



Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy

# Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report

London Borough of Redbridge

January 2024



Essex County Council



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**Address:** County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1QH

**Contact no:** 0333 013 6840

**Email:** [placeservicesecology@essex.gov.uk](mailto:placeservicesecology@essex.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.placeservices.gov.uk](http://www.placeservices.gov.uk)

**VAT number:** GB 104 2528 13



## Report Checking and Version Control

Prepared by:

Sue Hooton | Principal Ecological Consultant | [sue.hooton@essex.gov.uk](mailto:sue.hooton@essex.gov.uk)

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## Glossary of Acronyms

AA	Appropriate Assessment
AEOI	Avoid Adverse Effect On Integrity
EA	Environment Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
Ha	Hectare
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IRZ	Impact Risk Zones (for SSSIs)
JLP	Joint Local Plan
Km	Kilometre
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NE	Natural England
NGIS	Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PRoW	Public Right of Way
RIS	Ramsar Information Sheet
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAMMS	Strategic Access Management Measures
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Specific Scientific Interest
ZOI	Zone of Influence



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Purpose of This Report

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- 1.1.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) require the Competent Authority (in this instance London Borough of Redbridge) to undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) before making a decision about permission for any plan or project that may result in an adverse effect on the site integrity of a Habitats site<sup>1</sup> as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023).
- 1.1.2 Therefore, this report has been provided to determine whether the projects contained in the London Borough of Redbridge Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy (“NGIS/The Plan”) will result in an adverse effect on the site integrity Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 1.1.3 This report therefore provides a (plan level) Stage 1 HRA Screening, as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment would be undertaken if any of the objectives and policies of The Plan require mitigation to avoid adverse effects on site integrity (AEOI).
- 1.1.4 For the purposes of HRA, London Borough of Redbridge is considered to be the Competent Authority for assessing this Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy and consulting with Natural England on its conclusion.

## 1.2 Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy Planning Context

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- 1.2.1 The Redbridge Local Plan was adopted in 2018, having gone through an Examination in Public (EiP). The EiP examined the soundness of the Local Plan, as well as the Plan’s SA and HRA as accompanying documents that were legally required.
- 1.2.2 Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is a site of European significance, and the Council therefore has a duty to ensure that development has no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC. Policy protection is set out in LP39 which commits the Council to ensuring any mitigation and/or compensation measures proposed address the potential impact on the SAC. Subsequent to the adoption of the Local Plan approach outlined in

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<sup>1</sup> Habitats site: Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations and those listed in paragraph 187 of the NPPF (December 2023). This includes potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation; listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on Habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.



policy LP39, further guidance on how to manage any impact has now been produced by Natural England.

- 1.2.3 Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations), the competent authority - in this case, London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) - has a duty to ensure that any plans or projects that they regulate (including planning policy and planning applications) will have no adverse effect on the integrity of Habitats sites and Epping Forest SAC in particular. For example, an adverse effect on integrity would be something that impacts on the site's ecological structure and functioning and/ or affects the ability of the site to meet its conservation objectives.
- 1.2.4 The potential effects of development on Epping Forest SAC were assessed during the Redbridge Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process for the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030. The screening exercise carried out in 2017 can be found here: <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/media/10419/lbr-112-redbridge-local-plan-hra-2017.pdf>
- 1.2.5 The Epping Forest Visitor Survey 2017 Results Report investigating visitor access patterns at Epping Forest found that the majority of visitors (75%) of visitors originated from a 6.2km distance from Epping Forest. The Epping Forest District Council identifies that on top of the existing pressure from high levels of recreation, "additional recreational activity resulting from new residential development within 3km of the SAC in Epping Forest District would result in an adverse effect 'in combination' with growth in adjacent authorities (notably the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge, which are also core centres of SAC visitor origin) without mitigation.". Whilst visitor surveys indicate that few visitors currently derive from the 3km to 6.2km zone, the delivery of three new large sites "could result in changes to the patterns of activity and potentially result in a greater proportion of visitors to the SAC", so has informed the 6.2km zone of influence is being used to define the core recreational and urbanisation catchment of the SAC.
- 1.2.6 Having considered the informal comments from Natural England and all other matters, it is considered that the conclusions of the draft screening report remain correct such that the draft NGIS of itself is not likely to have any significant effects on the Habitats sites identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. As such, it is considered that it is not necessary to proceed to the next stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process, i.e., Stage 2 and there is no requirement for an Appropriate Assessment.
- 1.2.7 Given that this screening process concerns the NGIS, this screening report addresses the likely effects of the draft NGIS, of itself, rather than wider issues, including the principle of the development proposed by the Redbridge Local Plan. At planning application stage however, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will need to consider the likely impacts of the development, both in principle and in detail, when carrying out HRA screening and, if required, appropriate assessment. The requirement to provide a package of SANG measures will vary depending on a number of factors including, size, scale, proximity to the SAC, ease of access to the SAC, availability of other green spaces etc. The SANG





measures could include well designed open space or green infrastructure within the development, improvements to a number of green spaces already in the vicinity of the SAC, improvements to footpaths and contributions to other green projects being delivered by other parties.

