retirement and Nursing Homes	<p>1. Development for retirement or nursing homes for the elderly, including extensions to existing provision, will only be permitted if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it is accessible to facilities such as shops, medical services, places of worship, public open space and other community facilities,</li> <li>• it is accessible to staff and visitors by public transport, walking or cycling;</li> <li>• it is located where residents can enjoy a visually interesting outlook,</li> <li>• the site has level access to a garden or sitting out area;</li> <li>• it does not detract from the character and landscape of the area,</li> <li>• the design and construction of the development provides for wheelchair access; and</li> <li>• incorporates measures to optimise energy efficiency.</li> </ul> <p>2. Also, outside settlement policy boundaries development for retirement or nursing homes will only be permitted where it involves the change of use and conversion of existing large detached buildings.</p>	<p>Potential LSE</p> <p>This policy provides for new residential development for retirement and nursing homes, including extensions to existing provision, and including outside of the settlement boundary.</p> <p>In theory, this policy would have potential to result in an increase (albeit likely small) in residential development and population within 400m of the SPA resulting in an increase in potential impacts resulting from urbanisation within the SPA. However, in practice, any such development would be bound by the requirements of Policy Liss 5, which only allows development in exceptional circumstances, such as where essential utilities cannot be provided elsewhere, and paragraph 3.25 clarifies that any such development would require its own Habitat Regulations Assessment.</p>

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
Liss 13 – Business provision	<p>1. Provision for new business development is encouraged, particularly within existing business areas. Within these areas planning permission will be granted for appropriate new business development subject to other policies of the development Plan.</p> <p>2. Proposals that result in the loss of business floor space (including retail) will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that part or all of the premises are no longer suitable for business use and evidence has been submitted that demonstrates the property has been actively marketed for at least 6 months on realistic market terms and there is no prospect of new business occupiers being found.</p> <p>3. Proposals for new business development, particularly for the provision of small units providing flexible offices, multi- user and workshop space suitable for small businesses, will be approved in suitable locations, subject to other policies of the development plan.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This development is not considered likely to lead to recreational pressure or disturbance issues on European sites.</p>
Liss 14 – Community and Sports Facilities	<p>1. The important community facilities shown in Appendix 4 should be retained and enhanced to ensure a range of quality, accessible and safe facilities that meet the needs of the community.</p> <p>2. Development proposals resulting in the loss of important community facilities will only be permitted if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative provision is made within Liss, or</li> <li>• The existing use is not viable in whole or in part or, and there is evidence of a robust marketing campaign of at least 12 months that clearly demonstrates there is no market demand for the existing use , or</li> <li>• There is a demonstrable lack of need by the Liss community for the existing use.</li> </ul> <p>3. All new residential development must make provision for appropriate public open space, either through on-site provision or if that is not possible, by financial contribution towards off-site provision and management of open space.</p> <p>4. Financial contributions from the Community Infrastructure Levy may be used to improve existing community facilities and the provision of additional facilities which</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>The policy is positive in that it includes the need for new development to make provision for appropriate open space, which may help to deflect users from travelling to sensitive European sites, this includes financial contributions for off-site provision and management of open spaces, .</p>

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
	serve the community of Liss	
Liss 15 – Walking and Cycling access	<p>1.The network of green corridors, public right of ways, quiet roads and sunken lanes shown on the Policies Maps will be maintained and improved for the convenience and safety of users, for their ecological, landscape and recreational value, and to enhance connections across the village. New and improved links to promoted routes such as the Shipwrights Way will be encouraged.</p> <p>2. Development proposals that would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the use and amenity value of this network will not be permitted.</p> <p>3. Development should contribute to the development of the network by adding well signed walking and cycling routes in and around the village, separated from roads where possible.</p> <p>4. Residential development proposals will only be permitted if it is demonstrated that, wherever possible, they have sought to incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. attractive and safe footpath links, to the nearest point on the public right of way network or local footway networks.</li> <li>b. cycle routes which contribute to connections to the village centre and the railway station.</li> </ul>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a positive policy that encourages the use of Shipwrights Way. Whilst this PRoW passes adjacent to the SPA/SAC it does not enter, thus encouraging people not to enter the designated site. In addition this policy provides for the protection of and improved of access by foot and cycle. This policy is also encourages the use of transport by foot or cycle, thus improving air quality.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
Liss 16 - Parking	<p>1. All development proposals must provide adequate vehicle and cycle parking, in accordance with adopted parking standards, and that provision must be designed to make a positive contribution to the development and its environment.</p> <p>2. Development proposals that result in a loss of existing public car park provision will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. alternative suitable provision is made within Liss, or,</li> <li>b. the land is no longer suitable as a car park; or,</li> </ul>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a development management policy relating to the provision of parking.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present,</p>

