

LONG STRATTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) SCREENING REPORT 2019

Introduction

This Screening Assessment has been undertaken in order to support the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Development Plan which is being produced by Long Stratton Parish Council and Tharston and Hapton Parish Council and in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Neighbourhood Plan covers the same geographical area as the Long Stratton Area Action Plan which was adopted by South Norfolk Council in 2016.

The aim of this screening is to assess whether there will be any likely significant impacts on designated European sites either within or in relative proximity to the designated neighbourhood area of the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e. the civil parish of Long Stratton and part of Tharston and Hapton Parish).

Legislative Basis

Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive states that:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

The purpose of the Habitat Regulations Assessment is therefore to ensure the protection of European (Natura 2000) sites. These sites are designed to form an ecologically coherent network of designated sites across the whole of Europe. Referred to as 'European Designated Sites', Natura 2000 sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas for Conservation (SAC). As a matter of policy, the government also expect authorities to treat Ramsar sites, candidate SAC (cSAC) and proposed SPAs (pSPA) as if they are European sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.

As regards Neighbourhood Development Plans, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) states 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 (of which HRA is one).

Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (CHSR) puts into effect the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and requires that:

(1) Where a land use plan –

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

the plan-making authority must before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

Regulation 106 of the CHSR requires that:

A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment under regulation 102 or to enable them to determine whether that assessment is required.

As the 'competent authority' for these purposes, South Norfolk District Council has produced this screening report to determine whether a full Habitats Regulations Assessment is required.

Screening Assessment

The first step of the screening process involves the identification of European Sites that are considered to be within close proximity of the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan area. Conservation objectives for sites that may be affected by development in South Norfolk were identified in the October 2013 document: 'Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document, Wymondham Area Action Plan, Long Stratton Area Action Plan and Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan, undertaken for South Norfolk Council'.

The 2013 HRA subjected nine international sites to tests of likely significance relating to potential impacts from recreational pressure from the scale of planned development. The Stage 1 test concluded that significant effects on these sites were unlikely and no further steps were undertaken in the HRA process. This was subsequently agreed by Natural England.

One site was identified in the 2013 HRA as potentially being impacted by development in Long Stratton. It was concluded that this site was sufficient distance from Long Stratton not to be impacted by new development.

Breckland International Site

The assessment noted that access to this site would be indirect and in excess of 20km at the nearest unit (Breckland Forest SSSI/SAC at Bridgham) meaning that it is unlikely that visitors would visit this site. Furthermore, as there are no visitor facilities and the public are excluded during the stone curlew breeding season visitor impact from the Long Stratton area would be further reduced.

The 2013 report concluded that *“it is considered that it is unlikely that site integrity will be affected by development in Long Stratton as described in the draft Long Stratton AAP”*.

It is therefore considered reasonable to reach the same conclusion in the current neighbourhood plan HRA Screening and determine that there are no specific European sites in close proximity to Long Stratton that would be subject to impact from development arising as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

The Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate any additional sites for future development. All of the policies within the Plan are intended to ‘neighbourhood-wide’ development management policies. The proposed policies are focused on shaping and influencing development when planning applications are brought forward, with a specific focus on creating a well-designed, vibrant and sustainable community.

