



Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 -2036: (August 2020)

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA): Screening Report – August 2020





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Glossary of Acronyms

AA	Appropriate Assessment
BDC	Babergh District Council
DC	District Council
DPD	Development Plan Document
EA	Environment Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
Ha	Hectare
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IFCA	Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone (for SSSIs)
Km	Kilometre
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NDP/NP	Neighbourhood Development Plan / Neighbourhood Plan
NE	Natural England
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PRoW	Public Right of Way
RAMS	Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SIP(s)	Site Improvement Plans(s)
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Specific Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
ZOI	Zone of Influence



1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of This Report

This report screens to determine whether the draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). A Stage 1 HRA is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected Habitats (European) Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

1.2 The Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan

The main purpose of the Plan is to set out and identify the best ways to direct local planning towards community wants and needs, while protecting the natural environment and cultural assets, ensuring a more sustainable future for the community. The draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan will set out planning policies for Whatfield Parish and within the confines of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary as defined (see Appendix 1).

Once formally 'made' or 'adopted', a Neighbourhood Development Plan carries the same legal weight as Local Development Plans adopted up by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case Babergh District Council.



2. Legislative Background

2.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Under the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive and translated into English law by the Habitats Regulations (*The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)*), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any Habitats Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. European sites are also known as Natura 2000 sites and Habitats Sites in the NPPF (2019).

This HRA screening report has been undertaken in order to support the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan which is being produced by Whatfield Parish Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The area covered by the Plan is shown in Appendix 1.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a HRA.

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU *People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17*), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.

Further case law (*Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála*) now also imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority for any plans or projects at the Appropriate Assessment stage, including, but not limited to cataloguing the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected and being beyond reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.



3. HRA Screening

3.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan area.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for in combination effects from other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

3.2 Court Judgements and their consideration in this Report

3.2.1 CJEU *People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17*

As previously mentioned, in line with the Court judgement (CJEU *People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17*), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.

This HRA Screening Report does not therefore consider mitigation measures within the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan.

3.2.2 CJEU *Holohan C- 461/17*

This Court judgement now imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority for any plans or projects at Appropriate Assessment stage:

1. [...] 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.
2. [...] 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.

3. [...] 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.

Within this Stage 1 HRA Screening report, the assessment will determine the requirement for whether or not a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is needed for the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan.

3.3 Habitats (European) Sites

'Habitats sites' is the term used in the (revised) NPPF (2019) to describe the network of sites of nature protection areas. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and Habitats.

The sites are designated under the European Union (EU) Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) and the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora).

The Birds Directive requires the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The Habitats Directive similarly requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated for other species, and for Habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the Habitats (Sites) network. This is because all SPAs and SACs are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites make up the Habitats Sites in England. The following offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites.

3.3.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within EU countries. Example: The Stour and Orwell Estuary SPA is internationally important for wintering waterfowl. *Legislation: EU Birds Directive.*

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens for calcareous fens, *Molinia* meadows and Desmoulin's whorl snail *Legislation: EU Habitats Directive.*

Ramsar Sites (Wetlands of International Importance)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl Habitats. Example: Redgrave and South Lopham Fens is an extensive example of lowland base-rich valley, remarkable for its lack



of fragmentation which supports many rare and scarce invertebrates, including a population of the fen raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius*. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. *Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance.*

3.3.2 Habitats Sites to be considered

There are two Habitats sites (SPA/SAC/Ramsar) which lie within 20 km of Whatfield parish and are listed in Table 1 and shown on the map in Appendix 2. However, the Plan area lies outside of the Zones of Influence of any of these Habitats Sites, as identified by Natural England when considering potential impacts on statutory sites.

Table 1: Habitats Sites within 20km of the development

SPA	SAC	Ramsar
Stour and Orwell Estuaries	N/A	Stour and Orwell Estuaries

As the Plan area is not within the Zones of Influence for any of these Habitats sites, it is concluded that none are screened in for assessment for any likely significant effects resulting from the draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan.

3.3.3 Conservation Objectives

Information on each of the above Habitats sites has been obtained from the Natural England website.

The justification for the importance of each Habitats site and the reasons for designation - the Conservation Objectives and Designation Features - for each site are included in Appendix 3. It also reflects the Supplementary Advice for Conservation Objectives which describes the range of ecological attributes that are most likely to contribute to a site's overall integrity and key vulnerabilities to consider within Habitats Regulations assessments.