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
	<p>c. there is a demonstrable lack of need by the Liss community.</p> <p>3. Additional car parking provision to serve the village centre will be encouraged.</p>	
Liss 17 – The Village Centre	<p>1. Development within the village centre must contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre, in order to enhance it as an attractive place providing good local services for the village.</p> <p>2. Development proposals will be permitted if they provide appropriate retail uses or facilities and services that support the village community.</p> <p>3. Development proposals will be permitted if they make a positive contribution to the character of the street scene, including the undergrounding of all services, and wherever possible contributing to space and facilities within the public realm and the provision of appropriate soft landscaping. .</p> <p>4. Development must comply with other policies of the neighbourhood plan, particularly those on design, the historic environment, parking and shop fronts, in order to enhance the quality of the built environment within the village centre.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a development management policy relating to the vitality, viability, community, and character of the Village Centre.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
Liss 18 – Shop Fronts	<p>1. Changes to shop front and new shop fronts will be expected to protect and enhance the character of the village centre, particularly to the character of the conservation area.</p> <p>2. Changes to shop fronts and new shop fronts will only be permitted if they demonstrate they meet the guidelines of the Village Design Statement, and the design principles set out under Policy Liss8. They should also demonstrate that they have taken account of the requirements of the EHDC Shop Fronts and Signs Design Guide for East Hampshire and any subsequent guidance from the South Downs National Park Authority. Illuminated shop front signage will not normally be permitted.</p> <p>3. Proposals affecting shop fronts, including signage and illumination, within the village centre conservation area must also meet the requirements of Policy Liss 9 on the Historic Environment.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a development management policy relating to shop fronts.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
Liss 19 –	<p>1. Development of the housing sites allocated in Policy Liss 7 must take place in</p>	No LSE

Policy number/name	Policy Text	HRA Screening Outcome
Development Briefs	<p>accordance with the development briefs set out in Section 4.</p> <p>2. Planning permission will be granted only if it is demonstrated that the application conforms to the relevant development brief. Delivery of the brief will be secured through the determination and implementation of the application, all necessary agreements between the developer and the planning authority, and the payment of financial contributions through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).</p> <p>3. Development of each site will be closely monitored by the Liss Parish Council to ensure that the requirements of the relevant development brief and other policies of the plan are met.</p>	<p>Whilst this policy relates to the provision of new residential development, it does not prescribe any new development. This is effectively a development management policy detailing the requirement for compliance with development briefs, all necessary agreements between the developer and the planning authority, and the payment of financial contributions through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This policy provides indirect protection for European designated sites as the Planning Authority will be aware of the protection provided for Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA within the JCS.</p>
Liss 20 – Infrastructure and developer contributions	<p>1. Development must fully provide for on-site service and utility infrastructure, in conjunction with utility providers, to be in place before development is occupied.</p> <p>2. Development must also contribute towards infrastructure and community facilities which may be used by those living in or using the development, particularly where there are existing deficiencies of provision within the village</p> <p>3. Development will only be permitted if infrastructure contributions are made through legal agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Section 278 agreements will be secured to ensure safe and suitable access and highway improvements.</p> <p>4. Amongst the priorities for infrastructure and service provision are drainage, traffic management measures, sports and play provision, green space, facilities for community activities, car parks, and public toilets and walking and cycling networks.</p> <p>5. The Parish Council will closely monitor infrastructure and community needs during the period of the plan, and the use of developer contributions to meet those needs.</p>	<p>No LSE</p> <p>This is a positive policy in that it includes for green space provision.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1.1 Following the analysis of the updated policies within the Liss Neighbourhood Plan, it is concluded that there will be no Likely Significant Effect on European sites, either alone or in combination with other projects and plans.