## 1.3 Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy

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- 1.3.1 The London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) commissioned Place Services in April 2021 to support the council through the processing of creating a Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy (NGIS) to help mitigate additional recreational pressures resulting from new residential development on Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.
- 1.3.2 The London Borough of Redbridge is made up of a network of attractive parks, open spaces, wildlife, providing leisure and recreational opportunities and varied habitats, making an important contribution to the quality of life of its residents.
- 1.3.3 About one third of the borough is designated Green Belt, and around 48% of the borough is green space. Epping Forest and the valley of the River Roding provide highly important green corridors running from north to south. Epping Forest is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is a Habitats site as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023).
- 1.3.4 The interventions needed to displace recreational pressure that could result from planned growth in Redbridge is a function of the rate at which people visit Epping Forest SAC and the additional population which is being planned for. This assumes that the new population will behave in a similar way as the existing population and make a similar number of visits to Epping Forest SAC as the existing population do. Therefore, by observing the number of trips to the site and using population statistics to calculate the total population, which is making these visits, it is possible to calculate how many visits the average person makes, and therefore how many additional visits need to be made elsewhere to avoid adverse impacts on integrity on any Habitats site. The package of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) that is needed to avoid impacts from the Redbridge Local Plan alone has been identified and financial contributions towards improvements at greenspace across the Borough. The requirement will vary depending on a number of factors including, size, scale, proximity to Epping Forest SAC, ease of access to the SAC, availability of other green spaces etc. The SANG measures at 4 SANGs sites – Roding Valley, Claybury Park, Hainault Forest Country Park and Fairlop Waters Country Park as listed in Appendix 1 - could include well designed open space or green infrastructure within the development, improvements to a number of green spaces already in the vicinity of the SAC, improvements to footpaths and contributions to other green projects being delivered by other parties.



- 1.3.5 The residual impacts are addressed by the Epping Forest Strategic Access Management Measures (SAMM) which provides a strategic mechanism to collect a per dwelling tariff from all new residential developments within the Epping Forest SAC 6.2km mitigation buffer to deliver mitigation and management measures in perpetuity from the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030. This will avoid adverse impacts on integrity on Epping Forest SAC from the Redbridge Local Plan, in combination with other plans and projects.
- 1.3.6 Therefore, the draft NGIS has been prepared based on proposed Interventions that would enhance spaces to make them attractive alternative green spaces to Epping Forest SAC. Uplift was calculated for each SANG site based on an assessment of the proposed interventions and the expected additional number of visitors that will be attracted to the site following the proposed interventions.



## 2. Legislative Background

### 2.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

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- 2.1.1 Under the provisions of 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.
- 2.1.2 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 Habitats sites in the NPPF (December 2023).
- 2.1.3 This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy. The area covered by the plan is shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.1.4 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.
- 2.1.5 On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the Prime Minister triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which commenced a period of negotiations regarding the UK's exit from the EU. On 26 June 2018 The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent and work to prepare the UK statute book for Brexit is complete and the UK has now left the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 made sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. There is no immediate change to legislation or policy affecting national infrastructure. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and those are unchanged until amended by Parliament. The requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place with minor changes being affected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Parliament will however be at liberty to introduce future changes to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) since 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.
- 2.1.6 The position under section 6(3) EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), is that the courts in the UK, with the sole exception of the Supreme Court, will continue to be bound by HRA judgements handed down by the CJEU and by domestic courts prior to 31 December 2020 when interpreting the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as



amended). This is the case as long as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain unmodified by Parliament.

## 2.2 Court Rulings

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

- 2.2.1 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 Appropriate Assessment therefore considers mitigation measures for the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Plan.
- 2.2.2 In accordance with this Judgement, all mitigation measures already built into the Local Plan can now be taken into account for the Appropriate Assessment. At this stage other policies of the Plan can be considered in order to mitigate some of the potential Likely Significant Effects which have been identified. This stage is an iterative process as avoidance and reduction measures can be incorporated in order to be able to avoid the potential impacts identified in the Appropriate Assessment or reduce them to a level where they will no longer adversely affect the site's integrity.

### **CJEU Holohan C- 461/17**

- 2.2.3 Court rulings include CJEU Holohan C-461/17 (7 November 2018) which now imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority 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.*

2.2.4 At Stage 2, it is therefore necessary to consider species likely to be present on the Habitats sites, but for which that site has not been listed - e.g., birds which are designated features of the underpinning SSSI – and to consider 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.



## 3. Method and Approach

### 3.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Plans

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- 3.1.1 This HRA screening report considers the likelihood of significant effects of the draft NGIS, which are those that could undermine the Conservation Objectives for the Habitats sites e.g., Epping Forest SAC - to maintain or restore as appropriate, the qualifying heathland and Beech woodland habitats and to achieve favourable conservation status of the qualifying species (Stag Beetle).
- 3.1.2 It is necessary to understand how the draft NGIS, of itself, could affect any Habitats site including Epping Forest SAC.
- 3.1.3 This HRA screening will assess the likelihood of significant effects as a result of the draft NGIS, in itself, by considering impact pathways, the various characteristics of potential effects and the risk to Annex I habitats and Annex II species. This takes account of assumptions and limitations and has regard to the extent and nature of the on-site greenspace and information recreational space embedded in the design detail of the draft NGIS, the precautionary principle and other requirements of Habitats Regulations.
- 3.1.4 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).
- 3.1.5 This section of this Report aims to:
- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of London Borough of Redbridge.
  - Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each Habitats site to be considered in this assessment.
  - Screen the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
  - Assess the potential for effects in combination with other projects and plans in the area.
  - Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

### 3.2 Habitats Sites

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- 3.2.1 Habitats sites is the term used in the NPPF (December 2023) to describe the UK network of sites of European designated nature protection areas. These now form part of the UK national network of sites for nature protection. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.



3.2.2 All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for other species, and for Habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the National Network of sites. 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.