The table below summarises each of the policies within the proposed Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan to assess whether there would be any significant impact arising from these policies.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy		Comments
A Strong Community – Housing Policies		
LSNP SC1	Housing Mix	This policy requires all proposals to include a mix of homes to meet the needs of Long Stratton’s residents.
LSNP SC2	Homes for the older generation	This policy highlights the important opportunity for delivering additional specialist housing for the older generation in Long Stratton as well as specialist and supported housing for people with disabilities.
LSNP SC3	Affordable homes meeting Long Stratton needs	This policy requires that a proportion of affordable homes being delivered as part of market sites will be prioritised for those residents with an existing close connection to Long Stratton.
A Strong Community – Successful integration between the new community and existing community		
LSNP SC4	Pedestrian and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods	This policy requires all new schemes to be designed so as to facilitate easy and convenient access and movement for pedestrians and cyclists.
LSNP SC5	Maintaining good connectivity with outlying areas	This policy requires the continuation of good connectivity between Long Stratton and outlying hamlets.
LSNP – SC6	Location of new Community Facilities	A policy supporting the principle of new community facilities and requiring that all such provision should be located where it can easily be accessed by the communities they are intended to serve.
Design and Character Policies		
LSNP-DC7	Landscape and Settlement Character	A policy which requires all new development to be sympathetic to Long Stratton’s landscape and built heritage character.
LSNP – DC8	Creating successful neighbourhoods	Requires all residential development schemes to contribute positively to the quality of Long Stratton as a place.
LSNP – DC9	Strengthening and enhancing Long Stratton’s historic core	This policy requires new schemes coming forward in or in the vicinity of the Long Stratton Conservation Area to conserve or reinforce the specific qualities of the existing historic environment.
LSNP – DC10	Long Stratton Design Principles	This policy requires all proposed development to be design led and to follow the principles set out in the proposed Design Guidelines document.

Employment Policies		
LSNP E11	New Employment Uses in Tharston	This policy supports new employment uses at Tharston Industrial Estate subject to traffic impacts being assessed as acceptable and not adversely impacting pedestrian safety or amenity issues on the Flowerpot Lane/A140 junction.
LSNP E12	Training Long Stratton's work force	An aspirational policy encouraging planning proposals which facilitate the delivery of skills training or apprenticeship schemes to local people.
LSNP VC13	Re-establishing The Street at the heart of the town	This policy seeks contributions towards the delivery of town centre environmental enhancements from development proposals coming forward as part of the strategic site allocation set out in Policy LNGS 1 in the Area Action Plan.
LSNP VC14	Long Stratton Market Place	This is an aspirational policy which supports the creation of a new market place in Long Stratton town centre.
LSNP VC15	The Fire Station and Telephone Exchange	This policy establishes some principle to be adhered to in the event that the Fire Station and Telephone Exchange site comes forward for development during the period 2019 to 2036.
Outdoor Recreation, Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity		
LSNPa GI16	Long Stratton Recreational Open Space standards	This policy requires provision to be made towards open space improvements as needed when new development proposals come forward.
LSNP GI17	Delivering Green Infrastructure in Long Stratton	This policy identifies six priorities that should be adhered to when new green infrastructure is being provided in the plan.
LSNP GI18	Green Infrastructure Management	This policy establishes principles for the management of new green infrastructure provision
LSNP GI19	Protecting existing sites of Biodiversity Value	This policy identifies and protects the following sites as assets to biodiversity in the plan area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Tyrells Wood County Wildlife Site ii. Wood Green County Wildlife Site iii. Wet Meadow on Swan Lane iv. Area of grassland with pond and hedges behind the allotments
Indoor Community Infrastructure		
LSNP R20	Delivering a new Community Meeting Space in Long Stratton	This policy supports the provision of a new community meeting space in the vicinity of the town centre.

LSNP R21	A new swimming pool for a larger community	This is an aspirational policy which encourages proposals which would deliver a new public swimming pool in the plan area.
Superfast Broadband		
LSNP C22	Fibre to the premises	<p>A policy which establishes that all development coming forward as part of the strategic site allocation for 1,800 homes (as set out in Policy LNGS1 of the Area Action Plan) will be provided with superfast broadband via the provision of fibre infrastructure (as opposed to copper infrastructure) and Fibre to the Premises technology.</p> <p>All other proposals will benefit from this investment in infrastructure and will be required to facilitate provision of Fibre to the Cabinet on new build development.</p>

Conclusion

Due to the distance of the neighbourhood plan area from any specific European Designated Sites it is concluded that development resulting from the Long Stratton Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to an impact on these sensitive receptors and therefore a full Appropriate Assessment is not required.