## Appendix A. HRA of Liss Village Neighbourhood Plan Housing Options as presented in the March 2016 HRA

### Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA (and Woolmer Forest SAC)

#### *Recreational Pressure*

- 5.1.2 As detailed within **Section 1.1**, this report has not re-assessed the total quantum of housing to be delivered within Liss, as the NP is in-line with the higher tier Joint Core Strategy and the developing South Downs National Park Local Plan. The screening of the Liss NP policies (undertaken within **Table 1**) did identify that the location of residential site allocations required consideration. Residential site allocations identified in Policy Liss 8: (The allocation of land for housing) are illustrated in **Table 2**.

**Table 2: Screening of Site Allocations identified within Policy Liss 8: (The allocation of land for housing).**

Site Ref.	Site Name	Approximate number of dwellings to be provided on each site to total 150 dwellings
S1	Land at Inwood Road	25
S2	Land at Andlers Ash Rd central	35
S3	Land at Andlers Ash Rd south	35
S4	Land next to Brows Farm	15
S5a	Upper Green	35
S5b	Land formerly part of The Grange	About 5

- 5.1.3 All five residential site allocations within policy Liss 8: (The allocation of land for housing) (see **Table 2**) are located within 5km of Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA. It was agreed during preparation of the Joint Core Strategy that there was no strategic 'in combination' effect from development across the 5km zone that required mitigation (subject to mitigation of the Whitehill-Bordon development) it was also agreed with Natural England that each proposed development site within 5km of the SPA should nonetheless be considered on a case by case basis in order establish potential for individual site-specific effects that would not have been known at the Joint Core Strategy level, taking into account distance from the SPA and the number of dwellings proposed. This is also the approach reflected in the emerging South Downs National Park Local Plan and its HRA and is the approach that was utilised in preparing the East Hampshire Site Allocations Plan. Each residential site allocation within policy Liss 8 is therefore discussed individually below.
- 5.1.4 S1: Land at Inwood Road:
- 5.1.5 At its closest, this site is located 1.8km from the SPA. It is identified to provide approximately 25 new dwellings. Given this is a small number of new dwellings located over 1km from the SPA it will not have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and does not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation.
- 5.1.6 S2: Land at Andlers Ash Rd central:
- 5.1.7 At its closest, this site is located 2.0km from the SPA. It is identified to provide approximately 35 new dwellings. Given this is a small number of new dwellings located over 1km from the SPA it will not have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and does not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation.
- 5.1.8 S3: Land at Andlers Ash Rd south:
- 5.1.9 At its closest, this site is located 2.1km from the SPA. It is identified to provide approximately 35 new dwellings. Given this is a small number of new dwellings located over 1km from the SPA it will not have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and does not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation.
- 5.1.10 S4: Land next to Brows Farm:
- 5.1.11 At its closest, this site is located 1.4km from the SPA. It is identified to provide approximately 15 new dwellings. Given this is a small number of new dwellings located over 1km from the SPA it will not

have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and does not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation.

5.1.12 S5a: Upper Green:

5.1.13 At its closest, this site is located 1.3km from the SPA. It is identified to provide approximately 35 new dwellings. Given this is a small number of new dwellings located over 1km from the SPA it will not have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and does not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation.

5.1.14 S5b: Land formerly part of The Grange:

5.1.15 At its closest, this site is located 1.3km from the SPA. It is identified to provide about 5 new dwellings. Given this is a small number of new dwellings located over 1km from the SPA it will not have a site-specific LSE upon Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and does not trigger any need for site-specific mitigation.

