

# Horsford Neighbourhood Plan Habitat Regulation Screening Report

December 2017



To accompany Version 2: Neighbourhood Plan submission draft for examination

# 1. Introduction

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This Habitat Regulations Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Horsford Neighbourhood Plan which is being produced by the Horsford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The aim of this Screening Report is to assess whether there are likely to be any significant effects on European Sites as a result of the emerging policies set out in the draft Neighbourhood Plan that would necessitate the production of a full Habitat Regulations Assessment.

This report assesses, as far as practical, whether there are likely to be any significant effects on European Designated Sites within or relatively proximate to the approved Neighbourhood Plan area, which comprises the civil parish of Horsford.

## Legislative basis

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

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

The purpose of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is therefore to ensure the protection of European Designated Sites (Natura 2000) wherever practicable. European Designated Sites are designed to form an ecologically coherent network of designated spaces across Europe.

European Designated Sites, (Natura 2000) include **Special Protection Areas** (SPAs) and **Special Areas for Conservation** (SAC). As a matter of policy the government also expects authorities to treat **Ramsar sites**, **candidate Special Areas of Conservation** (cSAC) and **proposed Special Protection Areas** (pSPA) as if they are European Designated Sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.

**Definitions** (taken from the DEFRA – Joint Nature Conservation Committee)

- **Special Protection Areas** (SPAs) are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive, which came into force in April 1979. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds and for regularly occurring migratory species.
- **Special Areas of Conservation** (SACs) are strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of the Habitats Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species. The listed habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds).
- **Ramsar sites** are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the ‘basic conditions’ set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

## 2. Approach

The first step in producing this Screening Report involves the identification of European Designated Sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area itself or in close proximity to it. European Designated Sites were identified using open-source software provided by DEFRA (Magic). The relevant European Designated Sites identified are as follows:

- a. (Part of) Norfolk Valley Fens SAC (covering Buxton Heath)
- b. (Part of) River Wensum SAC

