

Land at Wymington Glebe, Wymington
(1006163)

**Information to Inform a Plan-level
Habitats Regulations Assessment for
the Proposed Allocation of the Site**

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Quality Management

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Proposals

1.1.1 Aspect Ecology has been commissioned by The St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance in respect of ecological matters relating to the site, located west of Rushden Road, Wymington, centred at grid reference SP 951 651 (see Plan 6163/HRA1).

1.1.2 The site is proposed as a suitable location for strategic residential development in order to contribute to the local housing requirement identified within the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030.

1.2 Consultation

1.2.1 As part of the initial consultation process associated with the promotion of the site for allocation within the emerging local planning policy documents, comments have been received from Natural England identifying a requirement for further information and assessment at the plan allocation stage in order to address concerns over potential for likely impacts in relation to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA designation. In particular, the comments received identify that the plan-level HRA should identify mitigation measures to address the recreational pressure impacts and possible loss of functionally linked land, such as SANG.

1.3 Relationship of Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR to the Site

1.3.1 The site is located approximately 2.5km from the closest component of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR designation (Ditchford Gravel Pits) including beyond existing development within Rushden and the A45 dual carriageway. Much of the site is therefore located within the identified 3km impact risk zone relating to recreational impacts which is identified in relation to new residential developments (see Plan 6163/HRA1).

1.4 Purpose of This Document

1.4.1 The purpose of this document is to provide sufficient information to enable the Competent Authority to undertake a formal Habitats Regulations Assessment in respect of the proposed allocation of the site for strategic development within the emerging planning policy documents.

2 Legislation and Assessment Methodology

2.1 Legislation

- 2.1.1 All areas in England classified as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs), collectively known as European sites, receive statutory protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) (the ‘Habitats Regulations’).
- 2.1.2 The Regulations impart a duty on ‘competent authorities’ in exercising their functions to carefully consider whether any proposals may have a significant effect on a ‘European site’, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. In most circumstances, permission may only be given for a plan or project to proceed if it has been ascertained that it will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any such designation.
- 2.1.3 National planning policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, revised July 2018) explicitly sets out that listed or proposed Ramsar sites, potential SPAs and possible SACs (along with sites identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on such sites) should be considered in the same way, as if they had been classified or designated as a ‘European Site’.

2.2 Assessment Methodology

- 2.2.1 The procedure for assessment of projects that are not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of the designation for conservation is an ordered process following a number of key stages, as set out within NPPF (revised July 2018) and accompanying ODPM circular 06/2005¹, whilst further detail is provided by EC guidance relating to the Habitats Directive^{2,3}. As set out within these documents, the procedure for assessment is an ordered process following a number of key stages, as summarised at the chart (Figure 2) within ODPM circular 06/2005, reproduced at Appendix 6163/HRA1.

Stage 1 – Screening

- 2.2.2 Under the first stage, it is necessary to examine if the proposals will result in any ‘likely significant effect’ on the internationally important features of the European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. EC guidance recommends that key indicators should be used to determine the significance of effects.
- 2.2.3 If it can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects on the European site, no further assessment is necessary and permission should not be refused under the assessment.
- 2.2.4 If any ‘likely significant effects’ are identified or where it remains unclear whether effects will be significant the assessment procedure should follow on to Stage 2.

¹ ODPM Circular 06/2005: Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their impact within the Planning System (16 August 2005)

² European Commission (November 2001) *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*

³ European Commission (April 2000) *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*

- 2.2.5 Following the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruling (*People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta*, Case C-323/17, dated 12 April 2018), measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a plan or project on a European site should not be taken into account at this screening stage (see e.g. Appendix 6163/HRA2), and instead these should only be considered as part of an Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2).

Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

- 2.2.6 Should it be determined that (in the absence of mitigation/avoidance measures) a plan or project will result in ‘likely significant effects’ on a European Site (or that such effects cannot be ruled out), the competent authority should proceed to the next stage, where further assessment is required.
- 2.2.7 Under the second stage, it is necessary to determine whether the proposals, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will result in any adverse effects on the ‘integrity’⁴ of the European Site as defined by the conservation objectives and status of the designation. The precautionary principle should be applied, and the focus should be on objectively demonstrating, with supporting evidence, that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the European site. Where this is not the case, adverse effects must be assumed.
- 2.2.8 If it is considered that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the designation, permission can be granted. If this cannot be ascertained, or there is uncertainty, the assessment procedure should follow on to Stage 3.
- 2.2.9 A high bar is set for the AA process, with case law advising that the decision maker should be ‘certain beyond reasonable scientific doubt’⁵ that no adverse effects will arise on the integrity of the designation. More specifically case law advises further that in reaching a conclusion, what is required is ‘reasonable certainty’ rather than ‘absolute certainty’⁶ and that the risk should be ‘real’ (identifiable) rather than ‘hypothetical’ or ‘fanciful’⁷.
- 2.2.10 Case law from the High Court⁸ advises that “*Each appropriate assessment must be commensurate to the relative precision of the plans at any particular stage and no more. There does have to be an appropriate assessment at the Core Strategy stage, but such an assessment cannot do more than the level of detail of the strategy at that stage permits*”. Further, more recent case law from the Court of Appeal⁹ identifies that, in relation to the consideration of mitigation measures at the planning policy stage, it is necessary only for the LPA (competent authority) to be “*satisfied that the proposed mitigation could be achieved in practice*”.

⁴ Site integrity has been defined as being ‘the coherence of its ecological structure and function across its whole area which enables it to sustain the habitats, complex of habitats and/or population levels of the species for which it was classified. Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity. ODPM. 2005

⁵ T.C. Briels & others v Minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu C-521/12 [2014]

⁶ WWF UK Ltd And RSPB V SoS for Scotland

⁷ Boggis V Natural England & Waveney District Council [2009] Ewca Civ 1061 and R (Morge) v Hampshire County Council (2011)

⁸ Sean Feeney v Oxford City Council and the Secretary of State (2011), Case No. CO/3797/2011; Neutral Citation Number [2011] EWHC 2699 Admin

⁹ No Adastral New Town Ltd and Suffolk Coastal District Council v Secretary of state CLG (2015), Case No. C1/2014/0672; Neutral Citation Number [2015] EWCA Civ 88

Stage 3 onwards

- 2.2.11 Under Stages 3 and 4, it is necessary to assess if there are alternative solutions and whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. If these tests are passed, authorisation may be granted subject to compensation measures being secured.

3 Description of Plan / Project

3.1 Site Location

- 3.1.1 The site forms an overall area of approximately 53ha land, located immediately west of Rushden Road and associated development within Little Wymington at the northern margin of the Bedford Borough and immediately south of existing residential development within Rushden (see Plan 6163/HRA1).
- 3.1.2 The majority of the site is composed of intensively managed arable land within 4 large fields, whilst an area of allotments, along with a horse-grazed grassland field and a smaller improved grassland field form the eastern parts of the site immediately adjacent to Rushden Road. Other habitats present are extremely limited in size and extent and include field boundary hedgerows and associated trees, a small number of stable structures and scrub/woodland within the eastern fields. A number of public bridleways are located across the site, including along the north eastern boundary adjacent to existing offsite development within Rushden and within the western field.
- 3.1.3 A summary of the habitats and faunal interest within Aspect Ecology's Technical Briefing Note, dated May 2021 (ref: 1006163 TN01 ECN)..

3.2 Development Proposals

- 3.2.1 The site is proposed for strategic allocation within the emerging local planning policy documents, comprising the erection of up to approximately 540 new dwellings within an area of approximately 30.27ha (representing the eastern part of the site).

4 Planning Context and Relevant Documents (Including in relation to ‘in combination’ effects)

4.1 Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

4.1.1 Current planning policy at Wymington is set out within the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030, which was adopted in January 2020, and contains strategic policies in relation to the borough’s identified growth needs to 2030.

4.1.2 Of particular relevance, Policy 42S “Protecting biodiversity and geodiversity” identifies that *‘Developments with potential to have an adverse impact, either alone or in combination, on the integrity of a European Designated Site will be assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations’*.

4.1.3 Consideration of potential for likely significant effects in relation to European sites as a result of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and policies contained therein is set out within the accompanying Habitat Regulations Assessment have been subject to consideration for likely significant effects at the local policy level, as part of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)¹⁰. The HRA includes screening for likely significant effects on the Upper Nene Valley Quarry Pits SPA/RAMSAR, which concluded that possible likely significant effects on the designation relate to ‘public recreation’ and possible ‘disruption to flight paths of animals’, with likely significant effects screened out in relation to all other threats.

4.2 Other Plans and Policies of Relevance

4.2.1 The vast majority of land within the identified (3km) Impact Risk Zone in relation to Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR is contained within North Northamptonshire. Accordingly, relevant plans and projects that could result in potential likely significant effects in combination with the proposed development (and which have therefore been considered during the current assessment) at the site include the following documents:

- North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS)
- Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS)

4.2.2 The Local Plan Part 1, known as the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) 2011-2031, was adopted by the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee (now part of North Northamptonshire Council) in July 2016.

4.2.3 Policies within the JCS include consideration of the need and distribution for new development within North Northamptonshire, along with measures seeking to protect existing biodiversity assets and enhance ecological networks, and to ensure the integrity of European Designated sites such as the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA are protected. In particular, the JCS identifies a requirement for a total of 35,000 new dwellings to be provided within the plan area during 2011-2031. Accordingly, given

¹⁰ Bodsey Ecology Limited (2018), The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030:Draft Submission September 2018 – Habitats Regulations Assessment

the proximity and extent of Northamptonshire (including the entirety of the land located between the site and the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR) the policies and strategic development identified within the JCS are of relevance in relation to the proposed allocation of the site for development and have been considered here. The evidence base associated with the JCS includes Habitats Regulations information.

- 4.2.4 **Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) of North Northamptonshire JCS.** The HRA assesses impact pathways for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and Ramsar site, and undertakes a screening exercise for local policies identified with potential to lead to significant effects upon the integrity of the SPA. In-combination effects of the Local Plan on the SPA are also considered.
- 4.2.5 The HRA determined that financial contributions to the management of recreational pressure will enable new net residential development within North Northamptonshire to take place without affecting the integrity of the SPA/RAMSAR: the specifics of developer financial contributions are detailed within the Upper Nene Valley Supplementary Planning Document (see below).
- 4.2.6 **North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy HRA Addendum.** The document reviewed changes to the JCS to determine whether there would be any changes to assessment of likely significant effects undertaken in the JCS HRA. It was concluded that changes would not result in new likely significant effects on the SPA.