3.2.3 The following table (Table 1) offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

**Table 1. Description and 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: Lee Valley SPA comprises a series of embanked water supply reservoirs, sewage treatment lagoons and former gravel pits that support internationally important numbers of wintering gadwall and shoveler and nationally important numbers of several other bird species. *Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).*

### **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: Epping Forest SAC is a large ancient wood-pasture with habitats of high nature conservation value including ancient semi-natural woodland, old grassland plains, wet and dry heathland and scattered wetland. *Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).*

### **Ramsar Sites (Wetlands of International Importance)**

Ramsar sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl. For example, Lee Valley Ramsar site contains a range of wetland and valley bottom habitat, both man-made and semi-natural, and supports one of the largest areas of tall fen vegetation in the county and provides a valuable habitat for birds and locally uncommon plants. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy

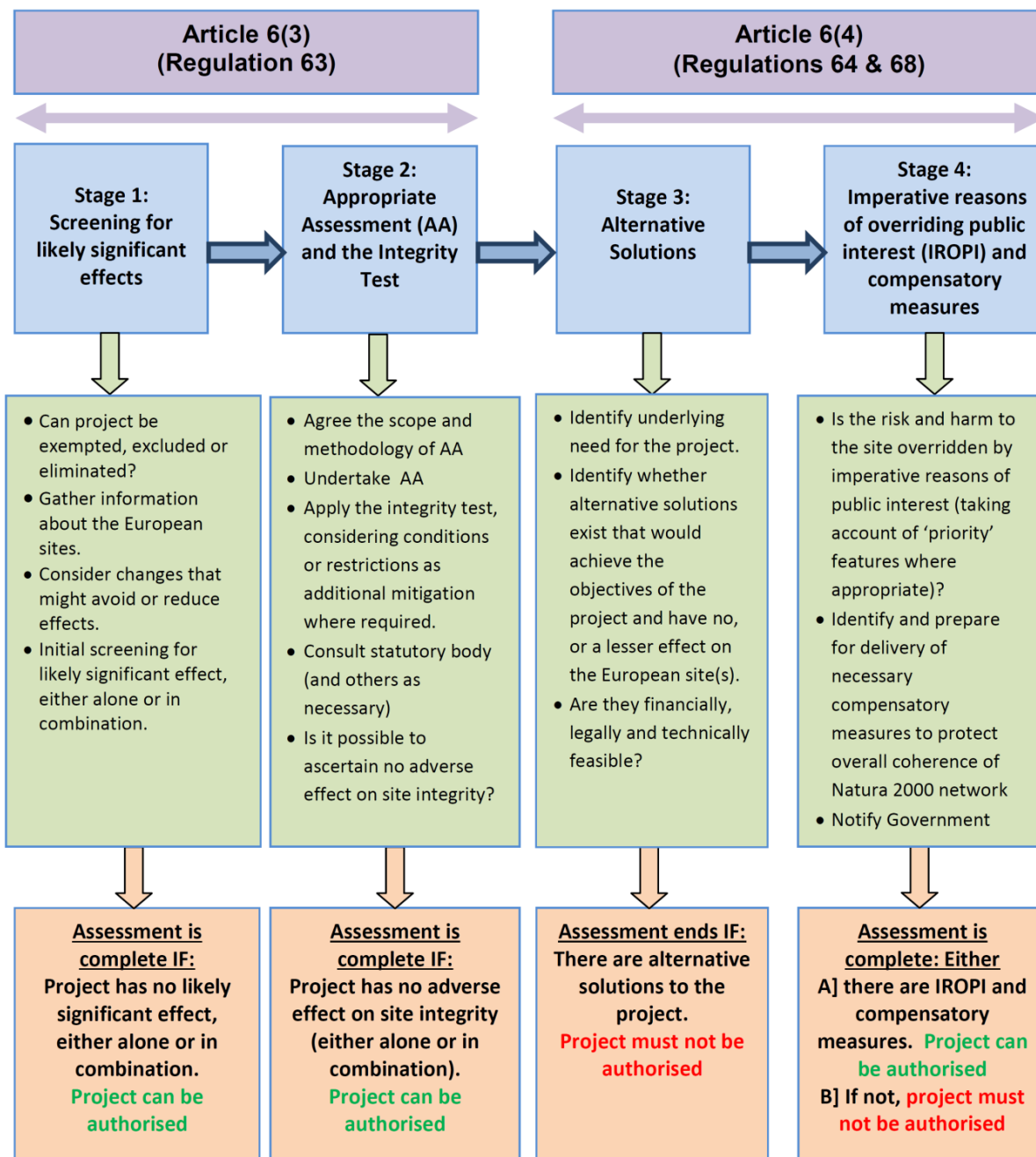


determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. *Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance.*





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





- 3.2.4 Plans should not contain proposals that would be vulnerable to failure under the Habitats Regulations at project assessment stage, as this would be regarded as 'faulty planning'.
- 3.2.5 'Significant effects' has been defined through case law. A significant effect is any effect that would undermine the conservation objectives for the qualifying features of Habitats sites potentially affected, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. There must be a causal connection or link between the Local Plan and the qualifying features of the site (s) which could result in possible significant effects on the site (s). Effects may be direct or indirect and a judgement must be taken on a case-by-case basis. The decision as to whether or not a potential impact is significant depends on factors such as: magnitude of impact, type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability, cumulative effects and the vulnerability of the habitats and species concerned. So, what may be significant in relation to one site may not be in relation to another.
- 3.2.6 An effect which is not significant can be described as 'insignificant', 'de minimis' or 'trivial'- *i.e.*, it would not undermine the conservation objectives.
- 3.2.7 A risk-based approach involving the application of the precautionary principle has been used in the assessment. A conclusion of 'no significant effect' was only reached where it was considered very unlikely, based on current knowledge and the information available, that a proposal in the Plan would have a significant effect on the integrity of a Habitats site.
- 3.2.8 Key advice guidance and information has also come from the following sources:
- DTA Publications Handbook: <https://www.dtapublications.co.uk/>
  - HRAs of neighbouring authorities Local Plans
  - Extensive experience of producing other HRAs
  - Government information regarding Habitats sites and their 'zones of influence', *e.g.*, [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)