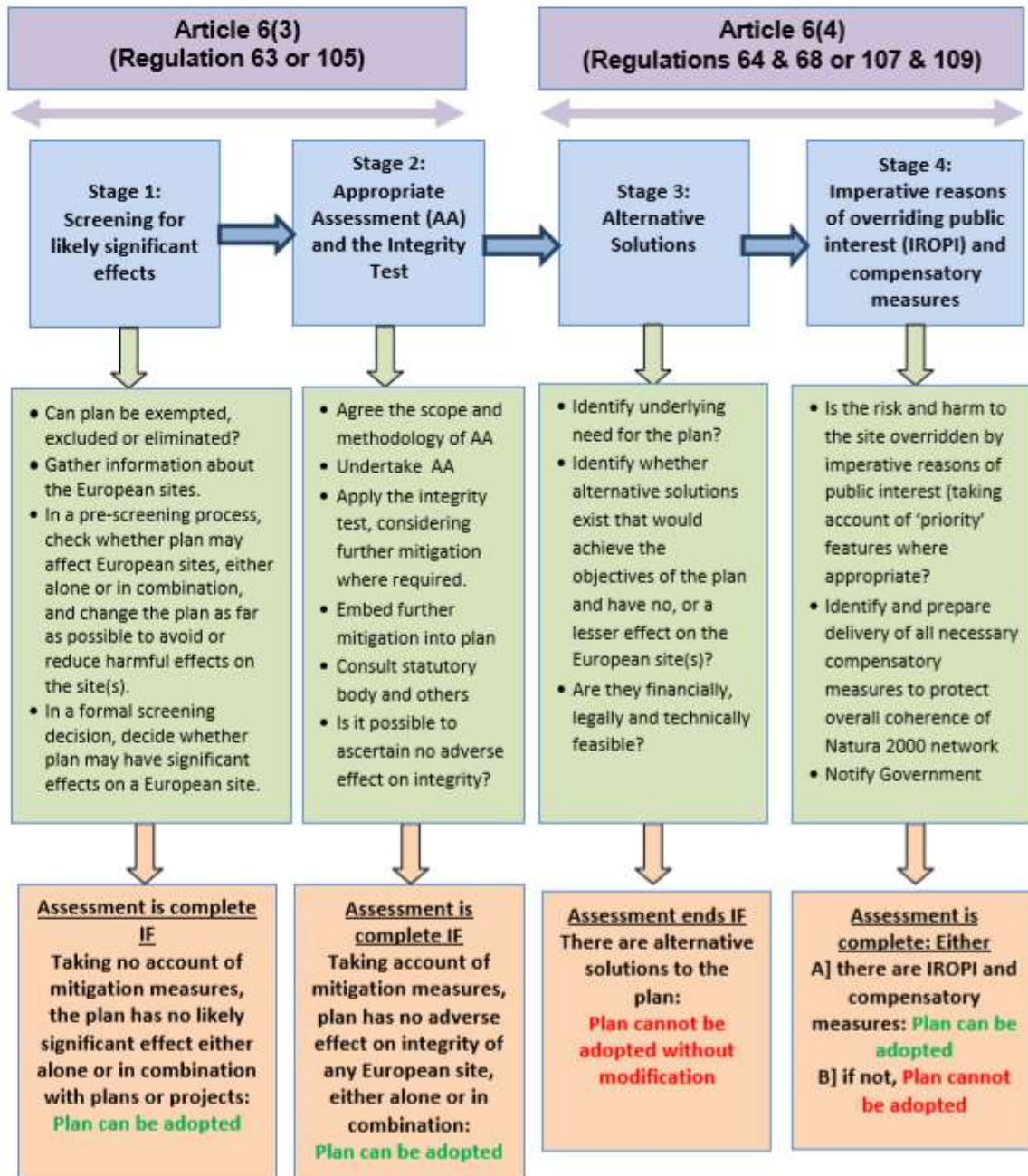
There are no Conservation Objectives set for Ramsar sites. The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting site's ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes and noteworthy features are not treated as qualifying features in the application of HRA tests. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the Ramsar criteria. Where the qualifying features of a Ramsar site would or could be adversely affected by a plan or project, the tests at Appropriate Assessment would need to be based on Article 4 of the Ramsar Convention, which allows a Contracting Party (in this case the UK government) to delete or restrict the boundaries of sites only "in its urgent national interest".

3.4 Method and Approach

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a HRA screening report; this is necessary to ensure the making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Habitats (European site or a European offshore marine site), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.



