

APPENDIX 3: REVISED SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT CONSULTATION ON CHANGES PROPOSED (November 2013)

1. Introduction

1.1 New development plans must be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal, which assesses the likely environmental, social and economic effects of the plan. This is done by appraising the plan against a number of sustainability objectives. A Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report sets the framework for sustainability appraisal, by containing all of the information needed to carry out the assessment. It therefore includes the sustainability objectives against which the appraisal will be made, baseline factual information relating to areas of sustainability, other plans and strategies that need to be taken into account, and major sustainability issues in the area.

1.2 The most recent Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for Reading was published in October 2008, and was successfully used in the production of development plan documents, in particular the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. However, it is now five years old, and needs review to consider whether it is still fit for purpose.

1.3 Sustainability Appraisal is a multi-stage process, most of which is undertaken in separate appraisals of individual plans. The Scoping Report covers Stage A (as defined in national guidance), comprising five tasks, as follows:

STAGE A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

A1 - Identifying other relevant plans, programmes, and sustainability objectives.

A2 - Collecting baseline information

A3 - Identifying sustainability issues and problems

A4 - Developing the SA Framework

A5 - Consulting on the scope of the SA.

1.4 At this stage, it is not proposed to consult on a full version of the Scoping Report, much of which will be comprised of factual information to use as a baseline for appraisal. Instead, this brief paper highlights key changes that are proposed and asks for responses on those changes.

1.5 In summary, the main changes proposed are:

- Identification of an updated set of relevant plans and proposals (Task A1)
- Revision of the sustainability objectives (Task A4)
- Incorporation of Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening into the SA process (Task A4)
- Incorporation of Equalities Impact Assessment Screening into the SA process (Task A4)

1.6 These changes are proposed to be made to the most recent Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (October 2008), which is available to view on the Council's website:

http://www.reading.gov.uk/documents/servingyou/planning/local_development_framework/20267/Revised-SA-Scoping-Report-1008.pdf

2 A1: Identifying Other Relevant Plans, Programmes and Sustainability Objectives

2.1 Identifying other plans, programmes and objectives is an important stage as it allows an appraisal to have a complete picture of what is proposed that might influence the assessment. The list published in 2008 is clearly in need of updating, as much has changed in five years. A revised list of plans and programmes is included in Annex 1.

3 A2: Collecting Baseline Information

3.1 A substantial amount of baseline information is included within the 2008 version of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Updated information is not included within this paper, but it will be required in the final version of the revised Scoping Report. Any comments suggesting changes to the baseline information reported in the 2008 report are welcomed.

4 A3: Identifying Sustainability Issues and Problems

4.1 The vast majority of the Sustainability Issues identified within the 2008 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report are still current. It is not therefore proposed that substantial change be made to this section. However, comments on whether these sustainability issues are still relevant are welcomed.

5 A4: Developing the Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability Objectives

5.1 The 2008 Report contained 18 sustainability objectives, covering environmental, social and economic matters, against which plans and policies are appraised. It is proposed to make a number of changes to these objectives, and the proposed revised list of 20 objectives is set out below. The reasons for the changes proposed are detailed in Annex 2, but in summary there are three main reasons:

- To address issues which were either not covered particularly well in the previous list, or which have emerged strongly since, for instance in national policy;
- As they have proven difficult to apply in practice, or not particularly useful, in the last five years of undertaking sustainability appraisals;
- To cover other related statutory assessment processes (see below).

Table 1: Proposed Revised Sustainability Objectives (2013)

Living within Environmental Limits (Environmental Objectives)	
1	To limit the impact of climate change through minimising CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gases.
2	Adapt to inevitable climate change in terms of preparedness for extreme weather events, including managing the risk of flooding, heat wave and storm damage.
3	Ensure appropriate, efficient, reliable and careful use and supply of energy, water, minerals, food and other natural resources.
4	Minimise the consumption of, and reduce damage to, undeveloped land.
5	Minimise the generation of waste and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management.
6	Minimise air, water, soil/ ground and noise pollution, and improve existing areas of contaminated land and poor air quality.
7	Value, protect and enhance the amount and diversity of wildlife, habitat and geology, and other

	contributors to natural diversity, including establishing/enhancing ecological networks.
8	Avoid significant effects on internationally-designated wildlife sites.
9	Create, enhance and maintain attractive and clean environments including protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing important landscapes and townscape.
10	Value, protect and, where appropriate, enhance heritage assets and the contribution that they make to society and the environment.
Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society (Social & Economic Objectives)	
10	Protect, promote and improve human health, safety and well-being including through healthy lifestyles.
11	Promote strong and vibrant communities through reduction in crime and the fear of crime and enhanced community cohesion.
12	Ensure high quality housing of a type and cost appropriate to the needs of the area.
13	Reduce the need for travel and transport particularly by car or lorry and facilitate sustainable travel choices.
	Ensure good physical access for all to essential services and facilities, including healthcare.
14	Avoid significant negative effects on groups or individuals with regard to race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
15	Ensure accessible opportunities for all to engage in culture, leisure, and physical and recreational activity, particularly in areas of open space and waterspace.
16	Facilitate sustainable economic growth and regeneration that provides employment opportunities for all and supports a successful, competitive, and balanced local economy that meets the needs of the area.
17	Reduce deprivation and inequality within and between communities.
18	Maximise access for all to the necessary education, skills and knowledge to play a full role in society and support the sustainable growth of the local economy.

Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulations)

- 5.2 The Council is required to undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of development plans under the European Community (EC) Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) (*commonly known as the Habitats Directive*) and Conservation (Natural Habitats &) Regulations 1994, commonly known as the *Habitats Regulations*. This assesses the likely effects on European designated wildlife sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) in terms of those sites' conservation objectives.
- 5.3 Screening level appropriate assessments have been produced for the Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document as separate documents, distinct from the sustainability appraisal process. However, it would make sense for these processes to be combined, as impact on significant biodiversity assets is part of the sustainability appraisal. This will save on resources and will avoid duplication of effort.
- 5.4 To do this, a sustainability objective relating purely to SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites is required in addition to more general biodiversity effects, in order that the specific requirements of legislation can be highlighted at this stage. This is included in the list of objectives in Table 1.
- 5.5 It will also mean including a certain amount of baseline information on European designated wildlife sites within the Scoping Report. This will include the following four steps of the Screening methodology used in previous assessments:
- Stage 1: Identify the sites to be assessed

- Stage 2: Identify relevant characteristics of the sites likely to be affected
 - Stage 3: Identify potential hazards
 - Stage 4: Identify other plans and strategies that may give rise to cumulative effects.
- 5.6 Stages 5 (determine potential significant effects), 6 (assess need for additional Appropriate Assessment stages) and 7 (consultation) will need to be carried out alongside the sustainability appraisal itself, as these stages will differ significantly according to what is being appraised.
- 5.7 If screening reveals that a full Habitat Regulations Assessment is required, this will be undertaken separately from the sustainability appraisal process.
- 5.8 Annex 3 sets out the proposed information on Appropriate Assessment that we intend to include within the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.9 The Council is required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of development plans. This focuses on how a policy or function will affect people from different groups and in turn whether it has a negative impact on groups or individuals in particular with regard to race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- 5.10 Reading Borough Council has a clear process for meeting the requirements of undertaking EqIAs. The following sequential stages are required, where relevant:
- ***Equality Relevance Test*** - to identify whether policies being assessed have a relevance to the equality duties.
 - ***Stage 1 - Initial Screening or Desktop Exercise*** to ascertain whether a partial or full assessment is required.
 - ***Stage 2 - Partial Impact Assessment*** will be necessary if the initial screening identifies a differential negative impact on any of the groups. If the outcome highlights real concerns then a stage 3 assessment will be required.
 - ***Stage 3 - Full Impact Assessment*** is carried out to investigate where there is an adverse impact and the EqIA will address how to reverse the impact.
 - ***Equality Impact Assessment Report*** - A report summarising the findings and required actions resulting from the assessments under stages 1-3
- 5.11 A full EqIA has been produced for each development plan document in Reading as separate documents, distinct from the sustainability appraisal process. However, it would make sense for these processes to be combined, as impact on equality is also covered the sustainability appraisal. This will save on resources and will avoid duplication of effort. The sustainability appraisal process has the potential to cover the equality relevance test and Stage 1 (screening) of the EqIA without requiring a separate document.

- 5.12 To do this, a sustainability objective relating purely to the protected equality characteristics is required, in order that the specific requirements of legislation can be highlighted at this stage. This is included in the list of objectives in Table 1.
- 5.13 However, if screening reveals that a full Equality Impact Assessment is required, this will be undertaken separately from the sustainability appraisal process.

6 A5: Consulting on the Scope of the Sustainability Appraisal

- 6.1 This paper is intended to fulfil Task A5, to consult on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal. A number of proposed changes are set out above, but any other comments on the scope of the Appraisal are also welcome.
- 6.2 Please send any comments to

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ANNEX 1: UPDATED LIST OF PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

U.K.
Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)
National Planning Policy Framework
PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management
Code for Sustainable Homes
Biodiversity 2020
National Adaptation Programme
Energy Efficiency Strategy
South East
South East Plan policy NRM 6
South East Regional Forestry Framework
Berkshire/Sub-Regional
Berkshire Biodiversity Strategy
Berkshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan (saved policies)
Berkshire Waste Local Plan (saved policies)
Reading
Core Strategy
Reading Central Area Action Plan
Sites and Detailed Policies Document
Draft Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule
Reading Economic Development Strategy
Sustainable Community Strategy
Local Transport Plan
Cycling Strategy
Climate Change Strategy
Biodiversity Action Plan
Tree Strategy
Open Space Strategy
Cultural Strategy
Re3 Waste Management Strategy
Air Quality Action Plan
Reading's Health and Well-Being Strategy
Community Cohesion Framework
Contaminated Land Strategy
Adjoining Areas
Wokingham Borough Core Strategy
Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Document (Draft)
West Berkshire Core Strategy
South Oxfordshire Core Strategy
Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