Upper Nene Valley Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 4.2.7 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared to supplement Local Plan policies within North Northamptonshire for which the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR is of relevance, and has been produced to ensure that development within North Northamptonshire has no significant effect on the SPA. Accordingly, whilst the site is located outside of (albeit immediately adjacent to) the area covered by the SPD, it is relevant to consider the information set out, including in particular in relation to 'in combination' effects.
- 4.2.8 The SPD is accompanied by an addendum mitigation strategy which applies to the council areas of East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough, including costed measures in order to mitigate the likely effects of additional housing proposed (within 3km of the SPA/RAMSAR) in the North Northamptonshire JCS on the designation. Accordingly, under the SPD, the majority of new residential developments within the 3km zone around the SPA/RAMSAR will be required to provide a financial contribution towards the strategic mitigation approach within North Northamptonshire (SAMM payment), which is considered to remove the adverse impact on the integrity of the designation.
- 4.2.9 It is noted that the current site is located within the Bedford Borough (i.e. outside of the four LPA areas within North Northamptonshire) and accordingly the option of providing a financial contribution under the SAMM would not appear to be available in respect of the site. However, the SPD does identify that *"Other large scale development, that have the scope to deliver SANGs, are unlikely to be required to meet the standard contribution as a bespoke project level HRA will be required, and the mitigation identified in that assessment will need to be delivered."* This is likely to be the approach progressed in relation to any allocated development at the site.

5 European Sites

5.1 European Designations within the vicinity of the site

- 5.1.1 Based on a search of the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database, along with available background information, the closest European-level ecological designation to the site is the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR site, the closest component of which (Ditchford Gravel Pits) is located approximately 2.5km north of the site at its closest point (see Plan 6163/HRA1).
- 5.1.2 No other European-level ecological designations have been identified within 25km of the site, nor does site appear to be located within any other identified Zones of Influence of relevance in regard to European-level ecological designations. Similarly, consultation comments received from Natural England in relation to the proposed allocation of the site make no reference to the need to consider any other European level designations. Accordingly, other European Designations can be screened out of further consideration within this document.

5.2 Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA / RAMSAR

Description

- 5.2.1 The site is located approximately 2.5km south of the closest component of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA designation (Ditchford Gravel Pits), beyond existing development within Rushden and the A45 dual carriageway .
- 5.2.2 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits covers 1,358 hectares, and is composed of 20 separate parcels of land/water formed by a 35km chain of exhausted sand and gravel pits extending for 35km along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene in Northamptonshire. The pits form an extensive series of shallow and open waters which occur in association with a range of habitats including reed swamp, marsh, wet ditches, rough grassland and scattered woodland. The extensive open waters and associated habitats collectively form a wetland of international importance used by more than 20,000 water birds, and include significant UK populations of Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Gadwall *Anas strepera* and Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.

Qualifying features

- 5.2.3 Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA is designated due to the presence of important wetland bird populations. The citation forms for the designation, along with associated relevant information is included at Appendix 6163/HRA3.
- 5.2.4 The SPA qualifies under article 4.1 of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the Annex 1 species Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (see Table 5.1 overleaf) in any season. In addition, the site qualifies under article 4.2 of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of the regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex 1) Gadwall *Anas strepera* (see Table 5.2) in any season.
- 5.2.5 Furthermore, the site qualifies under article 4.2 of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds in any season. In the non-breeding season, the areas regularly support 23,821 individual waterbirds, including Wigeon *Anas*

penelope, Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Mallard, Shoveler, Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, and Coot *Fulica atra*.

Table 5.1. Qualifying Species under Annex 4.1 of Directive 2009/147/EC

Annex 1 Species	Count and Season	Period	% GB Population	Notes
Bittern <i>Botarus stellaris</i>	2 indiv. – wintering	5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0	Bitterns, when present within the SPA are noted to roost in three main locations (Titchmarsh, Grendon and Stanwick) where there are dense stands of Common Reed <i>Phragmites australis</i> . During the day birds feed at various locations within the valley, both within and outside the SPA boundary.
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	5,790 indiv.- wintering	5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2004/04	2.3	Golden Plover use the SPA for roosting and loafing, favouring three main roost locations at Stanwick, Earls Barton (Summer Leys) and Northamptonshire Washlands. Birds feed on the surrounding agricultural land often flying many kilometres to feed, although locations of preferred foraging grounds are not known. A downward population trend has been noted for Golden Plover within the SPA, which is thought to be due to increased levels of recreational disturbance at the key roosting site of Northamptonshire Washlands.

Table 5.2 Qualifying Species under Annex 4.2 of Directive 2009/147/EC

Annex 1 Species	Count and Season	Period	% of subspecies /popn.	Notes
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals – wintering	5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0 of <i>A. strepera</i> breeding in north west Europe.	Birds distributed evenly across the SPA.

Conservation Objectives

5.2.6 The conservation objections for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, published by Natural England (30 June 2014), are to:

‘Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying features;
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- The population of each of the qualifying features; and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.’

Non-Qualifying Species of Interest

5.2.7 The SPA/Ramsar is used by breeding Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (both species listed in Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive) in numbers of less than qualifying thresholds.

Other designated status: RAMSAR

5.2.8 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar Site follows the same boundary as the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits; qualifying under Criterion 6 because it regularly supports 1% or more of the population of the following species (or subspecies) of waterbird in any season:

Table 5.3 Qualifying Species under Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Sites Criteria

Species	Count and Season	Period	% GB Population
Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	629 individuals wintering	– 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.7
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals wintering	– 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0 of <i>A. strepera</i> breeding in north west europe

Site Improvement Plan

5.2.9 The Site Improvement Plan for Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits (see Appendix 6163/HRA3) identifies the following threats to the integrity of the designation:

- Public Access/Disturbance – disturbance from recreation (particularly walkers and dog walkers affecting wintering birds by reducing the time available for feeding, and increasing energy expenditure when avoiding the sources of disturbance);
- Planning Permission – there continues to be an increase in built and recreational development within and around the SPA, leading to a loss and fragmentation of habitat, and increased disturbance;
- Freshwater Fisheries – An increasing number of lakes are being utilised as freshwater fisheries; overstocking of certain fish species can lead to declines in water quality and availability of food for waterbirds which feed on aquatic plants and invertebrates; and

- Changes in Land Management – Continuous habitat management is required to ensure the balance of short grassland, reedbed, fen and open water is maintained. There remains a significant area which is not under appropriate management and where existing mechanisms are not proving effective.

5.3 Other Designations

- 5.3.1 No other European sites have been identified within 25km of the site.

6 Stage 1 – Screening for Likely Significant Effects

- 6.1.1 This section assesses the potential for likely significant effects on the relevant European Designations (Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA) from the proposed allocation of the site in isolation, as well as in combination with other known plans or projects.
- 6.1.2 Based on the information available and the identified threats to the identified designations, including as set out above, a screening exercise has been undertaken in order to identify any likely significant effects as a result of the proposals alone, or in combination with other proposals, in the absence of mitigation, as set out within table 6.1, below.
- 6.1.3 In particular, consideration is set out in relation to the individual items raised within Natural England’s consultation comments.

Table 6.1. HRA Screening consideration

Screening for Likely Significant Effects	
What potential adverse effects are likely to affect the interest features of the Habitats Site?	
Potential Adverse Effect	Likelihood of effect and mechanism of effect/impact if known
Physical loss or fragmentation of habitats within the SPA/Ramsar	n/a – not applicable to the proposed allocation as the site is located outside of, and distant (2.5km) from the SPA. Therefore, no effects are predicted either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects and this potential effect is screened out from further assessment.
Direct Disturbance	The proposed development is located 2.5km south of the designation, beyond extensive existing development within Rushden. At this degree of separation, no direct disturbance effects from construction works are anticipated on qualifying species using the designation (e.g. noise, light), either alone or in combination with other plans/projects. Potential for direct disturbance can therefore be screened out from further assessment.
Recreational Impacts	<p>The site is proposed for allocation for residential development of up to 540 homes, which would generate an increase of approximately 1,296 new residents (based on average occupancy rate of 2.4 residents per dwelling).</p> <p>Visitor studies undertaken of the SPA/Ramsar in order to inform consideration of recreational impacts on the designation¹¹ indicate that the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits ‘attract fewer visits per house (particularly within 0-3500m) compared to other sites and that the decline in visitor rates with distance is steeper...’ in relation to other designations, with a visit rate of 0.3 people per day derived from 100 houses at a distance of 2km from the access point.</p> <p>The proposed development site is considered too far removed to generate regular pedestrian visits to the SPA/RAMSAR. Nonetheless, much of the site falls within the identified main visitor catchment/Zone of Influence (3km) for Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits, and it is therefore</p>

¹¹ Footprint Ecology (2014) *Visitor Access Study of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA*

	<p>likely that new residents of the proposed development would visit, most likely by car.</p> <p>Therefore, it is likely that additional visits to the SPA/Ramsar will be generated by the proposals, and in the absence of mitigation measures, likely significant effects on the interest features of the designation cannot be screened out.</p> <p>Recreational impacts are therefore scoped in to the Appropriate Assessment stage (below).</p>
<p>Potential for loss of Functionally Linked land</p>	<p>Of the species for which the SPA/RAMSAR site is designated, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Wigeon are noted to make use of agricultural land for foraging, with Golden Plover and Lapwing in particular known to forage within arable land.</p> <p>The site does not include any watercourses, waterbodies or other vegetation types that could form functionally linked land utilised by other qualifying species.</p> <p>The site was recorded to include arable land in the form of a number of large fields, albeit frequent use of existing public bridleways and access routes across the site was noted, whilst the least disturbed such fields are focussed on the western parts of the site (away from the proposed development areas). Accordingly, arable land within the site has potential to support winter foraging use for Golden Plover and Lapwing in particular as part of the wider landscape (with abundant similar habitats present including immediately adjacent to the site) such that, in the absence of specific wintering bird survey information for the site and/or mitigation measures, likely significant effects on the interest features cannot be screened out in relation to functionally linked land.</p> <p>Potential for loss of functionally linked land is therefore scoped into the Appropriate Assessment stage (see below).</p>
<p>Water Quality and Water Levels</p>	<p>The site does not contain any watercourse or tributary that could provide a direct hydrological link to the designation, whilst the distance and separation are such that direct run-off or contamination as a result of construction works are unlikely to represent potential for likely significant effects in this regard.</p> <p>Further, under standard drainage requirements,(e.g. EA) any new development would be required to maintain acceptable greenfield run-off rates, subject to which no significant likely effects would be anticipated in this regard.</p> <p>Information set out within the HRA associated with the East Northamptonshire Local Plan¹² in relation to potential for risk of increased phosphorus loading/associated eutrophication identifies in relation to the SPA/RAMSAR that although hydrologically linked to the River Nene Navigation (into which local Sewage Treatment Works discharge treated effluent), such linkage is understood to be via groundwater percolation and mobilisation of contamination such as phosphorus would be reduced to levels that are unlikely to represent significant risk. Further, the Site Improvement Plan prepared by Natural</p>

¹² Aecom, (December 2020), "East Northamptonshire Local Plan, Habitats Regulations Assessment"

	<p>England in relation to the designation does not identify water quality as a potential pressure or threat on the designation.</p> <p>Accordingly, likely significant effects in relation to water quality and levels can be screened out of further consideration in relation to the proposed allocation of the site.</p>
<p>'Dark Skies' (Lighting)</p>	<p>The site is sufficiently removed and distant from the SPA/RAMSAR that new lighting is unlikely to result in any disturbance or effect on interest features within the designation itself.</p> <p>Accordingly, potential for likely significant effects would be limited to potential for disturbance to SPA/RAMSAR bird species utilising functionally linked land and/or along flight corridors.</p> <p>The location of the site and proposed development areas are situated immediately adjacent to the existing developed areas within Rushden and Little Wymington, which include current lighting levels, albeit the potential exists for the lit area to be extended as part of any strategic development. Any such potential would require consideration in relation to new development and roads including specific modelling relating to proposed lighting layouts and design to ensure that light spill is not created that could result in likely significant effects on individuals and lighting is suitably contained within the development areas.</p> <p>However, the allocation of the site for development would not in itself necessarily result in the need for additional lighting and/or light-spill, which would only be permitted following consideration at the planning application stage, such that the proposed allocation of the site itself would not result in any likely significant effects as a result of additional lighting either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects.</p>
<p>Freshwater Fisheries</p>	<p>The proposed allocation of the site is removed from the SPA/RAMSAR and will not result in any effects in terms of utilisation or management of waterbodies as freshwater fisheries either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects. Accordingly, potential for likely significant effects in relation to freshwater fisheries can be screened out from further assessment.</p>
<p>Direct Waterbird Mortality (e.g. from collision with structures)</p>	<p>The proposed allocation is for residential development with new buildings and structures anticipated to be in-keeping with other residential development, including throughout the town of Rushden which is located immediately adjacent to the site and extends between the site and the SPA/Ramsar. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposals would result in an increase in direct mortality of qualifying bird species either alone or in-combination with other projects and this potential effect is therefore screened out from further assessment.</p>

Conclusion: In the absence of mitigation, are the proposals likely to have a significant effect on a Habitats site?

Yes, in relation to likely significant effects alone and in-combination with other plans and projects (as set out above), in the absence of mitigation, the proposed allocation of the site within the emerging planning policy documents would result in potential for likely significant effects from increased recreational pressures and potential effects on secondary supporting habitats.

An Appropriate Assessment is therefore required (stage 2 of the HRA process).

7 Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

7.1.1 Following the HRA Screening exercise, in the absence of mitigation likely significant effects are predicted in relation to increases in recreational pressure and potential for loss of functionally linked land. In Table 7.1 below, the likely significant effect is further assessed in relation to the conservation objectives of the designation and sets out the proposed mitigation.

Table 7.1: Appropriate Assessment in respect of identified likely significant effects

Do the proposals, alone or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects have the potential to affect the integrity of the European designation, given the sites' conservation objectives?	
<p>Yes.</p> <p>In line with the above considerations, in the absence of mitigation measures the proposed allocation would have potential to result in increased recreational pressure on the SPA/RAMSAR due to the increase in residents within the identified 3km zone, including in combination with other plans or projects (particularly new residential development anticipated under the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and associated documents.</p> <p>In addition, in the absence of survey information confirming that the habitats within the site are not used by significant numbers of qualifying bird species, potential for likely significant effects in the form of loss of functionally linked land cannot be ruled out.</p>	
Likely Significant Effect	Mitigation Measure(s) and Associated Considerations
<p>Recreational Disturbance</p>	<p>In the absence of mitigation, the proposed allocation (and subsequent development) of the site would result in likely significant effects on the interest features of the SPA/RAMSAR through increased recreational pressures/disturbance.</p> <p>It is noted that the current site is located within the Bedford Borough (i.e. outside of the four LPA areas within North Northamptonshire) and accordingly the option of providing a financial contribution under the North Northamptonshire SPA/SAMM would not appear to be available in respect of the site. However, the SPD does identify that <i>“Other large scale development, that have the scope to deliver SANGs, are unlikely to be required to meet the standard contribution as a bespoke project level HRA will be required and the mitigation identified in that assessment will need to be delivered.”</i> This is likely to be the approach progressed in relation to any allocated development at the site, which would be fully considered within the project-level HRA at the appropriate stage (planning application).</p> <p>SANG</p> <p>The proposed allocation is noted to be for 540 new dwellings, within an area of approximately 30.27ha. Given the overall size of the site (approximately 53 ha) it is therefore clear that additional landholding is available for use to provide new SANG of appropriate size to fully mitigate for any increased recreational pressures as a result of new residential development, whilst the background survey information prepared (as set out within Aspect Ecology’s note ref: 6163 TN01 ECN) confirms that the majority of the habitat area is</p>

	<p>composed of intensively managed arable land that is unlikely to be subject to significant constraints that would preclude the creation of SANG.</p> <p>Accordingly, it is clear that the proposed mitigation in the form of SANG (in line with the accepted mitigation approach for large scale residential development elsewhere in regard to recreational impacts associated with European Sites, including specifically in relation to Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR, as confirmed within the North Northamptonshire SPD) can be achieved at the site and secured through appropriate wording as part of any allocation.</p> <p>Plans and projects likely to combine with the proposed allocation to result in additional recreational pressures on the SPA/RAMSAR are largely located within North Northamptonshire, and would therefore be subject to their own mitigation through contributions to the SAMM (as required under the SPD) or other suitable bespoke mitigation in line with individual project-level HRA.</p> <p>Overall therefore, subject to the provision of mitigation measures in the form of bespoke SANG, and confirmation through detailed project-level HRA, any adverse impact as a result of increased recreational pressures resulting from the proposed development at the site would be avoided and the proposed allocation would not lead to any adverse effect on the integrity of the designation (either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects).</p>
<p>Loss of functionally linked land</p>	<p>The presence of existing undeveloped arable land at the site (particularly within the western parts of the site, removed from existing development within Rushden) has been identified, which <i>could</i> potentially be used by SPA qualifying bird species (Golden Plover and/or Lapwing).</p> <p>Accordingly, any planning application for development at the site would need to be informed by specific wintering bird survey work in relation to these species, in order to confirm any significant use of the habitats present (and thereby whether the land forms functionally linked land and inform a project level HRA at the appropriate (planning application) stage.</p> <p>No background records have been identified that would suggest any presence of qualifying species within the site. Further, given the setting of the site, relatively high levels of existing disturbance are likely to be present within the eastern parts of the site (proposed for allocation), whilst the sloping nature of much of the site (particularly the eastern areas which are proposed for allocation) which would likely limit sight-lines favoured by species such as Golden Plover such that any potential for significant use may be reduced. Nonetheless, if the survey work confirms the presence of important populations/use by these species, the proposed development would need to include avoidance or mitigation measures in order to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA.</p> <p>Such measures could include the enhancement of alternative areas of habitat at a similar distance from the designation and of the same area to ensure no loss of functionally linked land.</p> <p>The need for specific wintering bird survey work and associated mitigation measures (should qualifying species be present) could be further ensured with the use of appropriate wording/requirements as part of a site specific allocation within the planning policy documents.</p>

	<p>Given the overall size of the site (approximately 53 ha, of which the proposed allocation is identified as 30.27 ha), it is clear that, should the affected habitats be used by these species, the provision of alternative, enhanced habitats would be available within the residual land holding such that the proposed mitigation could be achieved in practice at the site.</p>
<p>Residual Effects</p>	
<p>Given the detailed nature of the required designs and spatial information relating to the proposed mitigation, further specific assessment of the detailed provision is not possible at the plan allocation stage. Nonetheless, the nature of the site is such that the proposed mitigation can safely be achieved at the site, with further detail anticipated at the project-level HRA stage in order to inform any planning application and in line with available case-law (see above).</p> <p>Following the inclusion of appropriate wording as part of any allocation of the site, the delivery of appropriate mitigation measures in line with the above considerations (including under a project-level HRA) would ensure that any adverse effects on the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR would be avoided, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.</p>	

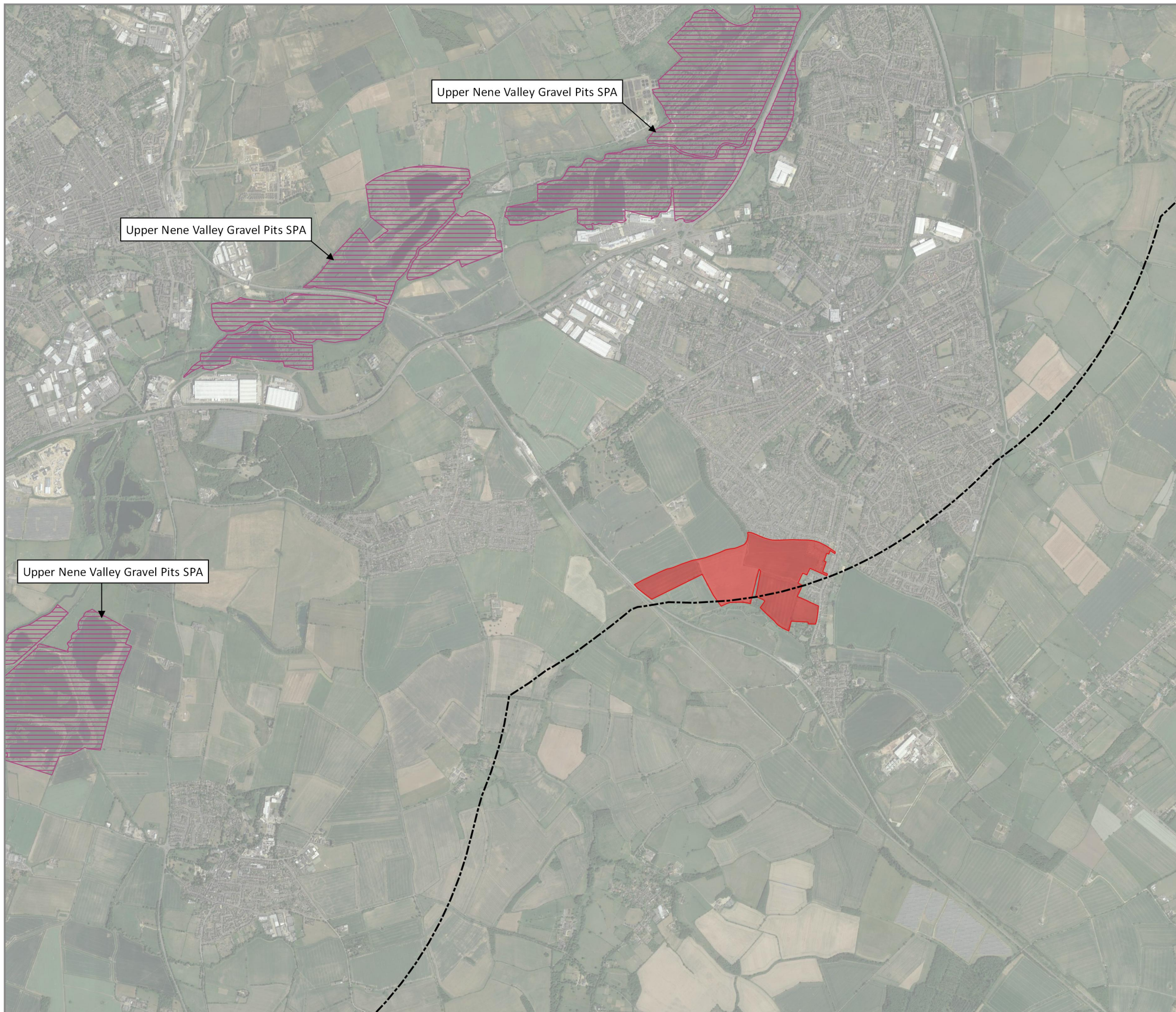
- 7.1.2 In line with the above measures, the project level HRA required in respect of any development at the site will need to consider detailed measures (including SANG design, location and extent) to avoid significant disturbance to the SPA qualifying bird species. In addition, detailed survey information in relation to any potential use of the habitats within the site itself by such species (functionally linked land) will be required to inform the detailed stages and (should such survey work confirm any such use) measures to ensure the development does not result in significant loss or availability of functionally linked land. However, given the site and nature of the site and availability of standard mechanisms to provide appropriate mitigation (including provision of SANG and potential for long-term enhancement/management of retained agricultural land to benefit foraging SPA qualifying bird species (Golden Plover and Lapwing), it is clear that the proposed mitigation could be achieved and secured in practice within the landholding as part of any suitably designed masterplan and associated development proposals at the appropriate planning stage.
- 7.1.3 As set out above, given the size and nature of the site (including in relation to the scale and nature of the proposed allocation), the provision of suitable mitigation measures is considered to be achievable at the site in order to fully address the potential likely significant effects identified as a result of the proposed allocation and subsequent implementation of the proposed strategic development at the site.
- 7.1.4 Accordingly, subject to appropriate wording as part of any proposed allocation of the site in relation to the inclusion of suitable mitigation and safeguarding measures (the details of which can suitably be confirmed at the more detailed stages) the proposed allocation of the site would not lead to any adverse effects on the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR designation, or any other identified European Site.

8 Summary and Conclusion

- 8.1.1 Aspect Ecology is acting on behalf of The St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance in respect of ecological issues relating to the proposed allocation of the site for strategic development.
- 8.1.2 This report provides an assessment of the potential for likely significant effects on the Upper Nene Valley Quarry Pits SPA/Ramsar to arise under the proposals.
- 8.1.3 Where potential for likely significant effects on the SPA have been identified, further consideration is set out in relation to the required plan-level 'Appropriate Assessment' in order to determine whether the proposed allocation of the site would lead to any adverse effects on the integrity of the designation.
- 8.1.4 It is concluded that appropriate mitigation measures would be available as part of a suitably designed development masterplan in order to avoid any likely significant effects on the interest features of identified European level ecological designations (all of which would be achievable under a suitably designed masterplan and detailed development scheme at the site, and could be further secured at the planning application stage). Accordingly, the use of suitable wording as part of any allocation policy in order to ensure the inclusion of such measures would be sufficient to ensure that the proposed allocation of the site would not lead to any adverse effect the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR (or any other identified European Site).

Plan 6163/HRA1:

Site relationship with Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR



Key:

- Site Location
- Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR
- 3km Recreational Zone of Influence associated with SPA/RAMSAR



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Land at North-West Wymington PROJECT

Site relationship with Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR TITLE

6163/HRA1 DRAWING NO.

A REV

May 2021 DATE

Appendix 6163/HRA1:

Appropriate Assessment Key Stages Figure 2, ODPM Circular 06/2005

Figure 1: Consideration of development proposals affecting Internationally Designated Nature Conservation Sites

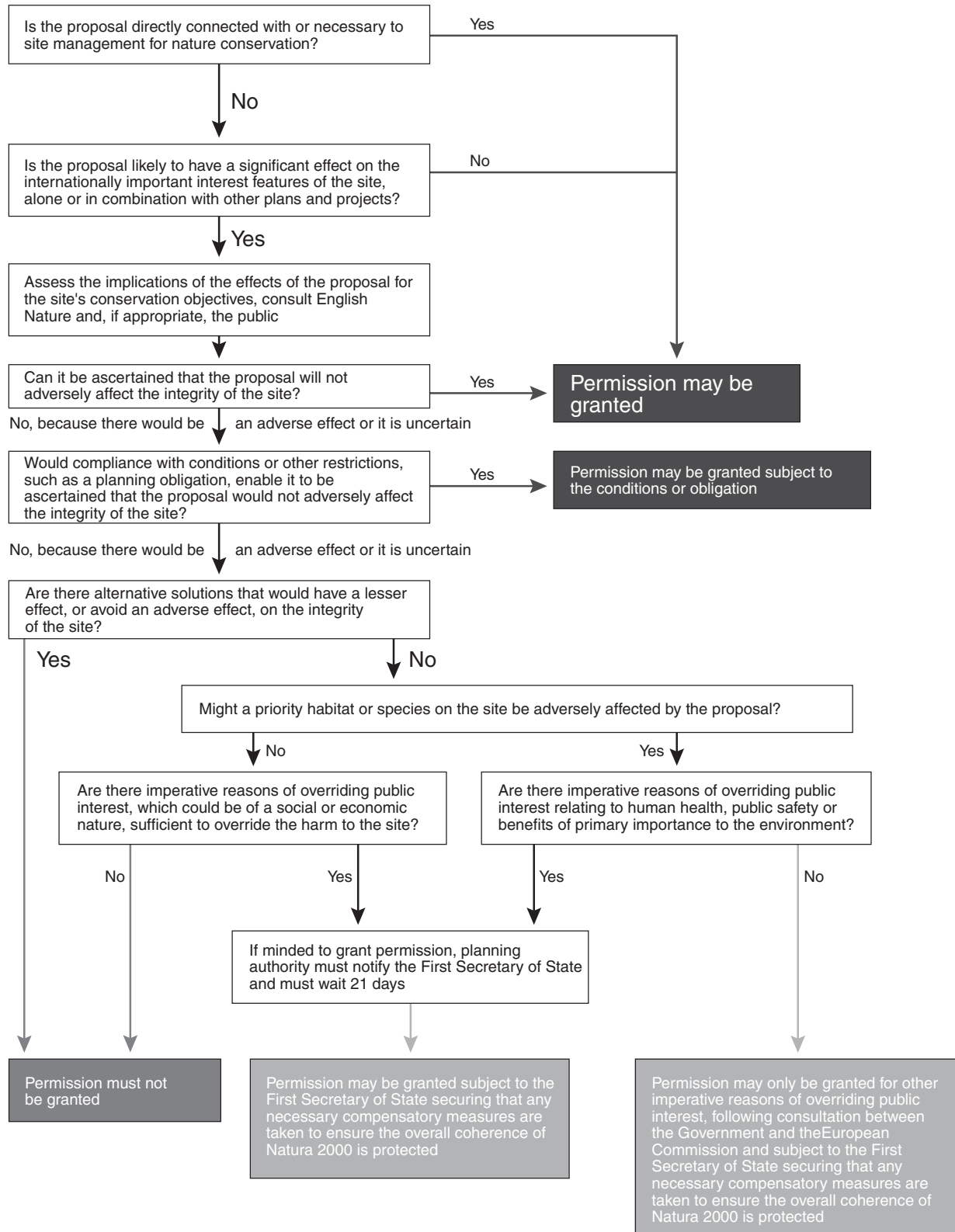
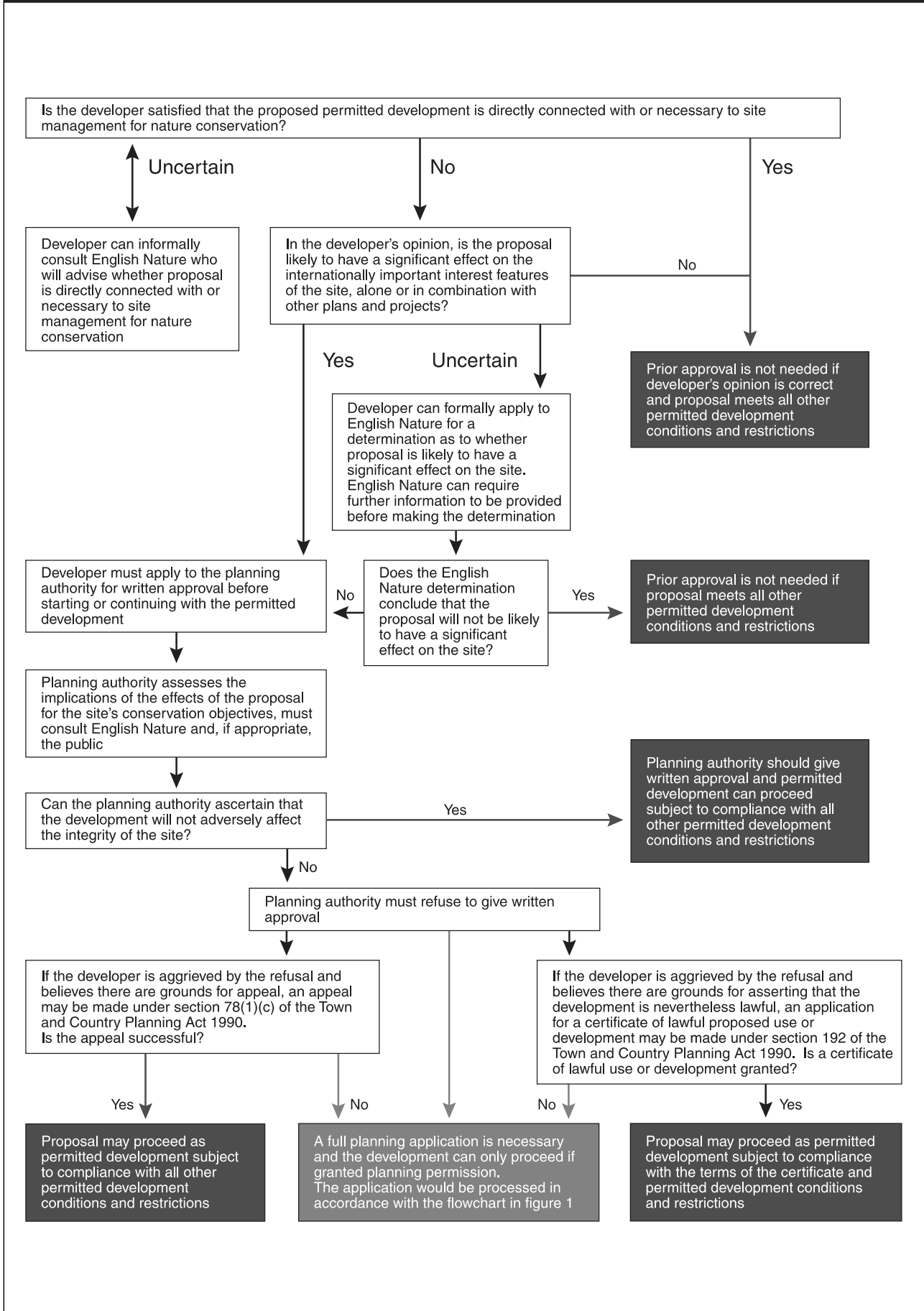


Figure 2: Permitted development rights potentially affecting Internationally Designated Conservation Sites



Appendix 6163/HRA2:

PINS Note 05/2018

PINS NOTE 05/2018

To: All Inspectors, HoSs Planning, Enforcement & Specialist Casework, Major Applications and Plans (England and Wales)

Relevancy: Planning casework, Enforcement & Specialist Casework, NSIP casework and Local Plan examinations

Date of Issue: 09 May 2018

Review Date: 09 November 2018

Consideration of avoidance and reduction measures in Habitats Regulations Assessment: *People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta*¹

Action

1. Inspectors should be aware that on 12 April 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) [issued a judgment](#)¹ which ruled that Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive² must be interpreted as meaning that mitigation measures (referred to in the judgment as measures which are intended to avoid or reduce effects) should be assessed within the framework of an appropriate assessment (AA)³ and that it is not permissible to take account of measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on a European site⁴ at the screening stage⁵.
2. Prior to this judgment, case law⁶ in England and Wales had established that avoidance or reduction measures that form part of a proposal could be taken into account when considering whether the plan or project would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site. If the risk of a significant effect could be excluded on the basis of objective information, there was no need to undertake an AA.
3. This Note provides guidance to Inspectors on the proposed approach to be taken where the proposed plan or project is subject to Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), and where the HRA relies on avoidance or reduction measures to conclude there would be no likely significant effects on European site(s). It should be noted that avoidance and

reduction measures can still be taken into account in the AA when the effects on site integrity are being assessed.

4. The CJEU reasoned that: *"Taking account of such measures at the screening stage would be liable to compromise the practical effect of the Habitats Directive in general, and the assessment stage in particular, as the latter stage would be deprived of its purpose and there would be a risk of circumvention of that stage, which constitutes, however, an essential safeguard provided for by the directive."* (paragraph 37 of the judgment).
5. The implication of the CJEU judgment is that **competent authorities cannot take account of any integrated or additional avoidance or reduction measures when considering at the HRA screening stage whether the plan or project is likely to have an adverse effect on a European Site.**
6. The screening stage must be undertaken on a precautionary basis without regard to any proposed integrated or additional avoidance or reduction measures. Where the likelihood of significant effects cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information the competent authority must proceed to carry out an AA to establish whether the plan or project will affect the integrity of the European site, which can include at that stage consideration of the effectiveness of the proposed avoidance or reduction measures.

Implications for Local Plans

7. In Local Plan examinations, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will be the competent authority throughout the local plan process. However, in determining soundness of the plan the examining Inspector will need to carefully consider whether the requirements of the [Habitats Regulations](#) have been met.
8. For local plan examinations which are ongoing or for which examining Inspectors have not yet issued their recommendations by 12 April 2018 (the date of the CJEU judgment), the HRA report for the plan should be reviewed:
 - If the HRA report⁷ identifies that the plan is likely to have significant effects on European site(s) and their designated features and an appropriate assessment of the plan has been carried out then **no further action is required.**
 - If the HRA report includes information that concludes that there are no pathways for the policies/allocations in the plan to cause significant effects on European site(s) and their designated features then **no further action is required.**
 - If the HRA report includes information that identifies likely significant effects on European site(s) and their designated features but concludes that they can be mitigated through avoidance or reduction measures (and does not go on to the AA stage) **then examining Inspectors should:**

- Ask the he LPA to confirm the extent to which they consider their HRA report is legally compliant in light of the judgment and ask them to re-visit the screening assessment in doing so.
 - If the revised screening assessment concludes that an AA is required this should be carried out.
 - Consider whether the AA necessitates any main modifications (MM) to the plan. The extent to which MM are likely will decrease where adequate avoidance and reduction measures were already identified and secured. If the avoidance and reduction measures are adequate to exclude adverse effects on European site(s) integrity, the approach required is primarily a procedural one ensuring that the AA has been undertaken where required.
9. Further consultation may be required on any revised screening assessment or AA. The Habitats Regulations require the competent authority (the LPA in this instance) to consult the appropriate statutory nature conservation body (SNCB) and have regard to any representations made by that body.
10. When reviewing the HRA report it is important to remember that more than one European site could be affected by the allocations/policies in a plan. The local authority may therefore have screened out some European sites (or designated features of a site) on the grounds that there was no pathway for effects, screened out others because of avoidance/reduction measures and finally taken only one or two European sites to full AA. It is only where likely significant effects have been screened out on the grounds of avoidance or reduction measures that further action needs to be taken.
11. It should be noted that there is no authoritative definition of what constitutes an integrated or additional avoidance or reduction measure and this should be considered on a case by case basis. If a measure is being introduced to avoid or reduce an effect on a European site then it can be viewed as mitigation. It may be helpful to consider whether a proposal could be considered integral to a plan or whether it is a measure to avoid harm. For instance, the HRA report could identify European sites whose designated features are vulnerable to disturbance caused by people visiting the site. If evidence presented in the HRA report and during the examination demonstrates that the housing allocation is too far from the European site to lead to increased visitor numbers then it could be concluded that there is no pathway for likely significant effects to occur. However if the HRA report determines that the housing allocation would be likely to increase visitor use of the European site and relies on measures which reduce visitor pressure (such as securing land to provide a buffer to the European site or ensuring footpaths and car parks are located away from the site) to avoid or reduce likely significant effects an AA will be required to assess whether the plan will affect the integrity of the European site.

Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Paragraph 119 of the NPPF

12. Inspectors should be aware that in accordance with paragraph 119 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring AA under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.

Implications for Planning Casework/Enforcement/Non-planning Casework

13. For on-going casework, and for any decisions or recommendations to be issued after 12 April 2018 where there is a risk that the proposed development may have a significant effect on a European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects), Inspectors must review the position regarding HRA in light of this CJEU judgment.
14. There are three possible outcomes from any review for each European site covered by the HRA:
 - A conclusion that likely significant effects can be excluded because there are no pathways that could lead to such effects. **If so, no further action is required.**
 - A conclusion that likely significant effects cannot be excluded and therefore an AA is required to consider the implications of the proposed development for the conservation objectives⁸ of the European site. If so, and an AA has been undertaken, **no further action is required.**
 - A conclusion that likely significant effects have been screened out on the basis of avoidance or reduction measures. **Consider whether the conclusions of the screening are valid and if it is concluded that likely significant effects have been screened out on the basis of avoidance or reduction measures then either undertake an AA or ensure that the competent authority has the necessary evidence available to them to undertake an AA.**
15. If the Inspector is the competent authority for HRA or is making a recommendation to the Secretary of State as the competent authority, the Inspector must ensure that the relevant steps have been considered, before concluding / recommending whether an AA should be undertaken. Consideration should be undertaken on a precautionary basis. If the information necessary to inform the HRA is not present, then it must be requested of the appellant and / or relevant parties such as the SNCB.
16. Where the proposed development has the potential to affect a European site, the Inspector must determine on a case-by-case basis whether further action (such as referring back to the parties for comment) needs to be undertaken. Where an AA is undertaken the Inspector must ensure that they have consulted the relevant SNCB and had regard to any representations made by those bodies.

17. [As noted above](#), there is no definition of what constitutes avoidance and reduction measures and what could be viewed as an integral part of a works or development proposal. If a measure is being introduced to avoid or reduce an effect on a European site then it can be viewed as mitigation. This includes measures outlined in SPDs such as the provision of Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring as in the Thames Basin Heaths approach. However it can also include 'embedded mitigation' such as a commitment within a development proposal to employing standard methods to prevent run-off from vehicles contaminating watercourses.

Contacts for further information

18. Please contact [Knowledge Centre](#) on x45885 if you have any general queries on this Note.
19. If you have a case involving a potentially affected European site and are unclear how to proceed, please seek advice from the [Environmental Services Team](#).
20. Non-salaried Inspectors should approach the [NSI Contract Management Unit](#) with any queries in the first instance, on which the NSI CMU will liaise with Knowledge Centre.

¹ [Case C-323/17](#)

² [Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.](#)

³ Assessment of whether the plan or project will affect the integrity of a European Site; a competent authority can only agree to a plan or project where it has been ascertained that that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site unless the plan or project falls into the Article 6(4) exception.

⁴ 'European Sites' are: candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) designated pursuant to the [Habitats Directive](#); and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated pursuant to the [Birds Directive](#). The requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives have been transposed into domestic legislation by [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#) ('the Habitats Regulations'). Paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework also requires proposed SPAs, possible SACs, listed or proposed Ramsar sites, and sites required to provide compensatory measures to be treated as European sites in England. In Wales, TAN5 requires proposed SPAs and listed Ramsar sites to be treated as European sites.

⁵ Consideration whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the internationally important features of the site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. If the risk or possibility of significant effects cannot be excluded, appropriate assessment must be undertaken.

⁶ [Hart DC v SSCLG, Luckmore Limited & Barratt Homes Limited \[2008\] EWHC 1204 \(Admin\)](#)

⁷ The HRA report is a collective term used to refer to the information which has been provided to support determination of the plan/project in accordance with the HRA Regulations. The HRA report will include the screening level information which is particularly relevant to the CJEU judgment.

⁸ Natural England has made the [Conservation Objectives for European \[terrestrial\] Sites](#) and [Conservation Advice for European Marine Sites](#) available electronically. Natural Resources Wales also make [Conservation Objectives for](#)

[European Marine Sites](#) available. Conservation Objectives for terrestrial sites can be [searched for through this page](#) of the NRW website. Ramsar sites do not have formal conservation objectives so NE or NRW should be contacted for advice on the appropriate objectives to be used.

Appendix 6163/HRA3:

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/RAMSAR – Citations and associated relevant information

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) – 2009-2012 version

Available for download from http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm.

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX.22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 14, 3rd edition). A 4th edition of the Handbook is in preparation and will be available in 2009.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Monkstone House

City Road

Peterborough

Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY

UK

Telephone/Fax: +44 (0)1733 – 562 626 / +44 (0)1733 – 555 948

Email: RIS@JNCC.gov.uk

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 7 April 2011

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

a) Designation of a new Ramsar site ; or

b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged:

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ; or
- ii) the boundary has been extended ; or
- iii) the boundary has been restricted**

and/or

If the site area has changed:

- i) the area has been measured more accurately ; or
- ii) the area has been extended ; or
- iii) the area has been reduced**

** **Important note:** If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) a **hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): ;
- ii) an **electronic format** (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ;
- iii) a **GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables** .

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The boundary follows the same boundary as Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and encompasses most of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI. For further details please see the maps provided at designation.

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

Longitude: 00 34 56 W

Latitude: 52 20 04 N

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s) the site lies and the location of the nearest large town.

Nearest town / city: Wellingborough and Northampton

The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits are located in the East Midlands region which is situated towards the centre of England in the county of Northamptonshire. The site extends for approximately 35 kilometres

along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene floodplain on the southern outskirts of Northampton, downstream to Thorpe Waterville, north of Thrapston.

10. Elevation: (in metres: average and/or maximum & minimum)

Min: 24m Max: 59m Mean: 37.77m

11. Area: (in hectares) 1,357.67

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

This chain of both active and disused sand and gravel pits form an extensive series of shallow and deep open waters which occur in association with a wide range of marginal features, such as sparsely-vegetated islands, gravel bars and shorelines and habitats including reedswamp, marsh, wet ditches, rush pasture, rough grassland and scattered scrub.