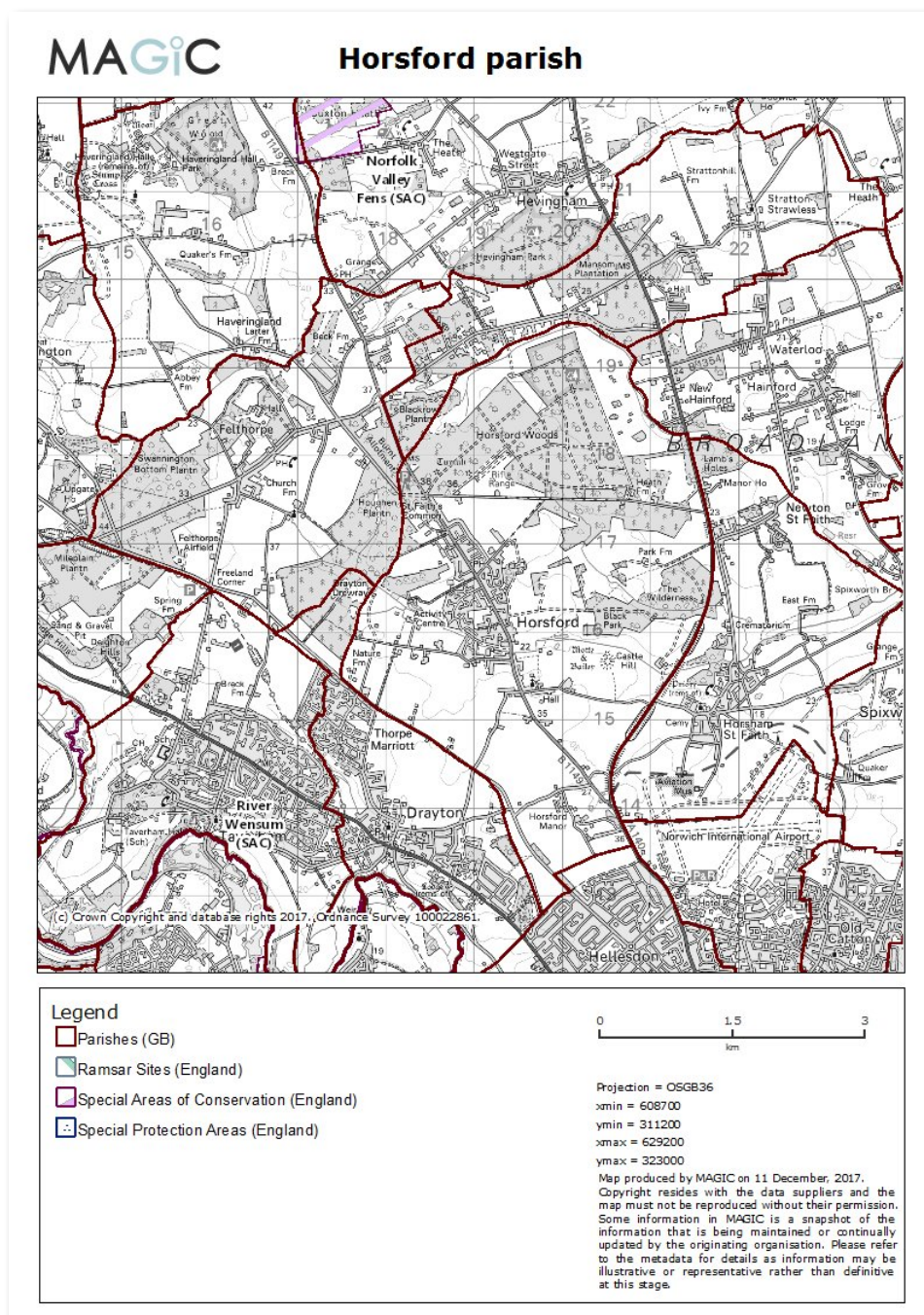


Figure 1 left: Horsford in relation to relevant European Designated Sites – none in the parish of Horsford.

Please note, there are no relevant European Designated Sites within the parish of Horsford.

The next step in the assessment is to undertake an appraisal of the extent to which the proposed policies could have a significant effect on the European Designated Sites. Specifically the assessment considers any potential effect that policies may have on the 'qualifying features' of each European Designated Site. The 'qualifying features' for the identified European Designated Sites were set out in the Appropriate Assessment produced in support of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) in 2009 for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk and these are provided at Appendix 1.

### 3. Screening Assessment

The table below provides an assessment of any likely significant effect of each Neighbourhood Plan policy on the European Designated Sites. For the purposes of this assessment the policies appraised are those that were issued in the Horsford Neighbourhood Plan Version 2: submission draft for examination, December 2017.

#### Key

- No likely significant effect (NLSE) on the site’s qualifying features
- Likely significant effect (NLSE) on the site’s qualifying features
- Uncertain whether it is NLSE or LSE

| Neighbourhood Plan policy                  | Comments  | Likely effect on identified sites |                  |            |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------|
|  |   | Broadland SPA                     | Broadland RAMSAR | Broads SAC |
| <b>COM1: Community meeting space</b>       | This policy seeks to support a new community meeting space should it be required. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                   | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |
| <b>COM2: New outdoor recreation space</b>  | This policy seeks to deliver new outdoor recreation space through new development. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                  | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |
| <b>COM3: Allotments</b>                    | This policy seeks to deliver further allotments. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.  | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |
| <b>COM4: Primary school</b>                | This policy seeks to deliver expansion of school facilities and/or merging of the two school sites. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features. | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |
| <b>COM5: Primary health care provision</b> | This policy seeks to improve primary health care provision and associated parking. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                  | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |
| <b>HBE1: Mixed housing</b>                 | This policy seeks to ensure a mix of housing provision across Horsford. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                             | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |
| <b>HBE2: Connectivity</b>                  | This policy seeks to ensure that all developments are laid out with good  | NLSE                              | NLSE             | NLSE       |

|   |   |      |      |      |
|---|---|------|------|------|
|   | connectivity. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.   |      |      |      |
| <b>HBE3: High quality design</b>                    | This policy seeks to ensure that all development should be of high quality design. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.  | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>TRA1: Walkable and bikeable community</b>        | This policy aims to make Horsford a walkable and bikeable community to improve access to village amenities and the countryside. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features. | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>TRA2: Public transport</b>                       | This policy seeks to ensure public transport is built into significant new developments. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.  | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>TRA3: Private parking</b>                        | This policy seeks to ensure new housing developments accommodate the private car. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.   | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>TRA4: Public parking for non-residential use</b> | This policy seeks to ensure parking for cars and bicycles is considered for non-residential use. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                                | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>ENV1: Woodland and heathland</b>                 | This policy seeks to protect or enhance the natural environment, particularly woodland and heathland. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                           | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>ENV2: New circular footpath</b>                  | This policy aims to maintain and enhance the connectivity of all green corridors where possible. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                                | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>ENV3: Local Green Space</b>                      | This policy identifies 'Local Green Spaces' for special protection. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.   | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>ENV4: Views and vistas</b>                       | This policy seeks to protect views across the parish that are of particular community importance. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                               | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>ENV5: Trees and site</b>                         | This policy seeks to retain and increase the number of trees in the parish. It is   | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |

|  |  |      |      |      |
|--|--|------|------|------|
| <b>boundaries</b>                        | unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.  |      |      |      |
| <b>ENV6: Street lighting</b>             | This policy aims to keep street lighting to a minimum. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.                 | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>BUS1: New businesses</b>              | This policy aims to encourage new businesses into Horsford. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.            | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>BUS2: New or expanded supermarket</b> | This policy encourages the provision of a new or expanded supermarket. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features. | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |
| <b>BUS3: Attractive village</b>          | This policy aims to enhance the village's aesthetic qualities. It is unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any of the qualifying features.         | NLSE | NLSE | NLSE |



## 4. Conclusion

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The assessment suggests that there is likely to be no significant negative effects on the European Designated Sites resulting from the Policies detailed within the draft Horsford Neighbourhood Plan.