The above documents are the main plans and programmes that will need to be taken into account most frequently. However, in individual sustainability appraisals, additional plans may need to be considered. This will need to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

ANNEX 2: PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES AND REASONS

Existing Objective	1. To limit the impact of climate change through minimising CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gases
Comments	No changes are required to this objective
Proposed objective(s)	1. To limit the impact of climate change through minimising CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gases
Existing Objective	2. Adapt to inevitable climate change in terms of preparedness for extreme weather events, including managing the risk of flooding
Comments	The objective should be expanded to refer to some of the other likely effects of climate change such as heat waves and storm damage.
Proposed objective(s)	2. Adapt to inevitable climate change in terms of preparedness for extreme weather events, including managing the risk of flooding, <u>heat wave and storm damage.</u>
Existing Objective	3. Use energy, water, minerals and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care
Comments	There are some important elements of sustainability that are not covered in the existing objectives. In particular, they do not cover the increasingly important issue of ensuring a reliable supply of resources, particularly energy, often through decentralised sources. They also do not cover local production of food. In addition, as the Council is now likely to produce minerals policies itself rather than as a joint Berkshire plan, the sustainability appraisal framework will need to be used to assess minerals policies, and ensuring supply of minerals is a key sustainability consideration.
Proposed objective(s)	3. <u>Use-Ensure appropriate, efficient, reliable and careful use and supply of energy, water, minerals, food and other natural resources</u> appropriately, efficiently and with care
Existing Objective	4. Minimise the consumption of, and reduce damage to, undeveloped land, appropriately utilising brownfield land
Comments	The objective does not require substantial alteration, although it can be shortened as the appropriate use of brownfield land is implicit in minimising consumption of undeveloped land.
Proposed objective(s)	4. <u>Minimise the consumption of, and reduce damage to, undeveloped land,</u> appropriately utilising brownfield land
Existing Objective	5. Minimise the generation of waste and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management
Comments	No changes are required to this objective. It will be of increasing importance in appraising waste policies, as the Council is now likely to produce waste policies itself rather than as a joint Berkshire plan.
Proposed objective(s)	5. Minimise the generation of waste and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management
Existing Objective	6. Minimise air, water, soil/ ground and noise pollution
Comments	This objective adequately covers effects on various aspects of pollution. However, it does not deal with existing issues of contaminated land and poor air quality, which are substantial sustainability issues in an urban area such as

	Reading, where development will usually take place in brownfield sites with areas of significant existing human activity. Both contaminated land and air quality have been identified as key issues in Reading, and the Council has strategies and plans in place to deal with both.
Proposed objective(s)	6. <u>Minimise air, water, soil, ground and noise pollution and improve existing areas of contaminated land and poor air quality</u>
Existing Objective	7. Value, protect and enhance the amount and diversity of wildlife and habitat, and other contributors to natural diversity, including establishing/enhancing ecological networks
Comments	<p>The objective as it stands does not require substantial change, and adequately covers the important elements of natural diversity and the Council's approach to them. Reference should be made to geo-diversity, to reflect the Council's policy CS36 as well as to reflect the likely increasing role that the sustainability appraisal will have in assessing minerals policies.</p> <p>In addition, as set out in section 5, in order to encompass the Appropriate Assessment process within sustainability appraisal, a specific objective relating to European-designated wildlife sites is also required.</p>
Proposed objective(s)	<p>7. <u>Value, protect and enhance the amount and diversity of wildlife and habitat and geology, and other contributors to natural diversity, including establishing/enhancing ecological networks</u></p> <p>8. <u>Avoid significant effects on internationally-designated wildlife sites</u></p>
Existing Objective	8. Create, enhance and maintain safer, cleaner and greener environments and attractive and functional buildings
Comments	This has proven a very difficult objective to apply in practice, as it includes many different elements and it is not clear entirely what the objective entails. It is not clear whether it is concerned with safety, attractiveness, functionality or open space and greenery. The objective should be restructured around the need to ensure high-quality landscape and townscape, which are important issues, recognised by local policies but not covered by the existing objectives. Safety is covered elsewhere and does not need to be referred to here, as is open space.
Proposed objective(s)	8. <u>Create, enhance and maintain safer, cleaner and greener attractive and clean environments and attractive and functional buildings including protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing important landscapes and townscapes.</u>
Existing Objective	9. Value, protect and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment
Comments	National policy now refers to 'heritage assets' rather than the historic environment, and the wording should be updated to reflect this. In addition, national policy places an emphasis on not just heritage assets themselves, but how these assets contribute to the wider environment and society, and how they should be built into strategies for enhancing the whole area. This means that the objective should be widened.
Proposed objective(s)	9. <u>Value, protect and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment heritage assets and the contribution that they make to society and the environment</u>
Existing Objective	10. Protect, promote and improve human health and well-being through healthy lifestyles and healthcare provision
Comments	This objective has proven difficult to use in assessments in the past, mainly because it refers to two very distinct health elements. Prevention of ill health is very different to treatment of ill health. For example, the way the objective is worded at the moment would make it difficult to assess an application for a residential development in an area of poor air quality that included a health clinic, because the air quality issue might lead to a negative score whilst the