Outline of the four-stage approach to the assessment of plans under the Habitats Regulations



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Figure 1: Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations



3.4.1 Stage 1: HRA screening

This screening stage identifies if alternatives are needed because any policies or projects will have an impact on a Habitats Site, amendments need to be made in Neighbourhood Development Plans. Table 3 identifies the different categories assigned to each policy in the plan: Category A identifies those policies or projects that may not result in a Likely Significant Effect and are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect and thus upon a European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Each of the policies in the draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Plan has been screened to identify whether they would have any impact on a Habitats Site and allocated to a category as shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Screening categorisation

Category A: No negative effect
Policies or projects that will not be likely to have any negative effect on a Habitats site.
Category B: No Likely Significant Effect
Policies or projects that could have an effect but would not be likely to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats site alone or in combination. This conclusion could only be reached if the effects, even in combination and taking the precautionary principle into account, are considered trivial.
Category C: Likely Significant Effect
Policies or projects which are predicted to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats Site either on its own or in combination with other plans and projects and require revision or further assessment (Appropriate Assessment).

3.4.2 Potential impacts of the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan on Habitats Sites

There are a wide range of potential impacts from development which can be summarised as -

- Land take by developments;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites (functionally linked land) may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding grounds for an identified species.
- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use resulting from new housing development and / or improved access due to transport infrastructure projects;
- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for water treatment, and changes in groundwater regimes due to increased impermeable areas;
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to increased traffic, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial Developments, quarries and waste management facilities.



Each policy in the neighbourhood plan will therefore be assessed against the above criteria in the table below.

Table 3: Assessment of potential impacts

Nature of potential impact	How the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and project) could affect a Habitats site?	Why these effects are/ not considered likely to be significant?
Land take by development	The Plan area is outside the boundaries of the two Habitats sites within scope of this HRA.	N/A
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The Plan area does not contain any functionally linked land for use by designated features of the Habitats sites.	N/A
Recreational pressure and disturbance	HRA / AA work undertaken at the Local Plan level indicates that there could be a potential pathway for development in the Plan area to impact on the SPA & Ramsar sites within the scope of the HRA as part of the Parish lies within the Zones of Influence of Habitats sites within the Suffolk Coast RAMS.	N/A
Water quantity and quality	It is considered that there is no pathway for development to result in impacts on water quantity or quality.	N/A
Changes in air & noise pollution levels	It is considered that there is no pathway for development to result in pollution impacts.	N/A

3.5 Results of HRA Screening of the Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan Policies

The HRA Screening exercise explores whether there will be any Likely Significant Effect resulting from the Plan's policies. These Policies are:

- Policy WHAT1 - Landscape Setting and Natural Features
- Policy WHAT2 - Protection of Existing Village Facilities and Amenities
- Policy WHAT3 - Local Green Spaces



- Policy WHAT4 - New Housing
- Policy WHAT5 - Housing Mix
- Policy WHAT6 - The Whatfield Design Guide

This section considers each policy in turn and the results of the screening exercise is recorded in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of findings from the HRA screening

Policy	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effect on a Habitats Site?	Recommendations
<p>Policy – WHAT1 Landscape Setting and Natural Features</p> <p>Landscape</p> <p>The visual scenic value of the landscape and countryside in the Neighbourhood Area outside the defined settlement boundary will be protected from development that may adversely affect this character. Development should be positioned appropriately within the landscape, having regard to the visual impact of the character of the immediate area.</p> <p>Those parts of the neighbourhood area that include sensitive features typical of Ancient Plateau Claylands Character Area such as tree belts, woodland or ancient hedge lines should be incorporated into the design and layout of development proposals such that the locally characteristic patterns can be retained within new land uses.</p> <p>Development within the Area of Important Local Landscape Quality as defined will only be supported provided that the proposal:</p> <p>a) conserves or enhances the special qualities of the landscape including the settlement pattern and ensures a sense of separation between settlements is maintained. b) is designed and sited to be sympathetic to the scenic beauty of the landscape setting.</p> <p>Important Views</p> <p>Outside of the Area of Important Local Landscape Quality, the following views and vistas as shown on Map B and the Policies Map (contained within the Whatfield NP document) are identified as important public local views:</p> <p>a) Views towards the village from the south east from Whatfield Road.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>



