

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)
Screening Matrix and Appropriate Assessment Statement

PLEASE NOTE: Undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of the decision maker as the Competent Authority for the purpose of the Habitats Regulations, however, it is the responsibility of the Qualifying Body to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose.

Stage 1 Details of the plan or project	
Neighbourhood Plan:	Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2014 - 2029
No houses indicated by Chichester Local Plan for Neighbourhood Plan Area:	10
No houses proposed by the Neighbourhood Plan:	<p>11 – Policy H1 - Land opposite the Green, Plaistow</p> <p>In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan allocates a small currently redundant light industrial site for mixed use, light industrial and residential (Ref EE4 - Little Springfield Farm). The precise mix of uses and quantum of floor space is not yet determined. The site is about 0.5ha in size and adjoins areas of woodland.</p>
Will the Neighbourhood Plan result in a net increase in residential development?	<p>Yes - Due to the combination of the allocation of site H1, windfall development within the village of Ifold and the allocation of EE4 - Little Springfield Farm.</p> <p><i>Note: This level of development is over and above that identified in the Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014-2029 (adopted July 2015) and the subsequent Site Allocations DPD (adopted January 2019) and tested by the evidence base underpinning those documents.</i></p>
Other than residential development, what other key policy areas does the plan cover?	<p>The aim of the plan is to protect the sense of community, the safety and rural tranquillity of the Parish. They propose that the four main village / hamlets will grow naturally; sympathetically blending new with old; respecting the character, natural boundaries and vistas. The plan recognises the importance of the Parish in contributing to the setting of the South Downs National Park.</p> <p>The plan, like the Chichester Local Plan, allows for development within the settlement boundary of Ifold subject to a number of caveats, specifically a need to prevent the loss of valuable trees, hedges or other natural features that form part of the character of the Ifold settlement.</p> <p>Support is also given to local employment uses including live/work units, and proposals for small-scale business development through the use of redundant agricultural buildings and other facilities.</p>
Status of Neighbourhood Plan:	Submission

<p>European site potentially impacted - Is the plan area within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.6km radius of a Chichester Harbour SPA • 3.5km of Pagham Harbour SPA • 6.5km or 12km of Ebernoe Common SAC / The Mens SAC / Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC • 400m or 5km of Wealden Heaths Phase 2 SPA 	<p>Yes – the plan area is within 6.5km of Ebernoe Common and 6.5km of The Mens.</p>
<p>Are any allocations within any of the above zones of influence?</p>	<p>Yes, Land opposite The Green, Plaistow (Ref H1) and the mixed use site at Little Springfield Farm, Ifold (Ref EE4) are within 6.5km of Ebernoe Common and 6.5km of The Mens.</p>
<p>Are there any other projects or plans that together with the plan / application being assessed could affect the Parish?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chichester Local Plan: Key policies 2014 – 2029 establishes the main planning policies covering the District including policies on housing growth, the economy, biodiversity protection and landscape quality. • Chichester Site Allocations DPD (adopted 22 January 2019) includes an allocation of a greenfield site at Little Springfield Farm in Ifold for 10 homes (Ref PL1) <i>Please note, this is different to the site allocated for mixed-use development (Ref EE4) in the Neighbourhood Plan.</i> • South Downs National Park Local Plan (now at Examination - in particular Core Policy SD 10: International Sites). The National Park designation covers part of the Parish. • Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol (currently in draft)
<p>Lead Planning Officer: Valerie Dobson (Principal Planning Officer)</p>	

Stage 2 HRA screening assessment

Test 1: the significance test – The Qualifying Body to provide evidence so that a judgement can be made as to whether there could be any potential significant impacts of the development on the integrity of the SPA/SAC/Ramsar.