	<p>provision of healthcare might lead to a positive score. Whilst there is always potential for mixed effects in each objective, this has arisen most frequently in relation to this objective. Access to healthcare should therefore be removed and dealt with in a separate objective that covers access to essential services.</p> <p>In addition, human safety is part and parcel of health, and it should be referred to here rather than in the other locations safety is dealt with.</p>
Proposed objective(s)	10 11. Protect, promote and improve human health, <u>safety</u> and well-being <u>including through healthy lifestyles</u> and healthcare provision
Existing Objective	11. Promote safe, stronger and vibrant communities through measures to reduce crime and the fear of crime and enhance community cohesion
Comments	This is one of a number of objectives that currently refer to safety. Reference to safety is now included in a single objective, and this enables this objective to be more focused on the strength and vibrancy of communities.
Proposed objective(s)	11 12. Promote safe, stronger and vibrant communities through measures to reduce <u>reduction in</u> crime and the fear of crime and <u>enhanced</u> community cohesion
Existing Objective	12. Provide high quality housing of a type and cost appropriate to the needs of the area
Comments	This objective does not require substantial change, but it should reflect the importance of upgrading existing housing to the standards the Council would expect of new housing. This can be done by a simple change.
Proposed objective(s)	12 13. Provide <u>Ensure</u> high quality housing of a type and cost appropriate to the needs of the area
Existing Objective	13. Reduce the need for travel and transport particularly by car or lorry while providing good physical access for all to services, facilities and other people by means such as walking and cycling
Comments	This is another objective that has proven difficult to apply in practice, as it conflates two related but distinct elements, i.e. access to services and more sustainable travel choices. These are both vital elements of sustainability, so the objective should be divided into two. The access to services should cover access to healthcare, which is proposed to be removed from objective 10.
Proposed objective(s)	13 14. Reduce the need for travel and transport particularly by car or lorry <u>and facilitate sustainable travel choices</u> while providing good physical access for all to services, facilities and other people by means such as walking and cycling <u>15. Ensure good physical access for all to essential services and facilities, including healthcare.</u>
Existing Objective	14. Value the social and cultural diversity and the local distinctiveness of communities
Comments	This is an objective that has been very difficult to apply in practice, often because it is very far from clear what effects a plan or proposal might have on what is a fairly intangible concept. This often leads to uncertain assessments, which do not shed any light on the effects of the development. Whilst it is a valuable objective in itself, it is preferable for the purposes of appraisal to focus instead on more tangible aspects such as equality for individuals, and inequality between communities.
Proposed objective(s)	None.
Existing Objective	None.

Comments	As set out in section 5, in order to encompass the Equality Impact Assessment screening process within sustainability appraisal, a specific objective relating to equality as relating to the protected characteristics under law is also required.
Proposed objective(s)	<u>16. Avoid significant negative effects on groups or individuals with regard to race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.</u>
Existing Objective	15. Ensure accessible opportunities for all to engage in culture, leisure, and physical and recreational activity, particularly in areas of open space and waterspace
Comments	No changes are required to this objective
Proposed objective(s)	15 17. Ensure accessible opportunities for all to engage in culture, leisure, and physical and recreational activity, particularly in areas of open space and waterspace
Existing Objective	16. Facilitate sustainable economic growth and regeneration that provides employment opportunities for all and supports a successful, competitive, and balanced local economy that meets the needs of the area, and improves the economic situation for particularly deprived communities
Comments	This objective covers two areas which are absolutely vital for the sustainability of Reading - economic growth as a whole, and deprivation within particular communities. The situation in Reading is that the area is generally economically buoyant, but there are pockets of deprivation where many people do not benefit from the overall buoyancy. There will often therefore be situations where a possible option or proposal would lead to economic growth in the Borough but would do nothing, or even worsen the situation, for deprived communities. The appraisal needs to highlight this, and these two elements should therefore be separated out into different objectives.
Proposed objective(s)	16 18. Facilitate sustainable economic growth and regeneration that provides employment opportunities for all and supports a successful, competitive, and balanced local economy that meets the needs of the area, and improves the economic situation for particularly deprived communities 19. <u>Reduce deprivation and inequality within and between communities.</u>
Existing Objective	17. Maximise access for all to the necessary education, skills and knowledge to play a full role in society
Comments	This objective does not require substantial change, but it should emphasise the importance that education and skills have on the health of the local economy.
Proposed objective(s)	17 20. Maximise access for all to the necessary education, skills and knowledge to play a full role in society <u>and support the sustainable growth of the local economy</u>
Existing Objective	18. Provide opportunities for all to participate fully in society including local democracy and decision-making processes
Comments	This objective is an important role for the Council. However, in countless appraisals over the past five years, this objective has rarely been appraised with anything other than a neutral score, because very few options have differing effects on this objective. Assessment against this objective therefore rarely sheds any light on the sustainability of a proposal, and it is not therefore a priority for sustainability appraisal to address. This issue is dealt with in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
Proposed objective(s)	None.