<p>b) View from Wheatfields away from the village towards the south west.</p> <p>Natural Features</p> <p>Development proposals will be expected to retain existing features of landscape and biodiversity value (including ponds, trees, woodland, hedgerows and verges) and where practical to do so, provide a net gain in biodiversity through, for example:</p> <p>a) the creation of new natural habitats. b) the planting of additional trees and hedgerows and restoring and repairing fragmented biodiversity networks.</p> <p>Where loss or damage is unavoidable, the benefits of the development proposals must be demonstrated clearly to outweigh any impacts and the development shall provide for appropriate replacement planting on site together with a method statement for the ongoing care and maintenance of that planting. Where development proposals cause damage to identified natural features, wildlife corridors around the interruption will be constructed.</p> <p>Development that would result in an adverse impact upon the landscape or nature conservation value of the following sites (as shown on Map C and the Policies Map – contained in the Whatfield NP document) will not be supported:</p> <p>a) Calves Wood (Ancient Woodland) b) Buckles Meadow (County Wildlife Site) c) Hunty's Vale (Area under Conservation Management) d) The Drift, on Rectory Road.</p>		
<p>Policy – WHAT2 Protection of Existing Village Facilities and Amenities</p> <p>The Parish has the following village facilities and amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Village Hall ◆ Church ◆ Salvation Army Hall ◆ Telephone Box ◆ Whatfield Primary School <p>Proposals for change of use involving a potential loss of an existing village facility or amenity, will only be supported where an improved or equivalent facility can be located elsewhere in the parish in an equally convenient, safe and accessible location or where there is no reasonable prospect of continued viable use and this can be sufficiently demonstrated.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



<p>Policy – WHAT3 Local Green Spaces</p> <p>The following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces for special protection (as shown on Map C and on the Policies Map contained in the Whatfield NP document):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The playing field adjacent to the School b) Churchyard of the Church of St Margaret of Antioch c) Allotments off Semer Road d) Church Farm Place Green <p>Development adjacent to a Local Green Space that would adversely impact upon its value to the local community will not be supported.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
<p>Policy – WHAT4 New Housing</p> <p>Within the defined settlement boundary for Whatfield, development proposals for 'windfall development in the form of individual dwellings or small groups of houses up to 5 dwellings will be supported where they meet the criteria of the policies set out in this plan.</p> <p>The scale and nature of all schemes must ensure an appropriate level of services, facilities and infrastructure, including primary school capacity, are available or can be provided to serve the proposed development.</p> <p>Proposals for new housing development outside the defined settlement boundary will only be permitted where they meet all of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) single dwellings and small groups of up to 5 dwellings outside, but immediately adjacent to, the Settlement Boundary; b) development would not have an adverse impact upon the historic or natural environment or highway safety c) The site has a close functional relationship to the existing settlement or constitutes a logical extension of the built-up area of the village e) The proposal is self-contained and has logical, natural boundaries f) The proposal is well designed and landscaped and is appropriate in size/scale, layout, and character to its setting and to the village g) The site is adjacent to or well related to the existing pattern of development for that settlement h) The proposal meets a proven need such as affordable housing or targeted market housing identified in an adopted local plan/neighbourhood plan. 	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
<p>Policy – WHAT5 Housing Mix</p> <p>Development proposals that enable a mixed and inclusive community and reflect the aspirations of the local population will be supported.</p> <p>In line with the latest evidence of need, the mix of housing should include:</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



<p>a) Family Housing – semi-detached and detached houses; b) Homes for first time buyers (e.g. 1-2 bed homes); c) Housing for older people in the form of bungalows; d) Affordable Housing; e) Housing for Key Workers e.g. agricultural workers, and public/private sector employees providing an essential service.</p> <p>Where affordable housing is proposed it should be identical in external form, quality and character to open market housing. In order to encourage integration within the development the affordable housing should be 'pepper potted' around the site and not grouped in clusters. It should be noted that the above housing types may not be suitably accommodated on every site.</p>		
<p>Policy – WHAT6 The Whatfield Design Guide</p> <p>Style</p> <p>The architectural style of new dwellings should be a sensitive combination of high quality modern contemporary designs which respects the traditional Suffolk vernacular and enhances the character and quality of development within the parish.</p> <p>All proposals for new development should respect the scale, materials and character of the existing and surrounding buildings. Proposals should be well landscaped, reinforce local development patterns, be compatible with the form, scale, massing and character of adjacent properties where these have been identified in the Photographic Study as providing a positive contribution to the local environment. The design of new development should be of high quality, incorporating detailed design features prevalent in Whatfield and highlighted in the Photographic Study.</p> <p>Materials</p> <p>Building materials that are high quality, locally crafted and domestically made including the use of hardwood materials for windows, doors and fascias will be encouraged. Proposals that seek to maximise the use of green /organic materials will be supported.</p> <p>The inclusion of environmental features such as rainwater harvesting from roof and greywater recycling via a permanent water well are encouraged. Wildlife features that seek to encourage and support wildlife species including bat bricks and swift bricks will be supported.</p> <p>Layout and Amenity</p> <p>All new dwellings should be designed to provide a sufficiently high standard of amenity to ensure the wellbeing of residents and reflect the needs of modern living.</p> <p>Proposals should include:</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>