This range of habitats and the varied topography of the lagoons provide valuable resting and feeding conditions for concentrations of wintering waterbirds, especially ducks and waders. Species such as golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* also spend time feeding and roosting on surrounding agricultural land outside the Ramsar site.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 8 • 9

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 5** because it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds:

In the non-breeding season, the site regularly supports 23,821 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 6** because it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird in any season:

Species	Count and season	Period	% of subspecies/population
Mute swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	629 individuals - wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.7% Britain
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0% <i>strepera</i> , NW Europe (breeding)

Bird counts from: Denton Wood Associates. 2005. *Wintering waterbirds in the Upper Nene Valley – supplementary data analysis in relation to possible SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site designation*. Unpublished report to English Nature. Copies available from Natural England on request.

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) **biogeographic region:**

b) **biogeographic regionalisation scheme** (include reference citation):

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & Geology	Alluvium, basic, neutral
Geomorphology & landscape	Floodplain, excavations
Nutrient Status	Eutrophic
pH	Circumneutral
Salinity	Fresh
Soil	Mainly organic
Water permanence	Permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Bedford 1971 – 2000) http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/bedford.html Max. daily temperature: 13.5 °C Min daily temperature: 5.6 °C Days of air frost: 50.5 Rainfall: 584.4mm Hrs of sunshine: 1523.6

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, and climate (including climate type).

The River Nene Catchment is 631 square miles (1,630km²).

The key characteristics of the wider Nene Valley - broad, flat and predominantly wide floodplain surrounded by rising landform of adjacent landscape types; deep, alluvial clay and silt with sand and gravel, masking the underlying geology; river channel with slow flowing watercourse with limited bank side vegetation in areas.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Flood water storage

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar “Classification System for Wetland Type” present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

Code	Name	% Area
7 (Human-made)	Excavations	49%
4 (Human-made)	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	26%
Other	Other	18%
6 (Human-made)	Water storage areas	5%
Ts (Inland)	Seasonal / intermittent freshwater marshes / pools on inorganic soils	1%
Xf (Inland)	Freshwater, tree dominated wetlands	1%

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

Open water, with associated wetland habitats including reedbeds, fen grassland and woodland which support a number of wetland plant and animal species including internationally important numbers of wintering and breeding wildfowl.

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14, Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Invasive plants present on site:

- Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*
- New Zealand Pigmy Weed *Crassula helmsii*
- Nuttall's Pondweed *Elodea nuttallii*

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14, Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Birds

Species occurring at levels of European importance (as identified at designation):

Over winter the area regularly supports:

Annex 1 species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0%
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	5,790 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.3%

**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:
Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Species	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI (individual birds)	Period	% of GB population
Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	5,001	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.2%
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	178		1.2%
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	625		1.1%
Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1,187		1.3%
Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	288		1.8%
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	285		1.2%
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	2,323		1.3%

23. Social and cultural values:

a) Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values:

- Aesthetic
- Conservation education
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing
- Tourism
- Transportation/navigation

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

- No

If Yes, tick the box and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

Ownership category	a) On-site	b) Off-site
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	+
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	+
Private	+	+
Other	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Activity	a) On-Site	b) Off-Site
Nature conservation	+	+
Tourism	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Current scientific research	+	+
Fishing: recreational / sport	+	+
Grazing	+	+
Flood control	+	
Transport route		+
Domestic water supply		+
Urban development		+
Non-urbanised settlements		+
Agriculture	+	+

26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of problem	a) On Site	b) Off Site	Major impact
Unspecified development: urban use	1	Activities connected with ongoing urban development cause significant disturbance to wintering birds if unmanaged.		+	
Vegetation succession	2	Lack of grazing is leading to succession from short grassland to rank grassland, scrub / woodland. Whilst this is desirable in certain areas, widespread vegetation succession will result in a decrease in the availability of suitable habitat for key species.	+		+
Introduction / invasion of non-native plant species	2	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i> and <i>Crassula helmsii</i> present in small areas of the site	+		
Recreation / tourism disturbance	2	Access by people and dogs both on and off of public rights of way is a significant cause of disturbance in some areas. The site is also subject to a variety of recreational activities including fishing & watersports. Demand for access and formal / informal recreational activities within the Nene Valley are increasing; development of facilities / opportunities is often in an uncoordinated manner.	+	+	+

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Vegetation succession: This is principally being addressed through agri-environment schemes, predominantly HLS. This is only relevant where large areas of grassland are involved. The scope of agri-environment schemes mean that much of the land is not eligible and there are no alternative sources of funding for the small scale landowners / occupiers to undertake positive management works associated with marginal / aquatic habitats e.g. willow clearance around edge of a lake. Alternative sources for funding e.g. local grant schemes should be investigated. Issues leading to vegetation succession are also to be addressed through enhanced liaison with landowners/occupiers, management agreements and management plans; assisted by powers under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Introduction / invasion of non-native plant species: Invasion of lakeside edges by invasive non-native plants is to be addressed through enhanced liaison with landowners / occupiers and The Environment Agency.

Recreation / tourism disturbance: The intensity and location of recreational activities taking place just prior to SSSI notification on 24 November 2005 was considered compatible with maintaining appropriate population levels. This is managed through voluntary agreements assisted by powers within Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010.

The development of future recreational opportunities is to be addressed through valley-wide tourism and recreational strategies to provide a coordinated approach; including the development of access

management plans for key sites and that appropriate planning policies are incorporated within strategic planning documents to ensure developments take account of direct and indirect recreational disturbance. Natural England intend to support and work in partnership with the following initiatives: The Wildlife Trust's Nene Valley Vision, RSPB Futurescapes and River Nene Regional Park projects.

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? Yes

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	+	+
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	+
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	+

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia ; Ib ; II ; III ; IV ; V ; VI

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

No

d) Describe any other current management practices:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practices are given in these documents.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

No information available.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

- Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Counts
- Ongoing SSSI unit monitoring
- Various local Wildlife Trust monitoring and research projects

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire and Rockingham Forest Trust make use of the site for environmental educational purposes, both formal and informal. The Wildlife Trust have also established an Ecology Group within the Nene Valley aimed at increasing the number of local people with wildlife monitoring skills and involvement with local reserves.

Within the wider Ramsar site, bird hides exist at Summer Leys Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Titchmarsh LNR, both managed by the Wildlife Trust and at Stanwick Lakes, managed by Rockingham

Forest Trust. There is a visitor centre at Stanwick Lakes, managed by Rockingham Forest Trust which has interpretation facilities and an events programme relating to Stanwick Lakes; there is no wider Nene Valley focussed visitor centre.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Recreational activities: bird-watching, walking, fishing, sailing, canoeing, water-skiing, cycling

Facilities provided: visitor centre, interpretation, bird hides, cafe

These activities / facilities are spread across the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Site Designations Manager, Natural England, 3rd Floor, Touthill Close, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1XN, UK

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Brayshaw, S. 2004. *Biodiversity and conservation assessment of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits in relation to possible SPA, Ramsar site and SSSI designation.* RSPB, unpublished report.

Cayford, J.T. & Waters, R.J. 1996. Population estimates for waders Charadrii wintering in Great Britain, 1987/88 – 1991/92. *Biological Conservation* **77**: 7-17.

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Stone, B.H., Sears, J., Cranswick, P.A., Gregory, R.D., Gibbons, D.W., Rehfisch, M.M., Aebischer, N.J. & Reid, J.B. 1997. Population estimates of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom. *British Birds* **90**: 1-22.

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Taylor, B. & van Perlo, B. 1998. *Rails: A Guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World*. East Sussex, Pica Press.

Wetlands International. 2002. *Waterbird Population Estimates – Third Edition. Wetlands International Global Series No. 12*. Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland**
Telephone: +41 22 999 0170 • Fax: +41 22 999 0169 • e-mail: ramsar@ramsar.org

NATURA 2000 – STANDARD DATA FORM

Special Protection Areas under the EC Birds Directive.

Each Natura 2000 site in the United Kingdom has its own Standard Data Form containing site-specific information. The data form for this site has been generated from the Natura 2000 Database submitted to the European Commission on the following date:

22/12/2015

The information provided here, follows the officially agreed site information format for Natura 2000 sites, as set out in the [Official Journal of the European Union recording the Commission Implementing Decision of 11 July 2011](#) (2011/484/EU).

The Standard Data Forms are generated automatically for all of the UK's Natura 2000 sites using the European Environment Agency's Natura 2000 software. The structure and format of these forms is exactly as produced by the EEA's Natura 2000 software (except for the addition of this coversheet and the end notes). The content matches exactly the data submitted to the European Commission.

Please note that these forms contain a number of codes, all of which are explained either within the data forms themselves or in the end notes.

Further technical documentation may be found here
http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/activities/Natura_2000/reference_portal

As part of the December 2015 submission, several sections of the UK's previously published Standard Data Forms have been updated. For details of the approach taken by the UK in this submission please refer to the following document:
http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Natura2000_StandardDataForm_UKApproach_Dec2015.pdf

More general information on Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the United Kingdom is available from the [SPA home page on the JNCC website](#). This webpage also provides links to Standard Data Forms for all SPAs in the UK.

Date form generated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee
25 January 2016.



NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

For Special Protection Areas (SPA),
Proposed Sites for Community Importance (pSCI),
Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and
for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SITE UK9020296
SITENAME Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

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- [2. SITE LOCATION](#)
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- [5. SITE PROTECTION STATUS AND RELATION WITH CORINE BIOTOPES](#)
- [6. SITE MANAGEMENT](#)
- [7. MAP OF THE SITE](#)

1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Type A	1.2 Site code UK9020296	Back to top
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1.3 Site name

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

1.4 First Compilation date 2011-04	1.5 Update date 2015-12
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1.6 Respondent:

Name/Organisation: Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Address: Joint Nature Conservation Committee Monkstone House City Road Peterborough
PE1 1JY
Email:

1.7 Site indication and designation / classification dates

Date site classified as SPA:	2011-04
National legal reference of SPA designation	Regulations 12A and 13-15 of the Conservation Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made) as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/625/contents/made).