### 3.3 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

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- 3.3.1 The screening stage identifies whether the Local Plan may result in a Likely Significant Effect to any Habitat site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The screening process should identify all aspects of the Plan that are:
- Exempt from assessment.
  - Excluded from assessment.
  - Eliminated from further assessment.
  - Have no Likely Significant Effects, alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore be screened out.



- Screened in as it is not possible to rule out Likely Significant Effects. In line with the 2018 Court judgment (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17) mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment. Consequently, any aspect of the Local Plan which cannot be ruled out as having Likely Significant Effects should continue to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

3.3.2 Habitats sites which have been included for assessment are those which are within the ZOI for the underpinning Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) as identified on MAGIC [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk).

3.3.3 It has been established that this Plan requires an HRA for the following reasons:

- Can the plan be exempt? - No, The Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to management of any Habitats sites.
- Can the plan be excluded? - No, The Plan cannot be excluded as it falls within the definition of being a plan within the Habitats Regulations.
- Can the plan be eliminated? - No, The Plan as a whole cannot be eliminated as it proposes a number of policies which may have a Likely Significant Effect on one or more Habitats site. However, individual policies can be eliminated.

## 3.4 Identifying Habitats sites, their Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Features

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3.4.1 The qualifying features and conservation objectives of the Habitats sites, together with current pressures on and potential threats, was drawn from the Standard Data Forms for SACs and SPAs and the Information Sheets for Ramsar Wetlands as well as Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIP) and the most recent conservation objectives. An understanding of the designated features of each Habitats site and the factors contributing to its integrity has informed the assessment of the potential Likely Significant Effects of The Plan.

3.4.2 Key sources of the Habitats sites information were found at:

- JNCC: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/>
- Site Designation features and Conservation Objectives- Designated Sites View: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>
- Site Improvement Plans, e.g.: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6270737467834368>
- MAGIC (the Multi Agency Geographic Information website): [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)
- "Managing Natura 2000 sites- The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC" [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/Provisions\\_Art\\_.nov\\_2018\\_endocx.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/Provisions_Art_.nov_2018_endocx.pdf)



3.4.3 The list of Habitats sites, their qualifying features and conservation objectives can be found in Appendix 3 including web links to further information.

3.4.4 The list of key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity can be found in Appendix 3, including links to further information.

**Table 2. Habitats sites within 20 km of the London Borough of Redbridge**

Site	Location	Scoped in or out
Epping Forest SAC	Epping Forest District /LB Redbridge/ LB of Waltham Forest	<b>Scoped in</b> This SAC is the main reason for the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy to deliver SANG within the Borough.
Lee Valley SPA & Ramsar site	Epping Forest District / Hertfordshire	<b>Scoped out</b> The Borough is outside the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Lee Valley SPA & Ramsar site as identified on MAGIC. In addition, there are no clear impact pathways to these Habitats sites.
Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods SAC	Hertfordshire	<b>Scoped out</b> The Borough is outside the IRZ of the underpinning SSSIs and the ZOI of the Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods SAC as identified on MAGIC. In addition, there are no clear impact pathways to this Habitats site.

3.4.5 A map of all 4 Habitats sites with the 20 km radius of the London Borough of Redbridge boundaries can be found in Appendix 4.

## 3.5 Screening Categorisation

3.5.1 Screening considers each policy in the Plan and the results of the screening exercise recorded, using the precautionary principle. Each policy and land allocation included in the Local Plan has been categorised. A 'traffic light' system has been used to record the



potential for policies and allocated sites to have a Likely Significant Effect, using the system of colours in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Categorisation**

<b>Category A: Significant effects not likely</b>
<p>Category A identifies those policies that would not result in a Likely Significant Effect and are considered to have no adverse effect. These policies can be 'screened out' and no further assessment is required. This is because, if there are no adverse effects at all, there can be no adverse effect to contribute to in combination effects of other plans or projects.</p>
<b>Category B: Significant effects uncertain</b>
<p>Category B identifies those policies which will have no significant adverse effect on the site. That is, there could be some effect but none which would undermine the conservation objectives, when the policy is considered on its own. Given that there may be some effect this now needs to be considered in combination with other plans or projects. If these effects can be excluded in combination, the policy can be screened out and no further assessment required. However, if the possibility of a significant adverse effect in combination cannot be ruled out there will be a Likely Significant Effect in combination, and Appropriate Assessment will be required.</p>
<b>Category C: Likely Significant Effect</b>
<p>Category C identifies those policies which cannot be ruled out as having a Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitat Site, alone, that is the effect could undermine the conservation objectives. In this case an Appropriate Assessment is triggered without needing to consider in combination effects at screening stage, although they may need to be considered at Appropriate Assessment.</p>

## 3.6 Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test

- 3.6.1 If the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy (NGIS) may cause Likely Significant Effects, the second stage is to undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications of the plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and establish whether there may be an Adverse Effect On site Integrity (AEOI) of any Habitats sites in view of their Conservation Objectives.
- 3.6.2 Some policies of the NGIS can be used to mitigate some of the potential Likely Significant Effects which have been identified. These would then be considered at Appropriate Assessment. This stage thus becomes an iterative process as avoidance and reduction



measures can be incorporated in order to be able to ascertain that there is no Adverse Effect on Integrity on any Habitats site, before making a final assessment.