ANNEX 3: PROPOSED SECTION ON APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING

A3.1 Introduction

An Appropriate Assessment Screening of new planning policy is required in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). The purpose is to consider whether the proposals would be likely to have significant effects on the identified Natura 2000 sites and whether a full Appropriate Assessment is required.

Article 3 of the European Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) provides for a network of *Natura 2000* Sites, which includes Special Area of Conservation (SACs - designated under the EU Directive) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs - designated under the Birds Directive, 79/409/EEC)

The Directive includes a requirement, which emerges through Regulation 48, that all plans that are 'likely to have a significant effect on a European site in Great Britain (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)' should 'make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives'.

Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)¹ identifies three stages for undertaking the process of Appropriate Assessments:

- *Task 1*: Identifying likely significant effects
- *Task 2*: Appropriate assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity and
- *Task 3*: Mitigation and alternative solutions

Task 1 involves gathering evidence and screening for likely impacts which is covered in a 'Screening' level document. This screening process determines whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and hence whether the subsequent steps of the AA are required. If it concludes that there are no likely significant effects, it will not be necessary to undertake *Tasks 2* and *3*.

Task 1 can be undertaken as part of the sustainability appraisal process, by assessing policies and proposals against sustainability objective 8. The appraisal will then set out whether significant effects on Natura 2000 sites are likely, and, if so, what. This will then highlight whether a full Appropriate Assessment is required.

A3.2 Methodology

The methodology for carrying out the Screening Appropriate Assessment has been derived with reference to the DCLG guidance on carrying out Appropriate Assessments, and has been agreed with Natural England.

¹ 'Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment', DCLG, 2006

The overall methodology for the screening exercise goes through seven sequential stages:

- Stage 1: Identify the sites to be assessed
- Stage 2: Identify relevant characteristics of the sites likely to be affected
- Stage 3: Identify potential hazards
- Stage 4: Identify other plans and strategies that may give rise to combined effects
- Stage 5: Determine potential significant effects
- Stage 6: Assess need for additional Appropriate Assessment stages
- Stage 7: Consultation

Stages 5-7 can only be undertaken in relation to a specific plan or proposal, and must therefore be left to the individual sustainability appraisal. However, Stages 1-4 can be undertaken within the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

A3.3 Stage 1: Sites to be assessed

This stage identifies those sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) upon which it is considered that plans within Reading Borough have the potential for significant effects.

Whilst there are no Natura 2000 sites within the Reading Borough boundary, there are 2-3 potential sites within the sub-region. After consultation with Natural England on previous Appropriate Assessment screening exercises, the Council decided to usually assess sites within 15 km of the boundary of the Borough. It was felt that other sites would be too far away for any significant effects to arise as a result of development plan proposals. Whilst 15 km will generally be used, where there is reason to believe that a plan may give rise to effects on more distant sites, these will also be included, and highlighted within the relevant sustainability appraisal report. There are no RAMSAR sites within a 20 km threshold.

Screening Appropriate Assessments will therefore look at the following three sites:

- Hartslock Wood SAC (5.5 km of Reading Borough boundary)
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA (6 km)
- Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (12.5 km)

Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Chilterns Beechwoods SAC are areas made up of several sites, and both only partially fall within the 15 km threshold. Therefore, the following elements of each are assessed within this document:

Thames Basin Heaths SPA

- *Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI*
- *Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI*
- *Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI*
- *Bramshill SSSI*
- *Hazeley Heath SSSI*

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

- *Bisham Woods SSSI*
- *Hollowhill and Pullinghill Woods SSSI*

Figure A3.1 outlines the location of the three sites to be assessed relative to the Borough boundary:

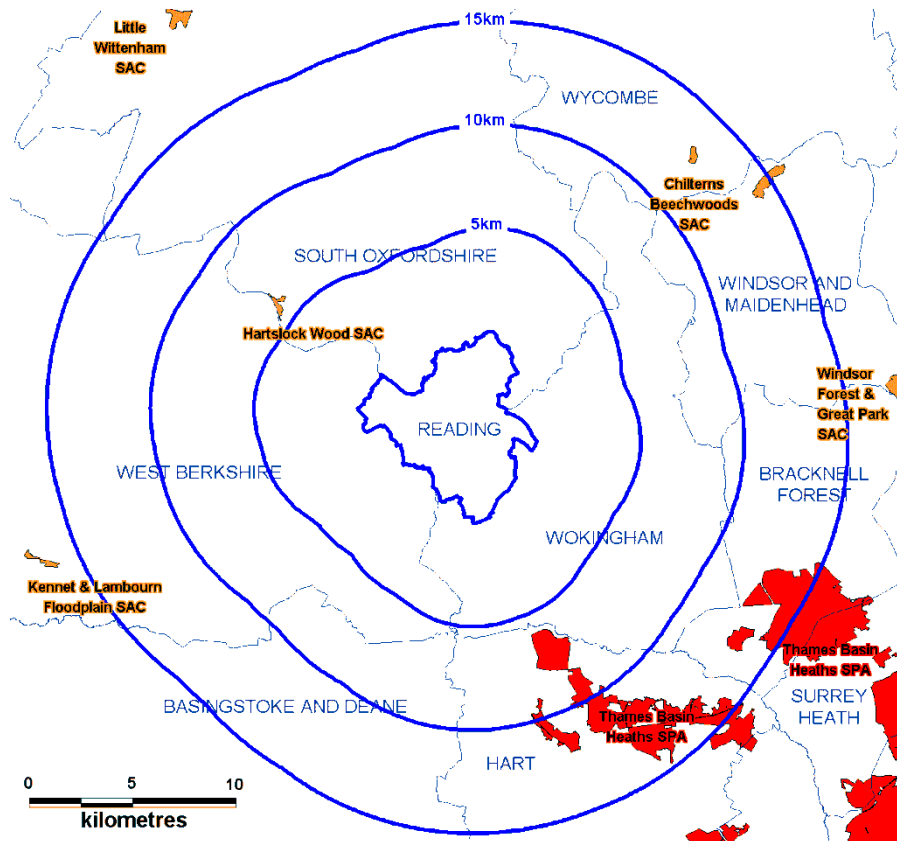


Figure A3.1: Location of designated sites to be assessed

A3.4 Stage 2: Relevant characteristics of the sites likely to be affected

According to the European Directive, the significance of effects should be 'determined in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the protected site concerned by the plan or project, taking particular account of the site's conservation objectives'.

This stage of the methodology therefore sets out the following two pieces of information for each site:

- The reasons for the designation of the site, i.e. the features that qualify the site as being of European significance. These will include both primary and non-primary features; and
- The conservation objectives for each site, sourced from Natural England.

These are set out in Table A3.2

Table A3.2: Reasons for designation and conservation objectives

HARTSLOCK WOOD S.A.C.

Reasons for designation (source: Joint Nature Conservation Committee, www.jncc.gov.uk)

HABITATS (PRIMARY)

Semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (important orchid sites):

The steep slopes of this site on the chalk of the Chilterns comprise a mosaic of chalk grassland, chalk scrub and broadleaved woodland. The chalk grassland mostly consists of a mosaic of shorter-turf NVC type CG2 *Festuca ovina-Avenula pratensis* grassland and taller CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland. The site supports one of only three UK populations of monkey orchid *Orchis simia*, a nationally rare Red Data Book species.

Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles:

The bulk of this site lies on a steep slope above the River Thames. Recent storms and landslips have resulted in a diverse age-structure for the yew population. Open patches show a rich flora including local species such as southern wood-rush *Luzula forsteri*, wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus* and narrow-lipped helleborine *Epipactis leptochila*.

Conservation objectives (source: Natural England)

Subject to natural change, to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition (*), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar).

- Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland
- Calcareous grassland

(*) or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable.

CHILTERN BEECHWOODS S.A.C.

Reasons for designation (source: Joint Nature Conservation Committee, www.jncc.gov.uk)

HABITATS (PRIMARY)

Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests:

The Chilterns Beechwoods represent a very extensive tract of *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests in the centre of the habitat's UK range. The woodland is an important part of a grassland-scrub-woodland mosaic. A distinctive feature in the woodland flora is the occurrence of the rare coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera*.

HABITATS (NON-PRIMARY)

- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*)
- *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK
- *Lucanus cervus* for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.

SPECIES (NON-PRIMARY)

Stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*

Conservation objectives (source: Natural England)

Subject to natural change, to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition (*), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar).

Bisham Woods SSSI

- Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland

Hollowhill and Pullingshill Woods SSSI

- Lowland mixed broadleaf woodland

(*) or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable.

THAMES BASIN HEATHS S.P.A.

Reasons for designation (source: Joint Nature Conservation Committee, www.jncc.gov.uk)

During the breeding season the area regularly supports:

Caprimulgus europaeus (Nightjar)
7.8% of the GB breeding population
Count mean (RSPB 1998-99)

Lullula arborea (Woodlark)
9.9% of the GB breeding population
Count as at 1997 (Wotton & Gillings 2000)

Sylvia undata (Dartford warbler)
27.8% of the GB breeding population
Count as at 1999 (RSPB)

Conservation objectives (source: Natural England)

Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI

To maintain*, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of Annex 1 species+ of European importance, with particular reference to:

- lowland heathland (Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI, Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI, Bramshill SSSI, Hazeley Heath SSSI)
- rotationally managed plantation

+ Woodlark, Nightjar, Dartford Warbler (Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI, Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI, Bramshill SSSI, Hazeley Heath SSSI)

* maintenance implies restoration if the feature is not currently in favourable condition

A3.5 Stage 3: Potential hazards

At this stage, the assessment identifies those potential hazards that development plans in Reading could have on the identified sites. This list has been agreed with Natural England as part of the assessment methodology on previous screening exercises.

Noise and vibration

Noise and vibration can disturb animal species, particularly when breeding. Strong vibrations may also affect roots of trees and plants. The potential effects of a development plan could be to directly increase noise and vibrations through development activity, but more likely are indirect effects through increases in transport to and from Reading.

Air pollution and quality

Reductions in air quality, through pollution, dust or other substances, can have direct effects on animal and plant life, by causing ill-health or death or restricting their growth. Airborne pollutants can also enter watercourses. Such pollutants could emerge as a result of development plan through construction/development processes or other operations, or through the end use, either directly from new development or as a result of more journeys, particularly by car, to Reading.

Water pollution and quality

Reductions in water quality could affect designated sites in a variety of ways. It can have direct effects on the health, growth and breeding of flora and fauna, both in and out of the water, and it can also change the habitat over time, resulting in a change in the species that inhabit it. This water pollution could come about as a result of pollutants entering watercourses or groundwater directly or via airborne pollution, either through development activity or the end use of developments.

Water flows

If surface- or groundwater flows are permanently changed, this could fundamentally alter the habitats present in designated sites, and therefore the species that inhabit them. Redevelopment can change water flows by changing the building footprint, or changing areas of hard surfacing. There could also be increases in water abstraction during development or through the end use, and this could also affect water flows.

Climate change

Climate change could result in higher temperatures, rising water levels and increased flooding, and more extreme weather conditions, as well as a wide range of other effects, such as increased pressure for development on higher ground. These effects would fundamentally alter existing habitats. A development plan could contribute to these effects by increasing traffic generation, construction processes and use of resources, among other factors.

Habitat loss and degradation

Habitat loss and degradation would directly affect the species present on the protected sites, and would compromise the reason for the designation, or fragment larger areas of habitat. Given that the Borough does not include, or is not adjacent to, any protected sites, direct habitat loss is unlikely to occur, but an increasing population could mean more visitors to the sites, with consequent degradation of the habitat. Strategic infrastructure requirements, if necessitated by the proposals, could mean some habitat loss, which is more likely to be a 'combined' effect than one simply as a result of the plan.

Landscape effects

Given the distance to the designated sites, the most likely landscape effects as a result of a development plan would be as a result of large or tall buildings. These could interrupt migration or feeding routes for birds or other animals present at the sites.

Lighting

Increasing lighting can disturb breeding and feeding for the wildlife present in the designated sites. Increased lighting could come from projected development in the Borough, also possibly from higher buildings, as well as from additional traffic generated from any development.

A3.6 Stage 4: Other plans and strategies that could give rise to combined effects

According to Regulation 48, the implications of a plan in combination with other plans and projects will need to be assessed. An appropriate assessment therefore needs to identify the plans that may give rise to combined effects, and consider their implications on the designated sites.

The sites identified for the purposes of carrying out appropriate assessment are those sites, or parts of sites, which fall within 15 km of the Reading Borough boundary. Therefore, this section looks only at those plans and projects that are in close proximity to the parts of the designated sites that are being assessed. A large designated site, such as Thames Basin Heaths SPA, stretches up to 40 km away from the Borough, and therefore an assessment of all plans or projects close to the whole area would be unwieldy, and unlikely to shed further light on the effects. This assessment defines 'close proximity' as areas with a significant area within 10 km of the designated site. Table A3.3 identifies which authorities contain plans or projects which have been assessed for combined effects for each site.