2. SITE LOCATION

2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

Longitude

-0.5822

Latitude

52.3344

2.2 Area [ha]:

1357.68

2.3 Marine area [%]

0.0

2.4 Sitelength [km]:

35.0

2.5 Administrative region code and name

NUTS level 2 code

Region Name

UKF2	Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire
------	--

2.6 Biogeographical Region(s)

Atlantic (100.0%)

3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION

3.2 Species referred to in Article 4 of Directive 2009/147/EC and listed in Annex II of Directive 92/43/EEC and site evaluation for them

Species				Population in the site							Site assessment			
G	Code	Scientific Name	S	NP	T	Size		Unit	Cat.	D.qual.	A B C D		A B C	
						Min	Max				Pop.	Con.	Iso.	C
B	A056	Anas clypeata			w	178	178	i		G	C			C
B	A050	Anas penelope			w	5001	5001	i		G	C			C
B	A053	Anas platyrhynchos			w	2312	2312	i		G	C			C
B	A051	Anas strepera			w	12	12	Bfemales		G	B			C
B	A059	Aythya ferina			w	625	625	i		G	C			C
B	A061	Aythya fuligula			w	1187	1187	i		G	C			C
B	A021	Botaurus stellaris			w	2	2	i		G	B			C
B	A125	Fulica atra			w	2323	2323	i		G	C			C
B	A017	Phalacrocorax carbo			w	285	285	i		G	C			C
B	A140	Pluvialis apricaria			w	5790	5790	i		G	B			C

B	A005	Podiceps cristatus		w	288	288	i		G	C		C
B	A142	Vanellus vanellus		w	3349	3349	i		G	C		C

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, I = Invertebrates, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Type:** p = permanent, r = reproducing, c = concentration, w = wintering (for plant and non-migratory species use permanent)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the Standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting (see [reference portal](#))
- **Abundance categories (Cat.):** C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present - to fill if data are deficient (DD) or in addition to population size information
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation); VP = 'Very poor' (use this category only, if not even a rough estimation of the population size can be made, in this case the fields for population size can remain empty, but the field "Abundance categories" has to be filled in)

3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

Species					Population in the site				Motivation					
Group	CODE	Scientific Name	S	NP	Size		Unit	Cat.	Species Annex		Other categories			
					Min	Max		C R V P	IV	V	A	B	C	D
B	WATR	Waterfowl assemblage			23821	23821	i						X	

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, Fu = Fungi, I = Invertebrates, L = Lichens, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **CODE:** for Birds, Annex IV and V species the code as provided in the reference portal should be used in addition to the scientific name
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting, (see [reference portal](#))
- **Cat.:** Abundance categories: C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present
- **Motivation categories:** **IV, V:** Annex Species (Habitats Directive), **A:** National Red List data; **B:** Endemics; **C:** International Conventions; **D:** other reasons

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

4.1 General site character

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Habitat class	% Cover
N07	19.0
N16	5.0
N06	49.0
N14	27.0
Total Habitat Cover	100

Other Site Characteristics

4.2 Quality and importance

ARTICLE 4.1 QUALIFICATION (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Botaurus stellaris (Europe - breeding) 2% of the GB population 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 ? 2003/04 Pluvialis apricaria [North-western Europe - breeding] 2.3% of the GB population 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 ? 2003/04 ARTICLE 4.2 QUALIFICATION (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: Anas strepera (North-western Europe) 2% of the population 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 ? 2003/04 ARTICLE 4.2 QUALIFICATION (79/409/EEC): AN INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT ASSEMBLAGE OF BIRDS Over winter the area regularly supports: 23821 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96) Including: Podiceps cristatus , Phalacrocorax carbo , Botaurus stellaris , Anas penelope , Anas strepera , Anas platyrhynchos , Anas clypeata , Aythya ferina , Aythya fuligula , Fulica atra , Pluvialis apricaria [North-western Europe - breeding], Vanellus vanellus

4.3 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site

The most important impacts and activities with high effect on the site

Negative Impacts			
Rank	Threats and pressures [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
H	F02		I
H	E06		B
H	A02		I
H	G01		I

Positive Impacts			
Rank	Activities, management [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
H	A04		I
H	A02		I
H	A06		I

Rank: H = high, M = medium, L = low

Pollution: N = Nitrogen input, P = Phosphor/Phosphate input, A = Acid input/acidification,

T = toxic inorganic chemicals, O = toxic organic chemicals, X = Mixed pollutions

i = inside, o = outside, b = both

4.5 Documentation

Conservation Objectives - the Natural England links below provide access to the Conservation Objectives (and other site-related information) for its terrestrial and inshore Natura 2000 sites, including conservation advice packages and supporting documents for European Marine Sites within English waters and for cross-border sites. See also the 'UK Approach' document for more information (link via the JNCC website).

Link(s): <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/3212324>
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216>

http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Natura2000_StandardDataForm_UKApproach_Dec2015.pdf

5. SITE PROTECTION STATUS (optional)

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5.1 Designation types at national and regional level:

Code	Cover [%]	Code	Cover [%]	Code	Cover [%]
UK04	100.0				

6. SITE MANAGEMENT

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6.1 Body(ies) responsible for the site management:

Organisation:	Natural England
---------------	-----------------

Address: _____

Email: _____

6.2 Management Plan(s):

An actual management plan does exist:

- Yes
 No, but in preparation
 No

6.3 Conservation measures (optional)

For available information, including on Conservation Objectives, see Section 4.5.

7. MAP OF THE SITES

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INSPIRE ID: _____

Map delivered as PDF in electronic format (optional)

- Yes No

Reference(s) to the original map used for the digitalisation of the electronic boundaries (optional).

EXPLANATION OF CODES USED IN THE NATURA 2000 STANDARD DATA FORMS

The codes in the table below are also explained in the [official European Union guidelines for the Standard Data Form](#). The relevant page is shown in the table below.

1.1 Site type

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Designated Special Protection Area	53
B	SAC (includes candidates Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance and designated SAC)	53
C	SAC area the same as SPA. Note in the UK Natura 2000 submission this is only used for Gibraltar	53

3.1 Habitat representativity

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent	57
B	Good	57
C	Significant	57
D	Non-significant presence	57

3.1 Habitat code

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
1110	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	57
1130	Estuaries	57
1140	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	57
1150	Coastal lagoons	57
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	57
1170	Reefs	57
1180	Submarine structures made by leaking gases	57
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines	57
1220	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	57
1230	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts	57
1310	Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand	57
1320	Spartina swards (Spartinion maritimae)	57
1330	Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)	57
1340	Inland salt meadows	57
1420	Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (Sarcocornetea fruticosi)	57
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes	57
2120	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria ("white dunes")	57
2130	Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")	57
2140	Decalcified fixed dunes with Empetrum nigrum	57
2150	Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea)	57
2160	Dunes with Hippophila rhamnoides	57
2170	Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae)	57
2190	Humid dune slacks	57
21A0	Machairs (* in Ireland)	57
2250	Coastal dunes with Juniperus spp.	57
2330	Inland dunes with open Corynephorus and Agrostis grasslands	57
3110	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae)	57
3130	Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea	57
3140	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp.	57
3150	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation	57

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
3160	Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds	57
3170	Mediterranean temporary ponds	57
3180	Turloughs	57
3260	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation	57
4010	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix	57
4020	Temperate Atlantic wet heaths with Erica ciliaris and Erica tetralix	57
4030	European dry heaths	57
4040	Dry Atlantic coastal heaths with Erica vagans	57
4060	Alpine and Boreal heaths	57
4080	Sub-Arctic Salix spp. scrub	57
5110	Stable xerothermophilous formations with Buxus sempervirens on rock slopes (Berberidion p.p.)	57
5130	Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	57
6130	Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae	57
6150	Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands	57
6170	Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands	57
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)	57
6230	Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in Continental Europe)	57
6410	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)	57
6430	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels	57
6510	Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis)	57
6520	Mountain hay meadows	57
7110	Active raised bogs	57
7120	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	57
7130	Blanket bogs (* if active bog)	57
7140	Transition mires and quaking bogs	57
7150	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	57
7210	Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae	57
7220	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)	57
7230	Alkaline fens	57
7240	Alpine pioneer formations of the Caricion bicoloris-atrofuscae	57
8110	Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani)	57
8120	Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (Thlaspietea rotundifolii)	57
8210	Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	57
8220	Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	57
8240	Limestone pavements	57
8310	Caves not open to the public	57
8330	Submerged or partially submerged sea caves	57
9120	Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (Quercion robori-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion)	57
9130	Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests	57
9160	Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli	57
9180	Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines	57
9190	Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains	57
91A0	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles	57
91C0	Caledonian forest	57
91D0	Bog woodland	57
91E0	Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)	57
91J0	Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles	57

3.1 Relative surface

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	15%-100%	58
B	2%-15%	58
C	< 2%	58

3.1 Conservation status habitat

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent conservation	59
B	Good conservation	59
C	Average or reduced conservation	59

3.1 Global grade habitat

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent value	59
B	Good value	59
C	Significant value	59

3.2 Population (abbreviated to 'Pop.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	15%-100%	62
B	2%-15%	62
C	< 2%	62
D	Non-significant population	62

3.2 Conservation status species (abbreviated to 'Con.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent conservation	63
B	Good conservation	63
C	Average or reduced conservation	63

3.2 Isolation (abbreviated to 'Iso.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Population (almost) Isolated	63
B	Population not-isolated, but on margins of area of distribution	63
C	Population not-isolated within extended distribution range	63

3.2 Global Grade (abbreviated to 'Glo.' Or 'G.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent value	63
B	Good value	63
C	Significant value	63

3.3 Assemblages types

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
WATR	Non breeding waterfowl assemblage	UK specific code
SBA	Breeding seabird assemblage	UK specific code
BBA	Breeding bird assemblage (applies only to sites classified pre 2000)	UK specific code

4.1 Habitat class code

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
N01	Marine areas, Sea inlets	65
N02	Tidal rivers, Estuaries, Mud flats, Sand flats, Lagoons (including saltwork basins)	65
N03	Salt marshes, Salt pastures, Salt steppes	65
N04	Coastal sand dunes, Sand beaches, Machair	65
N05	Shingle, Sea cliffs, Islets	65
N06	Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water)	65
N07	Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens	65
N08	Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana	65
N09	Dry grassland, Steppes	65
N10	Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland	65
N11	Alpine and sub-Alpine grassland	65
N14	Improved grassland	65
N15	Other arable land	65
N16	Broad-leaved deciduous woodland	65
N17	Coniferous woodland	65
N19	Mixed woodland	65
N21	Non-forest areas cultivated with woody plants (including Orchards, groves, Vineyards, Dehesas)	65
N22	Inland rocks, Screes, Sands, Permanent Snow and ice	65
N23	Other land (including Towns, Villages, Roads, Waste places, Mines, Industrial sites)	65
N25	Grassland and scrub habitats (general)	65
N26	Woodland habitats (general)	65

4.3 Threats code

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A01	Cultivation	65
A02	Modification of cultivation practices	65
A03	Mowing / cutting of grassland	65
A04	Grazing	65
A05	Livestock farming and animal breeding (without grazing)	65
A06	Annual and perennial non-timber crops	65
A07	Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals	65
A08	Fertilisation	65
A10	Restructuring agricultural land holding	65
A11	Agriculture activities not referred to above	65
B01	Forest planting on open ground	65
B02	Forest and Plantation management & use	65
B03	Forest exploitation without replanting or natural regrowth	65
B04	Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals (forestry)	65
B06	Grazing in forests/ woodland	65
B07	Forestry activities not referred to above	65
C01	Mining and quarrying	65
C02	Exploration and extraction of oil or gas	65
C03	Renewable abiotic energy use	65
D01	Roads, paths and railroads	65
D02	Utility and service lines	65
D03	Shipping lanes, ports, marine constructions	65
D04	Airports, flightpaths	65
D05	Improved access to site	65
E01	Urbanised areas, human habitation	65
E02	Industrial or commercial areas	65