- 3.6.3 Any Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken by the competent authority and should assess all aspects of the Local Plan which can by themselves, or in combination with other plans and projects, affect the sites' Conservation Objectives. The assessment must consider the implications for each qualifying feature of each potentially affected Habitats site. Key vulnerabilities are set out in Appendix 4 and the Site Improvement Plans were used to obtain this information. Site Improvement Plans have been developed for each Habitats site in England as part of the 'Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS)'. The plan provides a high-level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. These can be found at:

**<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5458594975711232>**.

- 3.6.4 In order to identify potential in combination effects other plans and projects which may affect the Habitats sites need to be identified. The list of Borough level plans which provide for development in the London as well as Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to be considered will be identified.
- 3.6.5 In accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, Natural England will be consulted on the HRA screening document to support adoption of the NGIS.



## 4. Screening of Likely Significant Effects

### 4.1 Policies for Likely Significant Effect

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- 4.1.1 This chapter summarises the potential for Likely Significant Effects identified, using Categories A, B and C outlined earlier in the report. It advises as to where Likely Significant Effects can be ruled out. The need for an 'Appropriate Assessment' is triggered where the HRA Screening stage identifies policies which may have a Likely Significant Effect on any Habitats sites.
- 4.1.2 Only a single Habitats site has been scoped in for HRA screening which is Epping Forest SAC. Where the NGIS interventions are likely to result in a significant effect, or where there is uncertainty, in line with the precautionary approach being applied in the HRA, until significant effects can be ruled out, they are treated as giving rise to Likely Significant Effects.
- 4.1.3 SANG interventions are screened out where they would not result in development because they either set out criteria relating to development proposed under other policies are very general in nature or they seek to protect the natural environment.
- 4.1.4 An initial assessment has been undertaken to identify whether the NGIS interventions have the potential to have any Likely Significant Effects on any Habitats sites. The notes in the RIS for Ramsar sites of factors affecting a sites 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.
- 4.1.5 A summary of the assessment is set out in Appendix 1.

### 4.2 Potential Impacts of the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy

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- 4.2.1 The range of potential impacts from the NGIS which can be summarised as -
- Land take of Habitats site by changing land use.
  - Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites (functionally linked land) may be relevant where changing land use or management 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 increased recreational advertisement.
- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for water treatment and changes in groundwater regimes.
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to changed traffic patterns, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial Developments, quarries and waste management facilities
- Changes in noise and light pollution levels and visual disturbance from construction or operation phases of development within the Borough.

4.2.2 A summary of the conclusion of whether the SANG projects at the four SANG sites (Roding Valley, Claybury Park, Hainault Forest Country Park and Fairlop Waters Country Park) were likely to cause a likely significant effect and their potential impact pathways have been outlined below in Table 4. These are in line with the screening matrix which was used to assess the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030. Conclusions take into account the potential effects of other plans and projects. Each policy was considered in the context of the SANG project Screening criteria above. There are no potential significant effects are identified in Table 4 below arising from the draft NGIS of itself.

**Table 4. Assessment of potential impacts**

Nature of potential impact	How the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy (NGIS) (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 changing land use	The NGIS has been prepared to enhance greenspace outside of designated sites; although the Plan area includes a number of Habitats sites, no land take is proposed.	N/A
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The NGIS has been designed to conserve and enhance the natural environment; the Plan will not have a negative impact on the Qualifying species.	N/A
Recreational pressure and disturbance	The NGIS aims to divert and deflect recreational impacts away from Habitats sites and in itself will not result in increased	Given the aim of the NGIS, it is not considered that it will, in itself, give rise to any likely significant adverse effects through increased





Nature of potential impact	How the Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy (NGIS) (alone or in combination with other plans and project) could affect a Habitats site?	Why these effects are / not considered likely to be significant?
	recreation at the individual Habitats sites	recreational pressure on the SAC or therefore its ecological interest. The delivery of the NGIS is addition to the Epping Forest SAMM which mitigates for predicted impacts from residential development in combination with other plans and projects.
Water quantity and quality	The NGIS has been designed to conserve and enhance the natural environment and will not result in adverse impacts on water quality or quantity. design to avoid adverse impacts on Habitats sites within scope of this HRA.	N/A
Adverse air quality	It is considered that there is no pathway for the NGIS to result in air pollution impacts.	N/A
Changes in noise and light pollution levels and visual disturbance	It is considered that there is no pathway for the NGIS to result in pollution impacts or additional visual disturbance of the qualifying features of the Habitats sites within the scope of this HRA.	N/A

### 4.3 Summary of Screening Results

4.3.1 All the NGIS Intervention at the four sites are shown in the HRA Screening Table in Appendix 1 and all are screened out as having no potential for Likely Significant Effects, alone or in combination with other plans and projects. As a result, the London Borough of Redbridge NGIS does not need to proceed to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.



## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1.1 The HRA Screening Report did not identify any impact pathways to scoped in Habitats sites. Therefore, this Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report considers that the London Borough of Redbridge NGIS is not predicted to have any Likely Significant Effects on any Habitats sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
- 5.1.2 The requirement for the draft NGIS to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore **screened out**.



## 6. References

- 1) Argus Ecology (2017) Redbridge Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment
- 2) London Borough of Redbridge (2018) Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030
- 3) Natural England (2014) Conservation objectives for European Sites. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6581547796791296>
- 4) Place Services (2023) Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy London Borough of Redbridge
- 5) Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C. (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (Feb 2019) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited. Available at: <https://www.dtapublications.co.uk/>



## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 1. HRA Screening of SANG Interventions

Location	Will the SANG Interventions have Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on Epping Forest SAC?
Roding Valley	No – The SANG interventions proposed at this site aim to deliver a package of NGIS measures and in itself will not result in any LSE on Epping Forest SAC.
Claybury Park	No – The SANG interventions proposed at this site aim to deliver a package of NGIS measures and in itself will not result in any LSE on Epping Forest SAC.
Fairlop Waters	No – The SANG interventions proposed at this site aim to deliver a package of NGIS measures and in itself will not result in any LSE on Epping Forest SAC.
Hainault Forest Country Park	No – The SANG interventions proposed at this site aim to deliver a package of NGIS measures and in itself will not result in any LSE on Epping Forest SAC.

As no mitigation is necessary to avoid Likely Significant Effects (LSE) from the SANG interventions in this NGIS, then in line with CJEU *People over Wind* court ruling, this does not need to be considered further.



## Appendix 2. Characteristics of Habitats sites

Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
<p><b>Epping Forest</b></p> <p>Epping Forest is a large ancient wood-pasture with habitats of high nature conservation value including ancient semi-natural woodland, old grassland plains, wet and dry heathland and scattered wetland. The semi-natural woodland is particularly extensive but the Forest plains are also a major feature and contain a variety of unimproved acid grasslands.</p> <p>The semi-natural woodlands of Epping Forest include important beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> forests on acid soils, which are important for a range of rare epiphytic species, including the moss <i>Zygodon forsteri</i>. The long history of pollarding, and resultant large number of veteran trees, ensures that the site is also rich in fungi and invertebrates associated with decaying timber. Records of stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i> are widespread and frequent.</p> <p>Areas of acidic grassland transitional with heathland are generally dominated by a mixture of fine-leaved grasses. In marshier areas, purple moor-grass <i>Molinia caerulea</i> frequently becomes dominant. Broad-leaved herbs typical of acidic grassland and heathland are frequent, including heather <i>Calluna vulgaris</i>. The site also contains an example of wet dwarf-shrub heath with both heather and cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i>.</p>				
<p><b><u>Epping Forest SAC</u></b></p> <p>Code: UK0012720</p> <p>Grid Reference: TQ399959</p>	1630.74	<p>Qualifying Features potentially affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H4010. Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath</li> <li>H4030. European dry heaths</li> <li>H9120. Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent and distribution of</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition:</b> Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads for ecosystem protection. Some parts of the site are assessed as in unfavourable condition for reasons linked to air pollution impacts.</li> <li><b>Undergrazing:</b> The quality and diversity of the SAC features requires targeted management best achieved through grazing to: minimise scrub invasion; minimise robust grass domination, and maximise the species diversity of heathland plant communities.</li> <li><b>Public Access/Disturbance:</b> Epping Forest is subject to high recreational pressure. There is a high general level of</li> </ol>



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
		<p>sometimes also <i>Taxus</i> in the shrub layer (<i>Quercion robur-petraeae</i> or <i>Ilici-Fagenion</i>); Beech forests on acid soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S1083. <i>Lucanus cervus</i>; Stag beetle</li> </ul>	<p>qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely</li> <li>• The populations of qualifying species, and,</li> </ul>	<p>footfall in Epping Forest throughout the year, including periods of significant use, and resulting in a diverse range of impacts which include mountain biking and unmanaged fires. Population and visitor numbers are likely to continue to increase.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>4. Changes in species distributions:</b> Beech tree health and recruitment may not be coping sufficiently with environmental conditions to sustain its presence and representation within the SAC feature. This may be linked to climate change as well as other factors such as air quality, recreational pressure and water availability.</li> <li><b>5. Inappropriate water levels:</b> Wet heath is dependent on suitable ground water levels. There is a threat of prolonged drying out through climate change.</li> <li><b>6. Water Pollution:</b> Surface run-off of poor quality water from roads with elevated levels of pollutants, nutrients and salinity may be affecting wet heath, probably mostly around the edges.</li> <li><b>7. Invasive species:</b> Heather beetle has locally impacted on some heathland areas. Vigilance is required to survey it and increase awareness of its likely effects and signs of impact.</li> <li><b>8. Disease:</b> Tree diseases such as <i>Phytophthora</i> present a real threat to Beech.</li> </ol>



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul>	<p><b>9. Invasive species:</b> Grey squirrel is not currently known to be significantly affecting tree health or regeneration, but there is a need to retain vigilance and perhaps consider increased awareness of the likely effects and signs of impact.</p>
<p><b>Lee Valley</b> The Lee Valley comprises a series of embanked water supply reservoirs, sewage treatment lagoons and former gravel pits along approximately 24km of the valley. These waterbodies support internationally important numbers of wintering Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> and Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> and nationally important numbers of several other bird species.</p> <p>The site also contains a range of wetland and valley bottom habitats, both man-made and semi-natural, which support a diverse range of wetland fauna and flora.</p>				
<p><u>Lee Valley</u> SPACode: UK9012111</p> <p>Grid Reference: TQ352886</p>	451.29	<p>Qualifying Features potentially affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A021 <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>; Great bittern (Non-breeding)</li> <li>A051 <i>Anas strepera</i>; Gadwall (Non-breeding)</li> <li>A056 <i>Anas clypeata</i>; Northern shoveler (Non-breeding)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent and distribution of qualifying natural</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Water Pollution:</b> The vegetation and invertebrates provide food for the ducks, while fish provide food for the bitterns; and the habitat mosaic needs to vary from clear open water with abundant aquatic vegetation to moderately eutrophic conditions. Changes in water quality need to be managed to prevent loss of suitable habitat and food sources.</li> <li><b>Hydrological changes:</b> Reservoir levels linked to operational requirements and all water bodies subject to natural fluctuations accounting for abstraction and climatic change.</li> <li><b>Public Access/Disturbance:</b> Areas of the SPA are subject to a range of recreational pressures including watersports,</li> </ol>