- a) Outside amenity space/garden footprint of between 84% and 92% of total plot area;
- b) Provision for Garages/off street parking;
- c) Integrated storage for refuse and recycling;
- d) Internal accommodation that can be easily adapted for home working;
- e) Soft well landscaped boundary edges where adjacent to open countryside or edge of settlement;
- f) Have regard for the guidance in Secure by Design to minimise the likelihood and fear of crime;
- g) Measures to suitably manage surface water drainage, including the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Development should protect and where possible enhance Public Rights of Way through the inclusion of new or improved routes and connections.

3.5.1 Recommendations

There are no recommendations for the policies in this draft Neighbourhood Plan as they have all been assigned to Category A (no negative effect) with no need to amend policy text.

This draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan does not allocate sites for development, so no development will lie within the 13km Zone of Influence for the Suffolk Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). As the Plan does not allocate any land for residential development within this ZOI, there is no pathway for impacts.

As there is no predicted Likely Significant Effect from the Plan alone, it is necessary to assess the likely effects from the Plan, in combination with other plans and projects; these are considered in Section 3.6.

3.6 Other Plans & Projects: In-Combination Effects

There are three relevant Plan level HRAs that have been carried out by Babergh DC or other organisations and these have been found, not to have an adverse effect on the integrity of Habitats sites when being assessed in-combination with other plans and projects. There are no Projects considered to be relevant to this section.

The Plan has not allocated sites for development, and the parish lies outside the 13km Zone of Influence for the Suffolk Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and all other Habitats sites so there is no pathway for impacts in combination with other plans and projects. There is therefore no requirement for any mitigation measures to be embedded in the Plan to avoid any likely significant effects.

Table 5: Other plans or projects considered for in combination effects

Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan	Babergh and Mid Suffolk Local Plan Reg 18: Habitat Regulations Assessment	The HRA report including Appropriate Assessment indicates that the Babergh	N/A



	and Appropriate Assessment (Place Services, 2019)	& Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is not predicted to have any adverse effect on integrity (AEOL) on any Habitats Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.	
Babergh District Council	Habitat Regulations Assessment of Core Strategy 2011	The Core Strategy aims to minimise impacts on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries, a European-designated site which supports species that are susceptible to disturbance. The principle potential impact on the European sites as a result of development proposed under the Core Strategy relates to increased recreational pressure. The Strategy therefore sets out a series of measures to ensure that the policies will not have a significant effect on the European sites.	N/A
Suffolk Coastal District Council	Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan at Final Draft Plan Stage (Dec 2018)	It is recommended that the Suffolk authorities should be mindful of the potential issue for impacts from air quality and plan for more detailed analysis of risks across the county, to inform the next plan reviews. This should include air quality modelling that incorporates a specific consideration of potential deposition rates within 200m of European sites.	N/A



4. Conclusions

Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA Screening Report concludes that the draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan is not predicted to have any Likely Significant Effect on any Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

The content of the draft Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (August 2020) has therefore been **screened out** for any further assessment and Babergh DC can demonstrate its compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).