5.1.16 It can be considered that these five residential site allocations can be screened out from further consideration.



## Appendix B. Background to European Sites Considered in this HRA

### East Hampshire Hangers SAC

#### Introduction

The East Hampshire Hangars describe a series of woodlands (totalling 569.68ha) on the western edge of the Weald. The SAC is made up of a number of SSSIs.

#### Upper Greensand Hangers: Empshott to Hawkley

A series of steep, rocky woodlands on calcareous soils. The dominant tree is ash, often with evidence of past coppicing. A variety of herb layer plants occurs, including ancient woodland indicators such as early purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, herb Paris *quadrifolia*, butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* and sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*. The woodland supports the nationally scarce Italian lords-and-ladies *Arum italicum* sub species *neglectum*. Bryophyte communities are notable and include nationally scarce species. Molluscs and hoverflies are also represented by nationally scarce species.

#### Upper Greensand Hangers: Wyck to Wheatley

The geology and species supported are similar to those found at Empshott to Hawkley.

#### Coombe Wood and The Lythe

The hanger woodlands comprise a range of species including ash, oak *Quercus robur*, beech *Fagus sylvatica* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. These woods support a relatively rich calcareous ground flora with substantial populations of green hellebore *Helleborus viridis* and violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*. The hanger woods also possess a rich bryophyte flora, mostly epiphytic on the older trees.

#### Wick Wood and Worldham Hangers

The species rich ancient woodland associated with varied soils is ecologically distinct and contains a number of nationally rare woodland types. On the freely draining upper slopes ash and wych elm *Ulmus glabra* predominate forming an extremely rare woodland type. Beech, pedunculate oak and whitebeam *Sorbus aria* also occur on the upper slopes. A few large coppice stools of small leaved lime *Tilia cordata* occur in Wick Hill Hanger. Fifty-seven species of plant which are indicative of ancient woodlands have been found in the SSSI. Two ponds provide added diversity, which attracts a variety of common and uncommon birds, butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies.

#### Selborne Common

This SSSI is beech-dominated woodland on a steep east-facing chalk slope, grading to mixed plateau woodland with relict open acid grassland on clay-with-flints. The ground flora is well-developed, with a number of unusual plant species and rare moss species. On the clay-with-flints plateau, acid grassland adds variety, together with a small water body. A small area of downland turf also exists. Selborne Common is one of the most important mollusc sites in Britain, and a number of notable beetles and butterflies also occur.

### Noar Hill

Noar Hill exhibits a range of chalk vegetation seral stages from open short-sward chalk grassland overlying ancient quarries, through invasive mixed scrub of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, juniper *Juniperus communis*, and sweetbriar and southern downy roses *Rosa micrantha* and *Rosa tomentosa* to mature beech hanger woodland. In addition, hazel coppice is found on the top of the steep scarp slopes. Eleven species of orchid occur, and the site is of national importance for butterflies and grasshoppers.

### Wealden Edge Hangers

The Wealden Edge Hangers comprise the mainly wooded easterly facing escarpment of the Hampshire chalk plateau, at the western extremity of the Weald. It exhibits a wide range of woodland types including mono-specific yew (in some cases developed over former juniper scrub), yew/beech and beech/ash with beech/wych elm /field maple *Acer campestre*/ash, and oak /hazel, on deeper soils, and moist ash/alder *Alnus glutinosa* wood by escarpment-foot springs. Ash, beech and elm all occur in coppice forms. A wide range of calcareous shrubs occur. The bryophyte flora is extremely rich, and the lichen flora is the richest for any woodland on chalk in Britain, after Cranborne Chase, with 74 species. The total vascular flora of the area comprises a known 289 species.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The East Hampshire Hangers qualify as a SAC for both habitats and species. Firstly, the site contains the Habitats Directive Annex I habitats of:

- Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone, including important orchid sites: Noar Hill in particular, has an outstanding assemblage of orchids, including one of the largest UK populations of the nationally scarce musk orchid.
- Beech forests on neutral to rich soils: the site is extremely rich in terms of vascular plants.
- Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines. The bryophyte flora is richer than on the chalk examples and includes several species that are rare in the lowlands
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (\* important orchid sites)  
Yew woods of the British Isles

Secondly, the site contains the Habitats Directive Annex II species:

- Early gentian.