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			<p>habitats and habitats of qualifying species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely</li> <li>• The populations of qualifying species, and,</li> </ul>	<p>angling and dog walking. This has the potential to affect SPA populations directly or indirectly.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <b>Inappropriate scrub control:</b> The reedbed habitats, muddy fringes, and bankside all provide habitat as part of the mosaic for the SPA birds. Scrub control is necessary to ensure these habitats are maintained.</li> <li>5. <b>Fisheries: Fish stocking:</b> Fish population and species composition needs to be appropriate to ensure suitable habitats including food resource and water quality are maintained for SPA bird species.</li> <li>6. <b>Invasive species:</b> <i>Azolla</i> and/or invasive aquatic blanket weeds will adversely affect aquatic habitat (food sources)</li> <li>7. <b>Inappropriate cutting/mowing:</b> The reedbed requires rotational management for bittern. This is dependent upon funding availability.</li> <li>8. <b>Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition:</b> Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads.</li> </ol>





Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>Lee Valley Ramsar site</u></b></p> <p>RIS Code: UK151</p> <p>Grid reference: TQ352886</p>	451.29	<p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation)</p> <p><b>Ramsar criterion 2</b> The site supports the nationally scarce plant species whorled watermilfoil <i>Myriophyllum verticillatum</i> and the rare or vulnerable invertebrate <i>Micronecta minurissima</i> (a waterboatman).</p> <p><b>Ramsar criterion 6</b> Over winter the site regularly supports internally important populations of Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> and Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i></p>	N/A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Vegetation succession</b></li> <li><b>Water diversion for irrigation/domestic/industrial use</b></li> <li><b>Eutrophication</b></li> <li><b>Persistent Drought</b></li> <li><b>Introduction / Invasion of exotic plant species</b></li> <li><b>Recreational/tourism disturbance (unspecified)</b></li> <li><b>General disturbance from human activities</b></li> <li><b>Unspecified development: urban use</b></li> </ol>



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
<p><b>Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods</b>            Wormley Hoddesdonpark Woods has large stands of almost pure hornbeam <i>Carpinus betulus</i> (former coppice), with sessile oak <i>Quercus petraea</i> standards. Areas dominated by bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> do occur, but elsewhere there are stands of great wood-rush <i>Luzula sylvatica</i> with carpets of the mosses <i>Dicranum majus</i> and <i>Leucobryum glaucum</i>. Locally, a bryophyte community more typical of continental Europe occurs, including the mosses <i>Dicranum montanum</i>, <i>D. flagellare</i> and <i>D. tauricum</i>.</p>				

**Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods**

Wormley Hoddesdonpark Woods has large stands of almost pure hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* (former coppice), with sessile oak *Quercus petraea* standards. Areas dominated by bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* do occur, but elsewhere there are stands of great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* with carpets of the mosses *Dicranum majus* and *Leucobryum glaucum*. Locally, a bryophyte community more typical of continental Europe occurs, including the mosses *Dicranum montanum*, *D. flagellare* and *D. tauricum*.



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
<p><u>Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods SAC</u> Code: UK0013696</p> <p>Grid reference: TL320059</p>	336.47	<p>Qualifying Features potentially affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H9160. Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli, Oakhornbeam forests</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats</li> <li>The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and</li> <li>The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Disease:</b> Acute Oak Decline (AOD) is present in at least two parts of the site and affects both native oak species, which are key components of this woodland type. Oaks can be killed by AOD within 5 years of symptoms appearing. Research is underway on the causal agents and spread of the disease. Based on current knowledge AOD has the potential in the long-term to cause high oak mortality right across the site.</li> <li><b>Invasive species:</b> Several tree and shrub species not native to the site are present. Where they are not being actively controlled, they are gradually spreading. The more invasive of these include sycamore, turkey oak, rhododendron and snowberry.</li> <li><b>Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition:</b> Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site. This requires further investigation.</li> <li><b>Deer:</b> Browsing and grazing by deer can reduce tree regeneration (from seedlings or coppice stools) and damage the woodland understorey and ground flora. At this site, deer damage levels are currently only moderate and do not appear to be affecting tree regeneration, habitat structure or species composition greatly. However, subtle damaging effects can</li> </ol>