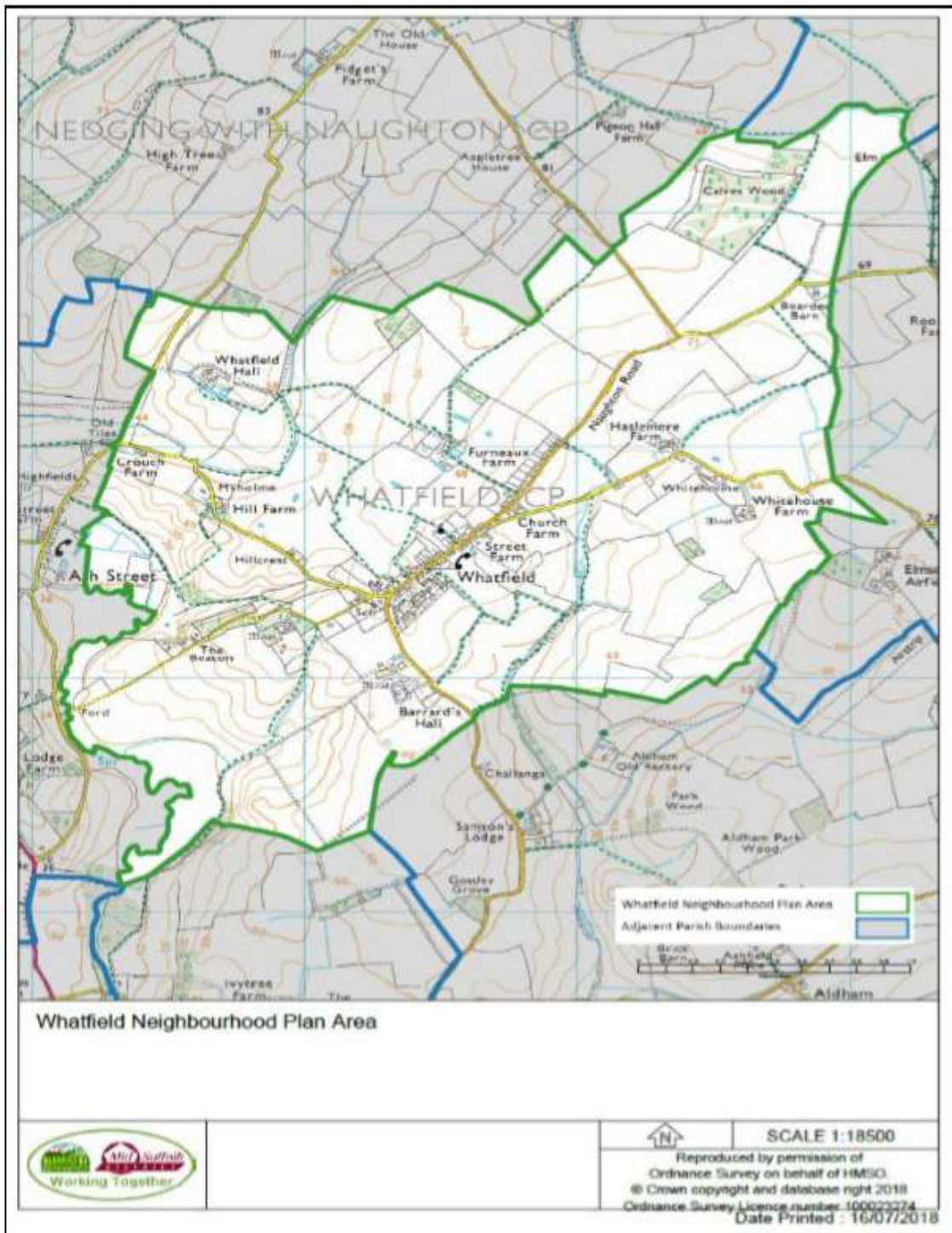
5. References

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Joint Local Plan (2018)
- Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6581547796791296#content>
- Natural England Site Improvement Plans: East of England
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/4873023563759616>
- Place Services (June 2019) Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment including Appropriate Assessment
- Parish of Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 – 2036 Pre-Submission Consultation Version (August 2020)