Table A3.3: Locations of plans and projects that may give rise to 'combined effects'

Hartslock Wood SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oxfordshire County ▪ South Oxfordshire District ▪ West Berkshire District ▪ Reading Borough
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buckinghamshire County ▪ South Bucks District ▪ Wycombe District ▪ Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead ▪ Reading Borough ▪ Wokingham Borough ▪ Oxfordshire County ▪ South Oxfordshire District
Thames Basin Heath SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bracknell Forest Borough ▪ Wokingham Borough ▪ Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead ▪ Reading Borough ▪ West Berkshire District ▪ Surrey County ▪ Surrey Heath Borough ▪ Runnymede Borough ▪ Woking Borough ▪ Guildford Borough ▪ Hampshire County ▪ Hart District ▪ Rushmoor Borough ▪ Basingstoke and Deane District

The tables below take each site in turn, and examine the proposals of adopted or emerging development plans insofar as they may affect the designated site. Where these plans are accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment, the results of this inform the discussion. These have been taken into account in assessing the implications under Stage 5.

HARTSLOCK WOOD (location: South Oxfordshire District)

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Adopted 1996) - saved policies
Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy - (Withdrawn 2013)

South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (Adopted 2006) - saved policies
Woodcote Neighbourhood Development Plan (Submitted 2013)

Berkshire

Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire - saved policies
Waste Local Plan for Berkshire - saved policies

Reading

Core Strategy (Adopted 2008)
Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted 2009)
Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted 2012)

West Berkshire

Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)
Local Plan 1991-2006 (Adopted 2002) - saved policies

CHILTERN BEECHWOODS (location of parts within 20 km of Reading: Wycombe District and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)

Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)
Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2004-2016 - saved policies

Wycombe

Core Strategy (Adopted 2008)
Delivery and Site Allocations Plan (Adopted 2013)
Wycombe District Local Plan (Adopted 2004) - saved policies

South Bucks

South Bucks Core Strategy (Adopted 2011)
South Bucks Local Plan (Adopted 1999) - saved policies

Berkshire

Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire - saved policies
Waste Local Plan for Berkshire - saved policies

Windsor and Maidenhead

Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan (Adopted 2011)
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan (Adopted 2003) - saved policies

Reading

Core Strategy (Adopted 2008)
Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted 2009)
Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted 2012)

Wokingham

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 2010)
Managing Development Delivery Document (Main Modifications stage 2013)
Wokingham District Local Plan (Adopted 2004) - saved policies

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Adopted 1996) - saved policies

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy - (Withdrawn 2013)

South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (Adopted 2006) - saved policies
Henley-Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan (Submitted 2013)

THAMES BASIN HEATHS (location of parts within 20 km of Reading: Bracknell Forest Borough, Hart District, Rushmoor Borough and Surrey Heath Borough)

South East

Saved Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (Published 2009)

Berkshire

Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire - saved policies
Waste Local Plan for Berkshire - saved policies

Bracknell Forest (South East Plan housing allocation: 12,780)

Bracknell Forest Core Strategy (Adopted 2008)
Site Allocations Local Plan (Adopted 2013)
Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (Adopted 2002) - saved policies

Wokingham

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 2010)
Managing Development Delivery Document (Main Modifications stage 2013)
Wokingham District Local Plan (Adopted 2004) - saved policies

Windsor and Maidenhead

Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan (Adopted 2011)
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan (Adopted 2003) - saved policies
Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan (Draft 2013)

Reading

Core Strategy (Adopted 2008)
Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted 2009)
Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted 2012)

West Berkshire

Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)
Local Plan 1991-2006 (Adopted 2002) - saved policies

Surrey

Surrey Minerals Plan Core Strategy (Adopted 2013)
Aggregates Recycling Joint Development Plan Document (Adopted 2013)
Surrey Waste Plan (Adopted 2008)

Runnymede

Runnymede Local Plan Core Strategy (Pre-Submission 2013)
Runnymede Borough Local Plan (Adopted 2001) - saved policies

Woking

Woking Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)
Woking Borough Local Plan (Adopted 1999) - saved policies

Guildford

Local Plan Strategy and Sites (Issues and Options 2013)
Guildford Borough Local Plan (Adopted 2003) - saved policies

Surrey Heath

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2012)

Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan (Submitted 2013)
Surrey Heath Local Plan (Adopted 2000) - saved policies

Waverley

The Core Strategy for Waverley (Withdrawn 2013)
Waverley Core Strategy (Adopted 2002) - saved policies

Elmbridge

Elmbridge Core Strategy (Adopted 2011)
Development Management Plan (Draft 2013)
Replacement Elmbridge Local Plan (Adopted 2000) - saved policies

Hampshire

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (Adopted 2013)

Basingstoke and Deane

Local Plan (Pre-Submission Draft 2013)
Local Plan (Adopted 2006) - saved policies

Hart

Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) (Adopted 2002, First Alterations Adopted 2006) - saved policies
Hart District Core Strategy (Withdrawn 2013)

Rushmoor

Rushmoor Core Strategy (Adopted 2011)
Rushmoor Local Plan Review (Adopted 2000) - saved policies
Farnborough Airport Area Action Plan (Preferred Approach 2010)