Natural England are satisfied that there will be no significant effects (appendix 2).

Therefore a full Habitat Regulations Assessment is not required.

# Appendix

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## Appendix 1: Details of relevant European Sites

This information has been taken from the Appropriate Assessment – Task 1 report produced in support of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk.

### Norfolk Valley Fens SAC

#### (i) Site Description & Qualifying Features

Norfolk Valley Fens comprises a series of valley-head spring-fed fens which are very rare in the lowlands (Figures A.8a and 8b). Most of the vegetation at this site is of the small sedge fen type, but with transitions to reedswamp and other fen and wet grassland types. The individual fens vary in their structure according to intensity of management and provide a wide range of variation. There is a rich flora associated with these fens.

The site is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for the narrow-mouthed whorl snail *Vertigo angustior*, and the desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*.

#### SAC Qualifying Features - Habitats

- Alkaline fens;
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*;
- European dry heaths;
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*);
- Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-siltladen soils (*Molinion caeruleae*);
- Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*, and;
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae* and *Salicion albae*).

#### SAC Qualifying Features - Species

- Narrow-mouthed whorl snail *Vertigo angustior*, and;
- Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*.

#### (ii) Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives are to maintain in favourable condition the qualifying features of the designation.

Management agreements, Countryside Stewardship and ESA payments help towards the reintroduction or promotion of the continued use of traditional management. Improved understanding of the water needs of these wetlands is required and is the subject of work by the Environment Agency and Natural England. Any effects of groundwater abstraction

which are identified will be addressed through appropriate licensing regimes, and the Environment Agency Review of Consents and Asset Management Plans.

### **(iii) Vulnerability**

These alkaline fens are very vulnerable to reductions on the water table and to a decrease in the volume of spring flows arising from groundwater abstraction. The cessation of traditional cutting and grazing management has contributed to the spread of scrub and woodland leading to the drying-out of the fens.

## **River Wensum SAC**

### **(i) Site Description & Qualifying Features**

The Wensum is a chalk-fed river in eastern England (Figure A.11). Although it is extensively regulated by weirs, *Ranunculus* vegetation occurs sporadically throughout much of the river's length. Stream water-crowfoot *R. penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans* is the dominant *Ranunculus* species but thread-leaved water-crowfoot *R. trichophyllus* and fan-leaved water-crowfoot *R. circinatus* also occur. It also supports riverine white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* populations.

#### *SAC Qualifying Features – Annex I Habitats*

Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation.

#### *SAC Qualifying Features – Annex II Species*

- White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*;
- Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*;
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, and;
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*.

### **(ii) Conservation Objectives**

The conservation objectives are to maintain in favourable condition, the:  
Water course of plain to montane levels with *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation.

And to maintain in favourable condition the habitats for the populations of:

- Bullhead;
- Brook lamprey;
- White-clawed crayfish, and;
- Desmoulin's whorl snail.

### **(iii) Vulnerability**

This SAC is vulnerable to alterations in the channel form which may affect habitat diversity, and further development on the flood plain which might alter the flow regime of the river. The river's ecology is also at risk from input of silt and chemicals as a result of arable farming practices, from eutrophication, and may be threatened by water abstraction.

As with most of the remaining crayfish populations in the south and east of England, the threats from non-native crayfish species and crayfish plague are severe. Designation of the river as a SAC provides as much protection as can be afforded to such vulnerable populations.

Populations of lamprey, *Lampetra planeri*, and bulhead, *Cottus gobio*, are dependent on the maintenance of riffle habitats and might also be vulnerable to the introduction of non-native fish species. Populations of *Vertigo moulinsiana* are susceptible to interference with the emergent bankside vegetation in which they occur.

The River Wensum Restoration Plan has been implemented to restore the river to its hydrological functionality, and will aim to take actions to reduce pressures particularly in relation to the river morphology.

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## **Appendix 2: Natural England response to the HRA Screening Report, 18 January 2018**

**From:** Consultations (NE) [<mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk>] **Sent:** 18 January 2018 13:24 **To:** Richard Squires **Subject:** Re: Horsford Neighbourhood Plan – HRA Screening Report

Dear Mr Squires

Horsford Neighbourhood Plan – HRA Screening Report

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

**Natural England does not consider that this HRA screening report poses any likely risk or opportunity in relation to our statutory purpose, and so does not wish to comment on this consultation.**

The lack of comment from Natural England should not be interpreted as a statement that there are no impacts on the natural environment. Other bodies and individuals may wish to make comments that might help the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to fully take account of any environmental risks and opportunities relating to this document.

If you disagree with our assessment of this proposal as low risk, or should the proposal be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then in

accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006,  
please consult Natural England again.

Yours sincerely

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