The proposed allocation within the Neighbourhood Plan is within the 6.5km zone of influence of both Ebernoe Common and The Mens. In combination with the allocation in the Chichester Site Allocations DPD this will result in the development of at least 21 homes. In accordance with advice from Natural England and as detailed in the emerging 'Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol', development could result in the direct loss of habitats and commuting / foraging paths, lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration. Therefore development proposals on greenfield sites and sites that support, or are in close proximity to, suitable commuting and foraging habitat (including mature vegetative linear features such as woodlands, hedgerows riverine and wetland habitats) within the identified 6.5km and 12km ranges, should have due regard to the possibility that Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats will be

utilising the site. Within the 6.5km zone all impacts on bats must be considered given that these habitats are considered critical for sustaining the populations of bats. Within the wider 12km zone significant impacts or severance to flightlines are to be considered.

The Neighbourhood Plan gives support to a number of development types including new housing, local employment uses, residential windfall sites and a small mixed use allocation, the impact of which cannot be screened out at this stage. The site at Little Springfield Farm (Ref EE4) is currently vacant so any new use will increase levels of activity which, when combined with the residential allocation in the Chichester Site Allocations DPD (Ref PL1) just to the north and the allocation of Land opposite the Green, Plaistow (Ref H1), could potentially be significant.

Stage 2 Conclusion

Would the proposal lead to likely significant effects on the integrity of a European Site? **Yes** – the proposals could lead to likely significant effects in combination with other plans and likely development proposals within the zones of influence of both Ebernoe Common and The Mens.

(If yes, continue to Stage 3)

Stage 3 HRA Appropriate Assessment

Test 2: the integrity test – If there are any potential significant impacts, the competent authority must be satisfied that adequate mitigation is in place. Other than for Bird Aware Solent and the Joint Pagham Scheme of Mitigation, the competent authority must also be satisfied that all details which demonstrate any long term management, maintenance and funding of any solution have been provided.

The reasons for the designation of the Ebernoe Common SAC are as follows:

Ebernoe Common is an internationally important example of ancient woodland. It qualifies as an SAC for both habitats and species. It contains a wide range of structural and vegetation community types which have been influenced in their development by differences in the underlying soils and past management. The native trees, particularly those with old growth characteristics, support rich lichen and fungal communities and a diverse woodland breeding bird assemblage. Nationally important maternity roosts for Barbastelle and Bechstein's bat occur within the woodland.

The designated features are:

H9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex

S1308 Barbastelle bat, *Barbastella barbastellus*

S1323 Bechstein's bat, *Myotis bechsteini*

The site conservation objectives are:

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;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

The potential significant effects are:

- Direct loss of commuting / foraging paths
- Lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration.

In themselves these may be minor but in combination with other plans and proposed developments within 12km of the SAC this may result in significant effects.

The reasons for the designation of The Mens SAC are as follows:

The Mens is an extensive area of mature beech woodland. It qualifies as an SAC for both habitats and species. It is important for its size, structural diversity and the extremely rich fungal and lichen floras which occur here. It is developing a near-natural high forest structure, in response to only limited silvicultural intervention over the 20th century, combined with the effects of natural events such as the 1987 great storm. The site also supports an important population of barbastelle bat.

The qualifying features are:

H9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex
S1308 Barbastelle bat, *Barbastella barbastellus*

The site conservation objectives are:

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;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

The potential significant effects are:

- Direct loss of commuting / foraging paths
- Lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration.

In themselves these may be minor but in combination with other plans and proposed developments within 12km of the SAC this may result in significant effects.

Relevant Mitigation Measures:

The Barbastelle bat main flightlines from both Ebernoe Common Sac and the Mens SAC were surveyed and mapped in 2008 (see 'BARBASTELLE BATS IN THE SUSSEX WEST WEALD 1997 – 2008' by Frank Greenaway, report to The West Weald Landscape Project, November 2008) The flightlines at that date did not extend to either Plaistow or Ifold. The likelihood of the site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan causing significant disruption is therefore small but cannot be discounted completely due to changes in use over time since 2008 or from occasional use by the qualifying species. Therefore the Plan incorporates precautionary mitigation measures.

The Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Plan Policy EH3: Protection of trees, woodlands and natural vegetation resists development that damages or results in the loss of trees / hedgerows unless the

need for development clearly outweighs the loss. In these cases replacement planting that supports biodiversity will be required. Policy EH2: Protection of the natural environment requires that development does not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as hedgerows and historic shaws. Policy EE4: Little Springfield Farm (Brownfield Site) requires that there is no harmful impact on the adjoining ancient woodland and the housing allocation, Policy H1: Land opposite The Green, requires development to retain existing mature trees and hedges, include suitable native-species landscaping.

In support of the allocation of the nearby adopted site Policy PL1 – Little Springfield Farm, Ifold in the Chichester Site Allocations DPD, an Appropriate Assessment has already been done of the likely significant effects of that proposal. Wording has been added to Policy PL1 requiring any application to take account of any adverse effect on foraging and commuting bat species associated with Ebernoe Common SAC and The Mens SAC.

The South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan (submission version, with adoption due Summer 2019) Policy SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Policy SD11: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows support developments within the National Park that retain, protect and enhance biodiversity features such as commuting routes through sites. The loss or damage of non-protected trees, woodland or hedgerows should be avoided but if it is unavoidable appropriate replacement or compensation will be required. Policy SD10: International Sites requires development proposals within identified conservation areas and on greenfield sites or sites with or in close proximity to suitable commuting and foraging habitat, to have due regard to the possibility that Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats will be utilising the site. Such proposals are required to incorporate necessary surveys, retain key features (foraging habitat and commuting routes) and provide a suitable buffer to safeguard against disturbance.

Stage 4 Appropriate Assessment to be carried out by the Competent Authority (the local planning authority) in liaison with Natural England

Conclusion

The Plaistow & Ifold Neighbourhood Plan may have a likely significant effect in combination with other proposals on the Ebernoe Common SAC and The Mens SAC. This is in relation to the potential impact upon Barbastelle and Bechstein's Bat flightlines due to the relatively close proximity to two SACs.

The site at Springfield Farm contains currently vacant premises which may provide roosting space, it is connected to Waphurst Wood to the south and there is a small waterbody situated nearby. Land opposite the Green in Plaistow is bordered by mature hedgerows and Beggars Copse / Long Copse are close by and likely to provide suitable habitat for bats.

The preservation of features of relevance to commuting bats (along with a suitable buffer) should be possible without significant deliverability implications for the proposals, but bat surveys should be conducted on all relevant sites to determine the precise requirements.

In relation to the impact from lighting, development proposals should demonstrate that all opportunities to minimise or remove the need for lighting are taken. This includes external lighting but also the spill from internal lighting for example through roof lights and conservatories.

To safeguard against noise and vibration during construction relevant applications should be accompanied by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which details the measures to be taken to minimise environmental impact from the construction phase of the development.

With the inclusion of the mitigation measures set out above in the Neighbourhood Plan, Chichester District Council concludes that the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan **will not lead to any significant or adverse effects on the integrity of the Ebernoe Common SAC and The**

Mens SAC.

Having made this assessment and consulted with Natural England and fully considered any representation received (see below), the authority may agree to the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Natural England Officer Comments:

Natural England agrees with the conclusions of the HRA, i.e. that the mitigation measures outlined are sufficient to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the Ebernoe Common and The Mens SACs.

Alison Giacomelli
23 April 2019

Does the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan require amending as a result of the Appropriate Assessment and / or Natural England's comments?

Yes

If 'YES', what needs to change?

Policy EH2 – Protection of Natural Environment should include reference to the need for a Construction Environmental Management Plan

Policy EH3 – Protection of trees, woodlands and natural vegetation should include reference to the relevance of trees and hedgerows for flightlines and foraging paths for bats as well as a need to secure an appropriate buffer from development.

Policy EH5 – Lighting Emissions should include reference to the need to reduce lighting for the benefit of important local bat communities.

Policy EH5 – Lighting Emissions should include requirements to minimise light spill from internal lighting.