### **Historic Trends and Current Pressures**

The habitats of the East Hampshire Hangers SAC are dependent upon maintenance of appropriate species composition and cover. The great majority of the SAC is in favourable condition, and where not, this is due to factors such as non-native species present, inappropriate vegetation structure (e.g. lack of regeneration, or too much scrub), and inadequate grazing regimes.

The key vulnerabilities to the SAC are:

- Low nutrient runoff from surrounding land: being steep and narrow, the Hanger woodlands are vulnerable to nutrient run-off leading to eutrophication.

- Disease outbreaks affecting beech trees.
- Absence of direct fertilization (agricultural runoff).
- Appropriate woodland management

## Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and Woolmer Forest SAC

### Introduction

The Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA is made up of four separate SSSI units and also contains Woolmer Forest SAC.

### **Woolmer Forest SSSI and SAC**

Woolmer Forest SSSI contains the largest and most diverse area of lowland heathland habitats in Hampshire (outside the New Forest) and is considered the most important area of heathland in the Weald of southern England. Woolmer Forest SSSI is of international importance for its rich diversity of breeding and wintering heathland birds including nationally important breeding populations of nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, woodlark *Lullula arborea* and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*. The heathland also supports breeding hobby *Falco subbuteo*, breeding populations of stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, tree pipit *Anthus trivialis* and linnet *Acanthis cannabina*. In winter up to two roosts of hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, as well as merlin *Falco columbarius* and great grey shrike *Lanius excubitor* are regularly recorded in the heathland. The valley mires and wetlands around Woolmer and Cranmer Ponds attract breeding curlew *Numenius arquata*, redshank *Tringa totanus* and snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. The sandy shores of Woolmer Pond also provide habitat for nesting little-ringed plover. The woodlands of Holm and Holly Hills and Passfield Common support redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. These mature pasture woodlands have also attracted several breeding pairs of wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*.

### Reasons for Designation

Wealden Heaths Phase II qualifies as a SPA for its breeding bird species. The site contains:

- 1.3% of the British breeding population of nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (5 year mean, 1989-1993)
- 2.5% of the British breeding population of woodlark *Lullula arborea* (1997)
- 1% of the British breeding population of Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* (5 year mean 1989-1993; 1994)

The SAC interest features of Woolmer Forest are:

- Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds: Cranmer Pond is a southern example of this habitat in Britain.
- Dry heaths: Woolmer Forest contains the largest and most diverse area of lowland heathland in Hampshire, outside the New Forest, representing a transition between this and the Surrey heaths.
- Depressions on peat substrates: seepage mires and other waterlogged areas are a minor feature amongst predominantly wet heath habitat.
- Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath (though not a primary reason for site selection)
- Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface (though not a primary reason for site selection)

**Historic Trends and Current Pressures**

- Inappropriate grazing regimes and loss of traditional habitat management.
- Heathland habitat is extremely vulnerable to accidentally or deliberately started fires.
- Damage to habitat as a result of reductions in air quality
- Introduction of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed that can out-compete native vegetation, and reduce breeding site availability for birds.
- Recreational pressure: formal and informal recreation activities (e.g. mountain biking, orienteering, car and motorcycle events) and military training activities
- Recreational pressure: walking, dog walking and cycling
- Fluctuations on water quality and water levels

## About AECOM

AECOM (NYSE: ACM) is a global provider of professional technical and management support services to a broad range of markets, including transportation, facilities, environmental, energy, water and government. With approximately 100,000 employees around the world, AECOM is a leader in all of the key markets that it serves. AECOM provides a blend of global reach, local knowledge, innovation, and collaborative technical excellence in delivering solutions that enhance and sustain the world's built, natural, and social environments. A Fortune 500 company, AECOM serves clients in more than 100 countries and has annual revenue in excess of \$6 billion.

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