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
E03	Discharges	65
E04	Structures, buildings in the landscape	65
E06	Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities	65
F01	Marine and Freshwater Aquaculture	65
F02	Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources	65
F03	Hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), including damage caused by game (excessive density), and taking/removal of terrestrial animals (including collection of insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds of prey, etc.), trapping, poisoning, poaching, predator control, accidental capture (e.g. due to fishing gear), etc.)	65
F04	Taking / Removal of terrestrial plants, general	65
F05	Illegal taking/ removal of marine fauna	65
F06	Hunting, fishing or collecting activities not referred to above	65
G01	Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities	65
G02	Sport and leisure structures	65
G03	Interpretative centres	65
G04	Military use and civil unrest	65
G05	Other human intrusions and disturbances	65
H01	Pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish)	65
H02	Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources)	65
H03	Marine water pollution	65
H04	Air pollution, air-borne pollutants	65
H05	Soil pollution and solid waste (excluding discharges)	65
H06	Excess energy	65
H07	Other forms of pollution	65
I01	Invasive non-native species	65
I02	Problematic native species	65
I03	Introduced genetic material, GMO	65
J01	Fire and fire suppression	65
J02	Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions	65
J03	Other ecosystem modifications	65
K01	Abiotic (slow) natural processes	65
K02	Biocenotic evolution, succession	65
K03	Interspecific faunal relations	65
K04	Interspecific floral relations	65
K05	Reduced fecundity/ genetic depression	65
L05	Collapse of terrain, landslide	65
L07	Storm, cyclone	65
L08	Inundation (natural processes)	65
L10	Other natural catastrophes	65
M01	Changes in abiotic conditions	65
M02	Changes in biotic conditions	65
U	Unknown threat or pressure	65
XO	Threats and pressures from outside the Member State	65

5.1 Designation type codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
UK00	No Protection Status	67
UK01	National Nature Reserve	67
UK02	Marine Nature Reserve	67
UK04	Site of Special Scientific Interest (UK)	67

Site Improvement Plan

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) have been developed for each Natura 2000 site in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS). Natura 2000 sites is the combined term for sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Areas (SPA). This work has been financially supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community.

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. It does not cover issues where remedial actions are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for maintenance.

The SIP consists of three parts: a Summary table, which sets out the priority Issues and Measures; a detailed Actions table, which sets out who needs to do what, when and how much it is estimated to cost; and a set of tables containing contextual information and links.

Once this current programme ends, it is anticipated that Natural England and others, working with landowners and managers, will all play a role in delivering the priority measures to improve the condition of the features on these sites.

The SIPs are based on Natural England's current evidence and knowledge. The SIPs are not legal documents, they are live documents that will be updated to reflect changes in our evidence/knowledge and as actions get underway. The information in the SIPs will be used to update England's contribution to the UK's Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).

The SIPs are not formal consultation documents, but if you have any comments about the SIP or would like more information please email us at IPENSLIFEProject@naturalengland.org.uk, or contact Natural England's Responsible Officer for the site via our enquiry service 0300 060 3900, or enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

This Site Improvement Plan covers the following Natura 2000 site(s)

UK9020296 Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA

Site description

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA consists of a chain of exhausted sand and gravel pits extending for approximately 35km along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene in Northamptonshire. The pits form an extensive series of shallow and open waters which occur in association with a wide habitats including reedswamp, marsh, wet ditches, rough grassland and scattered woodland. The extensive open waters and associated habitats of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits collectively form one of the most important inland localities in England for waterbirds in the non-breeding period and regularly supports peak numbers of waterbird in excess of 20,000 individuals, including significant populations of bittern, golden plover and gadwall.

Plan Summary

This table shows the prioritised issues for the site(s), the features they affect, the proposed measures to address the issues and the delivery bodies whose involvement is required to deliver the measures. The list of delivery bodies will include those who have agreed to the actions as well as those where discussions over their role in delivering the actions is on-going.

Priority & Issue	Pressure or Threat	Feature(s) affected	Measure	Delivery Bodies
1 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Manage recreational impacts through access and habitat management and advice.	East Northamptonshire District Council, Natural England, Nene Valley NIA, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire LEP, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterboro, Volunteers, Wellingborough Borough Council, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, River Nene Regional Park, Rockingham Forest Trust, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, Local nature partnership

2 Planning Permission: general	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Provide clear guidance to developers and local planning officers	East Northamptonshire District Council, Natural England, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, Wellingborough Borough Council, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit
3 Fisheries: Freshwater	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Maintain and develop sustainable freshwater fisheries, by developing individual Fisheries Plans	Environment Agency, Natural England, Fisheries, Angling Trust(s)
4 Change in land management	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Establish appropriate grazing and scrub management	Natural England, Landowner(s)

Issues and Actions

This table outlines the prioritised issues that are currently impacting or threatening the condition of the features, and the outstanding actions required to address them. It also shows, where possible, the estimated cost of the action and the delivery bodies whose involvement will be required to implement the action. Lead delivery bodies will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the action, but not necessarily funding it. Delivery partners will need to support the lead delivery body in implementing the action. In the process of developing the SIPs Natural England has approached the delivery bodies to seek agreement on the actions and their roles in delivering them, although in some cases these discussions have not yet been concluded. Other interested parties, including landowners and managers, will be involved as the detailed actions are agreed and delivered. Funding options are indicated as potential (but not necessarily agreed or secured) sources to fund the actions.

1 Public Access/Disturbance

Disturbance from recreation (particularly walkers and dog owners) affects wintering birds by reducing the time available for feeding, and increasing energy expenditure when avoiding those sources of disturbance.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1A	Develop, agree and implement an Access Management Strategy for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.	Staff time	2014-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	East Northamptonshire District Council, Local Authority(ies), Nene Valley NIA, Northamptonshire LEP, RSPB, Wellingborough Borough Council, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, River Nene Regional Park, Local nature partnership
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1B	Manage recreation disturbance at Northamptonshire Washlands.	Staff time	2014-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	RSPB, River Nene Regional Park, Nene NIA Partnership, Local nature partnership

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1C	Undertake a survey of bird behaviour in relation to recreational disturbance on key lakes.	£40,000	2016-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	RSPB, Nene NIA Partnership, Local nature partnership

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1D	Undertake a survey of the lakes to understand the distribution of waterbirds within the SPA.	£40,000	2016-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	RSPB, Nene NIA Partnership, Local nature partnership

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1E	Establish a Joint Strategic Partnership.	Staff time	2015-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	East Northamptonshire District Council, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterboro, Wellingborough Borough Council, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, River Nene Regional Park, Nene NIA Partnership, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1F	Establish a wardening scheme within the SPA.	Staff time	2015-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	Nene Valley NIA, RSPB, The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterboro, River Nene Regional Park, Rockingham Forest Trust

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
1G	Ensure complete coverage of WeBS counts across the SPA	Staff time	2014-20	Existing Local Project	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

2 Planning Permission: general

There continues to be an increase in built and recreational development within and around the SPA leading to loss and fragmentation of habitat, and increased disturbance. Seven local planning authorities are involved with decision making; policies can be inconsistent across the authorities or provide insufficient protection.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
2A	Develop a Supplementary Planning Document relating to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.	Staff time	2014-15	Advice	Staff time	Natural England	East Northamptonshire District Council, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, Wellingborough Borough Council, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
2B	Ensure a complete coverage of WeBS counts is maintained across the SPA.	Staff time	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

3 Fisheries: Freshwater

An increasing number of lakes are being utilised as freshwater fisheries; overstocking of certain fish species can lead to declines in water quality and availability of food for waterbirds which feed on aquatic plants and invertebrates. The issuing of licences to control fish-eating birds can reduce the populations of species for which the site is important.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
3A	Develop fishery management plans for key fisheries within the SPA, focusing on those where a HRA will be needed as part of the new Live Fish Movement Scheme or licensing activities relating to cormorants.	Staff time	2014-16	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Staff time	Natural England	Environment Agency, Fisheries, Angling Trust(s)
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
3B	Ensure a complete coverage of WeBS counts is maintained across the SPA.	Staff time	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

4 Change in land management

Continued habitat management is required to ensure the balance of short grassland, reedbed, fen and open water is maintained. For example: grazing or mowing is required to maintain short grassland required by wigeon and golden plover; scrub /tree control is required to control invasive scrub and willow to maintain open sightlines and access to waterbodies; scrub removal and water level management is required to maintain suitable habitats in reedbeds for wintering bittern. There remains a significant area which is not currently under appropriate management and where existing mechanisms are not proving effective.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
4A	Introduce grazing and scrub clearance to remaining unmanaged areas. Ensure management continues across the site and takes into account habitat changes as a result of climate change.	Not yet determined	2015-16	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES), New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)	Natural England	Landowner(s)

Site details

The tables in this section contain site-relevant contextual information and links

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	A140(NB) <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> : European golden plover
	Waterbird assemblage
	A021(NB) <i>Botaurus stellaris</i> : Great bittern
	A051(NB) <i>Anas strepera</i> : Gadwall

Site location and links

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA

Area (ha) 1357.67	Grid reference SP966717	Map link
Local Authorities	Northamptonshire	
Site Conservation Objectives	European Site Conservation Objectives for Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	
European Marine Site conservation advice	n/a	
Regulation 33/35 Package	n/a	
Marine Management Organisation site plan	n/a	

Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) provides the main framework for managing the water environment throughout Europe. Under the WFD a management plan must be developed for each river basin district. The River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) include a summary of the measures needed for water dependent Natura 2000 sites to meet their conservation objectives. For the second round of RBMPs, SIPs are being used to capture the priorities and new measures required for water dependent habitats on Natura 2000 sites. SIP actions for non-water dependent sites/habitats do not form part of the RBMPs and associated consultation.

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA

River basin

[Anglian RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Nene

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

GB105032045060, GB105032045090, GB105032045140, GB105032045230, GB105032045330, GB105032050383, GB30537913

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	n/a

Ramsar	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	18/12/2014	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000



European Site Conservation Objectives for Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Site Code: UK9020296



With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- **The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features**
- **The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features**
- **The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely**
- **The population of each of the qualifying features, and,**
- **The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.**

This document should be read in conjunction with the accompanying *Supplementary Advice* document, which provides more detailed advice and information to enable the application and achievement of the Objectives set out above.

Qualifying Features:

A021 *Botaurus stellaris*; Great bittern (Non-breeding)

A051 *Anas strepera*; Gadwall (Non-breeding)

A140 *Pluvialis apricaria*; European golden plover (Non-breeding)

Waterbird assemblage

Explanatory Notes: European Site Conservation Objectives

These Conservation Objectives are those referred to in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the Habitats Regulations'). They must be considered when a competent authority is required to make a 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' including an Appropriate Assessment, under the relevant parts of this legislation.

These Conservation Objectives, and the accompanying Supplementary Advice (where this is available), will also provide a framework to inform the management of the European Site and the prevention of deterioration of habitats and significant disturbance of its qualifying features

These Conservation Objectives are set for each bird feature for a [Special Protection Area \(SPA\)](#).

Where these objectives are being met, the site will be considered to exhibit a high degree of integrity and to be contributing to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive.

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