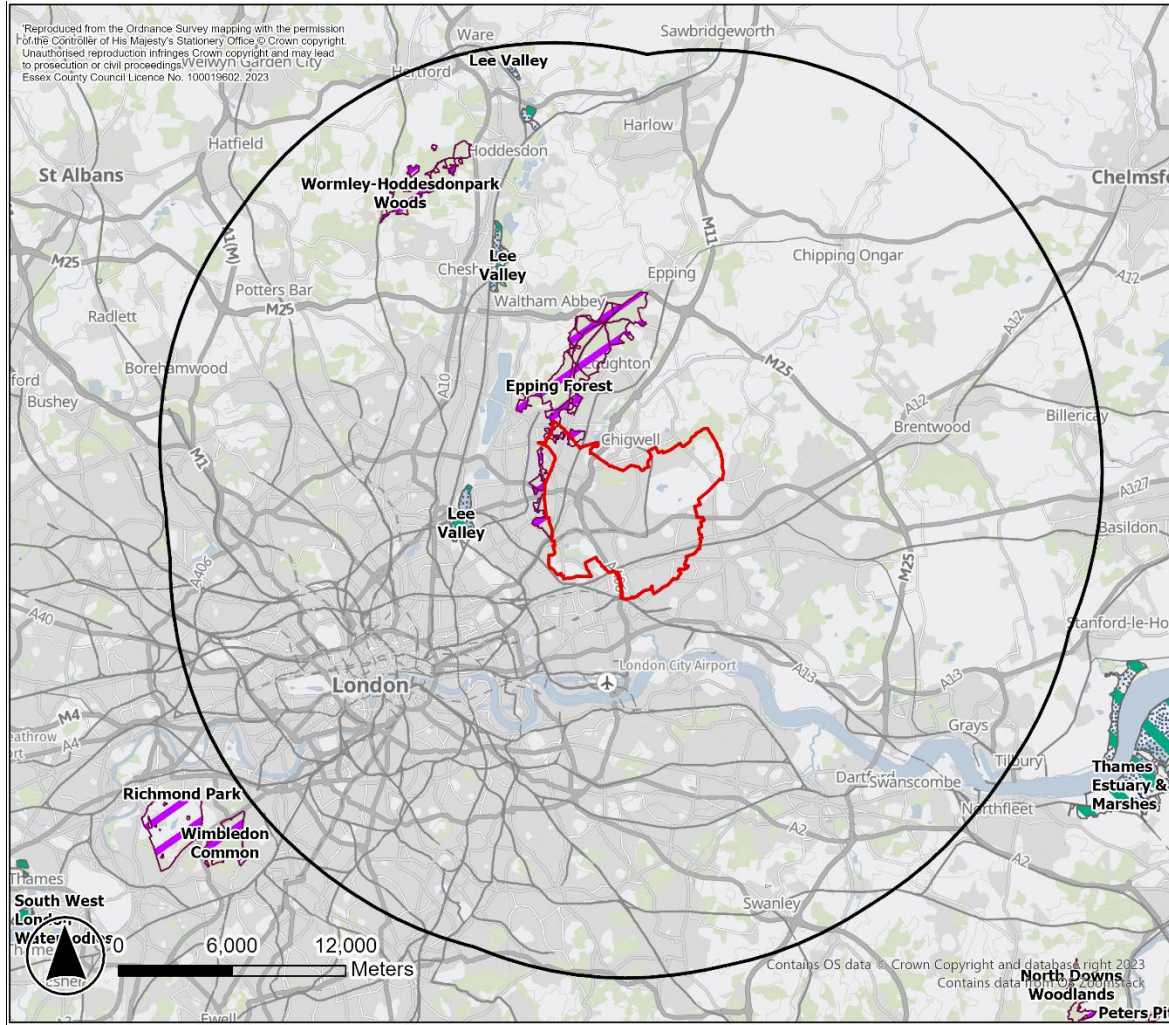
Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				<p>be difficult to identify and monitor, and deer populations can increase rapidly.</p> <p>5. <b>Vehicles: illicit:</b> Illegal use of restricted byways and bridleways by off-road vehicles causes localised but sometimes severe rutting and soil compaction, damaging the woodland ground flora, shrubs and trees. Fly-tipping damages the ground flora directly and can introduce toxins and alien species.</p> <p>6. <b>Forestry and woodland management:</b> <i>The larger woodland units with public access are under appropriate management but some of the smaller, privately-owned units are not. Though it is quite acceptable for a significant proportion of the site to be left as 'minimum intervention' high forest, in some circumstances a lack of active management can lead to adverse effects. These include a reduction in structural and species diversity (particularly in previously coppiced areas), the loss of temporary and permanent open space, the over-shading and deterioration of veteran pollards, and the spread of invasive species.</i></p> <p>7. <b>Public Access/Disturbance:</b> The site is a large, attractive area of ancient woodland with extensive public access and close to large urban centres, so it is heavily used by the public for recreational purposes. Sensitive management of access points and routes by the site's main owners has been largely successful in mitigating the potential adverse effects of this high level of use. However, visitor numbers continue to</p>



Site name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Conservation objectives (only available for SACs & SPAs)	Key vulnerabilities / factors affecting site integrity
				<p>increase, the types of use can change unpredictably and less obvious adverse effects on important flora and fauna could be missed during routine, 'general purpose' monitoring.</p>



### **Appendix 3. Habitats Sites within 20km of the London Borough of Redbridge**



- Legend**
- London Borough of Redbridge Boundary
  - 20km Buffer
  - Ramsar
  - Special Protection Areas
  - Special Areas of Conservation

Client:  
London Borough of Redbridge

Job:  
Natural Greenspace Improvement Strategy  
Habitats Regulations Assessment

Drawing Title:  
Habitats Sites within 20km



Date: 21/12/23 | Author Name: JA

Rev. 1.0

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Woodlands  
Peters,Pit



## Place Services

Essex County Council

County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1QH

T: +44 (0)333 013 6840

E: [enquiries@placeservices.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@placeservices.co.uk)

[www.placeservices.co.uk](http://www.placeservices.co.uk)

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