Appendix I

Whatfield Neighbourhood Development Plan Area



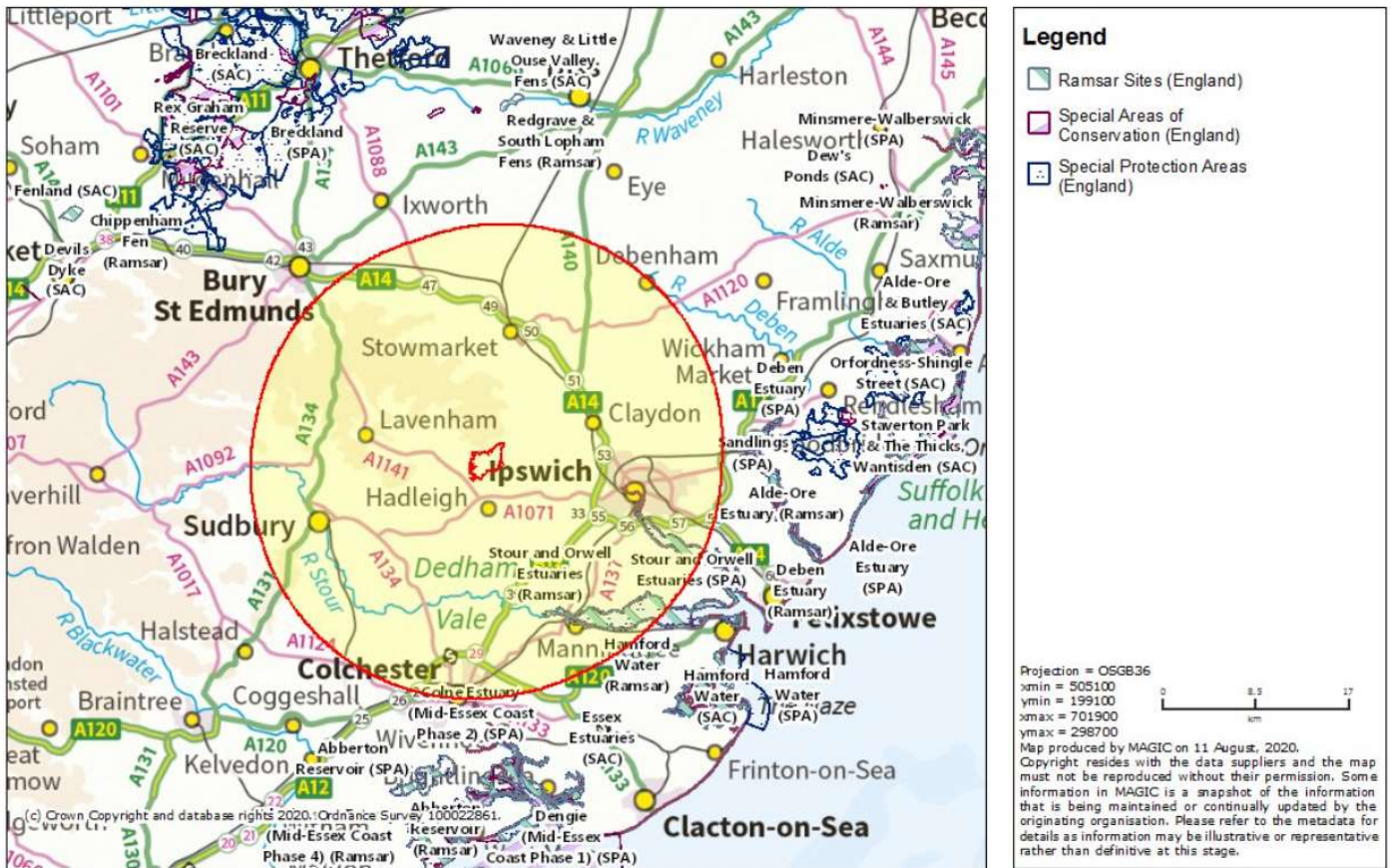
Source: Whatfield Neighbourhood Plan – Pre-Submission Version August 2020



Appendix II

Whatfield parish and Habitats Sites within 20km

MAGiC Habitat sites within 20km of Whatfield



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Appendix III

Characteristics of Habitats Sites

This appendix contains information about the Habitats Sites included in the scoping for this 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) and the Standard Data Forms or Ramsar Information Sheets available from the JNCC website. Site conservation objectives are drawn from Natural England's website and are only available for SACs and SPAs. Supplementary Advice has also been added to describe the range of ecological attributes that are most likely to contribute to a site's overall integrity and key vulnerabilities to consider within Habitats Regulations assessments. The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting site's ecological character are not considered as necessary for HRA screening purposes and noteworthy features are not treated as qualifying features in the application of HRA tests. The assessment under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations is strictly limited to the qualifying features which meet the Ramsar criteria.



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
The Stour and Orwell estuaries				
<p>These estuaries straddle the eastern part of the Essex/Suffolk border in eastern England. The estuaries include extensive mud-flats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches. The mud-flats hold <i>Enteromorpha</i>, <i>Zostera</i> and <i>Salicornia</i> spp. The site also includes an area of low-lying grazing marsh at Shotley Marshes on the south side of the Orwell. In summer, the site supports important numbers of breeding Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>, while in winter they hold major concentrations of waterbirds, especially geese, ducks and waders. The geese also feed, and waders roost, in surrounding areas of agricultural land outside the SPA. The site has close ecological links with the Hamford Water and Mid-Essex Coast SPAs, lying to the south on the same coast.</p>				
<p><u>Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA</u></p> <p>EU Code: UK9009121</p>	3676.92	<p><u>Qualifying Features</u> potentially affected:</p> <p>Annex I species:</p> <p>Over winter: Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i></p> <p>This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species: Over winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> • Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> 	<p>With regard to the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified ("the Qualifying Features" listed below);</p> <p>Avoid the deterioration of the Habitats of the qualifying features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of the Birds Directive.</p> <p>Subject to natural change, to maintain or restore:</p> <p>The extent and distribution of the Habitats of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The structure and function of the Habitats of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The supporting processes on which the Habitats of the qualifying features rely;</p>	<p>Coastal squeeze – Coastal defences are present along most of the Orwell coastline to mitigate for impacts from climate change, such as rising sea level. Unless changes are made to the management of the coastline, Habitats supporting qualifying SPA birds will be lost or degraded through coastal squeeze, sedimentation and reduced exposure.</p> <p>Public access/disturbance – Stour and Orwell Estuaries is subject to land- and water-based activities, including boating and water sports; walking; bait-digging; fishing; wildfowling; and military overflight training. These activities are likely to impact Habitats supporting breeding and overwintering water birds. 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</p>



