

Consultation Draft Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

Habitats Regulations Assessment – Screening Report

June 2019

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, a proposed plan or project can only be adopted or permitted if it can be determined that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of a European site (Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or Ramsar site) with the exception of certain circumstances.
- 1.2 This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report has been undertaken by Mid Sussex District Council in respect of the Consultation Draft Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Mid Sussex Design Guide aims to deliver high quality new development across Mid Sussex that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable.
- 1.3 The aim of this HRA screening report is to assess whether there would be any likely significant effects on European sites from this Consultation Draft Mid Sussex Design Guide.

2.0 Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC

- 2.1 Ashdown Forest lies within Wealden District, and is adjacent to the north-east boundary of Mid Sussex. Parts of Ashdown Forest are classified as Special Protection Area (SPA) and designated as Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Ashdown Forest is also notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 2.2 Ashdown Forest is classified as a SPA because of the presence of breeding populations of Dartford warbler and European nightjar, and is a designated SAC with qualifying habitats of Northern Atlantic wet heaths and European dry heaths as well as Great crested newts. Appendix A provides a map showing the location of Ashdown Forest in relation to Mid Sussex District.
- 2.3 The protected birds on the Ashdown Forest SPA are vulnerable from increased recreational activity arising from new residential development and related population growth. As considered through the District Plan HRA, mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of potential increasing recreational pressure. The proposed approach as set out in the District Plan Policy DP17 recommends a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) approach. Mid Sussex District Council has a strategic SANG at East Court & Ashplats Wood, East Grinstead. An Interim SAMM Strategy is currently being implemented and a Joint SAMM Strategy prepared with the other affected local authorities is being finalised¹.

¹ <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/protecting-ashdown-forest/>

- 2.4 The Ashdown Forest SAC qualifying features are vulnerable to atmospheric pollution from a number of sources including motor vehicles. There is a potential impact pathway from new development and associated increases in traffic flows on the roads such as the A275, A22, A26 and B2110, which traverse or run adjacent to the Ashdown Forest SAC. The emissions from these vehicles may cause a harmful increase in atmospheric pollutants which are then deposited on the habitats on Ashdown Forest. The main pollutant effects of interest are acid deposition and eutrophication by nitrogen deposition. The critical load for nitrogen deposition and acid (nitrogen (N) or sulphur (S)) deposition is already exceeded in parts of Ashdown Forest.
- 2.5 The District Plan HRA² concluded that adverse effects from atmospheric pollution are not considered likely for the Ashdown Forest SAC. Recreational disturbance impacts were assessed as potentially affecting the Ashdown Forest SPA, however, the impacts were considered to be adequately avoided and mitigated by the District Plan policy response.

3.0 Screening Assessment

- 3.1 From review of the Consultation Draft Mid Sussex Design Guide, it is considered that it is not directly connected with, or necessary to the nature conservation management of Ashdown Forest.
- 3.2 The potential impact on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC arises from increased development. The Mid Sussex Design Guide does not propose new development, rather it provides more detail to policies within the District Plan. As such, it is considered that the District Plan HRA provides the background and assessment for this screening report of the Consultation Draft Mid Sussex Design Guide.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Since the Consultation Draft Mid Sussex Design Guide does not propose new development, it is not considered that it will have a likely significant effect on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, and so an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

² <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/mid-sussex-district-plan/habitats-regulations-assessment-for-the-district-plan/>

Appendix A: Map of Mid Sussex District and the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC