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		<p>The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> • Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> • Redshank <i>Tringa tetanus</i> • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> • Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> • Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i><u>Branta bernicla bernicla</u></i> • Wigeon <i>Anas Penelope</i> • Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> • Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> • Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> • Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> • Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>. 	<p>The populations of the qualifying features;</p> <p>The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	<p>sensitive is required to ensure the Estuaries are appropriately managed.</p> <p>Changes in species distribution – Declines in the number of bird species present at Orwell coastline have occurred. This is likely to be the result of changes in population and distribution on an international scale, due to climate change.</p> <p>Invasive species – An increase in <i>Spartina anglica</i> may be affecting the growth of <i>Spartina maritime</i>, a key habitat feature for qualifying bird roosting and feeding areas of saltmarsh and mudflat.</p> <p>Planning permission: General – The issue of development in combination with other factors is not fully understood. To ensure management is appropriate to the SPA a better understanding of the sensitivities relating to each habitat, species and location to different types of development is required. Difficult issues highlighted by the SIP include; a) Assessing the cumulative effects of numerous, small and often 'non- standard' developments. b) Development outside the SPA boundary can have negative impacts, particularly on the estuaries' birds. c) Assessing the indirect, 'knock-on' effects of</p>



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				<p>proposals. d) Pressure to relax planning conditions on existing developments.</p> <p>Air pollution: impact from atmospheric nitrogen deposition – Atmospheric nitrogen deposition exceeds the relevant critical loads for coastal dune Habitats used by breeding terns and hence there is a risk of harmful effects.</p> <p>Inappropriate coastal management – Due to the presence of existing hard sea defences, such as sea walls there is little scope for adaptation to rising sea levels. Any freshwater Habitats behind failing seawalls are likely to be inundated by seawater, which would result in the loss of this habitat within the SPA.</p> <p>Fisheries: Commercial and estuarine – Commercial fishing activities can be very damaging to inshore marine Habitats and the bird species dependent on the communities they support. Any ‘amber or green’ categorised commercial fishing activities in Habitats Marine Sites are assessed by Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA). This assessment takes into</p>



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				account any in-combination effects of amber activities and/or appropriate plans or projects.
<u>Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar site</u> EU Code: UK11067	3676.92	Ramsar criterion 2 Contains seven nationally scarce plants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stiff saltmarsh-grass <i>Puccinellia rupestris</i> • Small cord-grass <i>Spartina maritime</i> • Perennial glasswort <i>Sarcocornia perennis</i> • Lax-flowered sea lavender <i>Limonium humile</i> • Eelgrasses <i>Zostera angustifolia</i>, <i>Z. marina</i> and <i>Z. noltei</i>. Ramsar criterion 5 Assemblages of international importance; species with peak counts in winter; 63,017 waterfowl. Ramsar criterion 6 Species/ populations occurring at levels of international importance: Species with peak counts in spring/autumn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common redshank , <i>Tringa totanus totanus</i> • Species with peak counts in winter: 	None available.	Similar to Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA (See above). A key threat identified by RIS was erosion. Erosion - Natural coastal processes exacerbated by fixed sea defences, port development and maintenance dredging. Erosion is being tackled through sediment replacement for additional erosion that can be attributed to port development and maintenance dredging. A realignment site has been created on-site to make up for the loss of habitat due to capital dredging. General background erosion has not been tackled although a Flood Management Strategy for the site is being produced.



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> • Northern pintail , <i>Anas acuta</i> • Grey plover , <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Red knot , <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> • Dunlin , <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Black-tailed godwit , <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> • Common redshank , <i>Tringa totanus tetanus</i> 		



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