

Revised Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)  
Screening Matrix and Appropriate Assessment Statement

**PLEASE NOTE: Undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of the decision maker as the Competent Authority for the purpose of the Habitats Regulations, however, it is the responsibility of the Qualifying Body to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose.**

Stage 1 - Details of the plan or project	
Neighbourhood Plan:	<p>Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2014 – 2029</p> <p><b><i>Examination Stage April 2021</i></b></p>
No houses indicated by Chichester Local Plan for Neighbourhood Plan Area:	10
No houses proposed by the Neighbourhood Plan:	<p><b>11</b> – Policy H1 - Land opposite the Green, Plaistow</p> <p>In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan allocates a small currently redundant light industrial site for mixed use, light industrial and residential (Ref EE4 - Little Springfield Farm). The precise mix of uses and quantum of floor space is not yet determined. The site is about 0.5ha in size and adjoins areas of woodland.</p>
Will the Neighbourhood Plan result in a net increase in residential development?	<p>Yes - Due to the combination of the allocation of site H1, windfall development within the village of Ifold and the allocation of EE4 - Little Springfield Farm.</p> <p><i><u>Note:</u> This level of development is over and above that identified in the Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014-2029 (adopted July 2015) and the subsequent Site Allocations DPD (adopted January 2019) and tested by the evidence base underpinning those documents.</i></p>
Other than residential development, what other key policy areas does the plan cover?	<p>The aim of the plan is to protect the sense of community, the safety and rural tranquillity of the Parish. They propose that the four main village / hamlets will grow naturally; sympathetically blending new with old; respecting the character, natural boundaries and vistas. The plan recognises the importance of the Parish in contributing to the setting of the South Downs National Park.</p> <p>The plan, like the Chichester Local Plan, allows for development within the settlement boundary of Ifold subject to a number of caveats, specifically a need to prevent the loss of valuable trees, hedges or other natural features that form part of the character of the Ifold settlement.</p> <p>Support is also given to local employment uses including live/work units, and proposals for small-scale business development through the use of redundant agricultural buildings and other facilities.</p>

Status of Neighbourhood Plan:	Submission
European site potentially impacted - Is the plan area within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5.6km radius of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA / Ramsar</li> <li>• 3.5km of Pagham Harbour SPA / Ramsar</li> <li>• 6.5km or 12km of Ebernoe Common SAC / The Mens SAC / Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC</li> <li>• 400m or 5km of Wealden Heaths Phase 2 SPA</li> <li>• The Sussex North Water Supply Zone (impact on Arun Valley SAC / SPA / Ramsar)</li> </ul>	<p>Yes – the plan area is within 6.5km of Ebernoe Common and 6.5km of The Mens.</p> <p>Yes - the plan area is within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.</p>
Are any allocations within any of the above zones of influence?	Yes, Land opposite The Green, Plaistow (Ref H1) and the mixed use site at Little Springfield Farm, Ifold (Ref EE4) are within 6.5km of Ebernoe Common and 6.5km of The Mens.
Are there any other projects or plans that together with the plan / application being assessed could affect the Parish?	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chichester Local Plan: Key policies 2014 – 2029 establishes the main planning policies covering the District including policies on housing growth, the economy, biodiversity protection and landscape quality.</li> <li>• <b>Chichester Site Allocations DPD (adopted 22 January 2019) includes an allocation of a greenfield site at Little Springfield Farm in Ifold for 10 homes (Ref PL1)</b> <i>Please note, this is different to the site allocated for mixed-use development (Ref EE4) in the Neighbourhood Plan.</i></li> <li>• South Downs National Park Local Plan (now at Examination - in particular Core Policy SD 10: International Sites). The National Park designation covers part of the Parish.</li> <li>• Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol (currently in draft)</li> </ul>
Lead Planning Officer: Valerie Dobson (Principal Planning Policy Officer)	

## Stage 2 - HRA screening assessment

**Test 1: the significance test** – The Qualifying Body to provide evidence so that a judgement can be made as to whether there could be any potential significant impacts of the development on the integrity of the SPA/SAC/Ramsar.

The proposed allocations are within the Sussex North water resources supply zone (WRZ). The Sussex North Water Resource Zone includes supplies from a groundwater abstraction which cannot with certainty conclude is not having an adverse impact on integrity on the Arun Valley SPA, SAC and Ramsar. As the plan will increase water demand within the Sussex North WSZ mitigation will be required.

The proposed allocation within the Neighbourhood Plan is within the 6.5km zone of influence of both Ebernoe Common and The Mens. In combination with the allocation in the Chichester Site Allocations DPD this will result in the development of at least 21 homes. In accordance with advice from Natural England and as detailed in the emerging 'Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol', development could result in the direct loss of habitats and commuting / foraging paths, lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration. Therefore development proposals on greenfield sites and sites that support, or are in close proximity to, suitable commuting and foraging habitat (including mature vegetative linear features such as woodlands, hedgerows riverine and wetland habitats) within the identified 6.5km and 12km ranges, should have due regard to the possibility that Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats will be utilising the site. Within the 6.5km zone all impacts on bats must be considered given that these habitats are considered critical for sustaining the populations of bats. Within the wider 12km zone significant impacts or severance to flightlines are to be considered.

The Neighbourhood Plan gives support to a number of development types including new housing, local employment uses, residential windfall sites and a small mixed use allocation, the impact of which cannot be screened out at this stage. The site at Little Springfield Farm (Ref EE4) is currently vacant so any new use will increase levels of activity which, when combined with the residential allocation in the Chichester Site Allocations DPD (Ref PL1) just to the north and the allocation of Land opposite the Green, Plaistow (Ref H1), could potentially be significant.

### **Stage 2 Conclusion**

Would the proposal lead to likely significant effects on the integrity of a European Site?

**Yes** – the proposals could lead to likely significant effects on Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar site in combination with other plans and likely development proposals within the Sussex North WRZ due to increased water abstraction adversely affecting water management within the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar downstream of the abstraction point.

**Yes** – the proposals could lead to likely significant effects in combination with other plans and likely development proposals within the zones of influence of both Ebernoe Common SAC and The Mens SAC.

(If yes, continue to Stage 3)

### **Stage 3 - HRA – Appropriate Assessment**

Test 2: the integrity test – If there are any potential significant impacts, the competent authority must be satisfied that adequate mitigation is in place. Other than for Bird Aware Solent and the Joint Pagham Scheme of Mitigation, the competent authority must also be satisfied that all details which demonstrate any long term management, maintenance and funding of any solution have been provided.

#### **The reasons for the designation of the Ebernoe Common SAC are as follows:**

Ebernoe Common is an internationally important example of ancient woodland. It qualifies as an SAC for both habitats and species. It contains a wide range of structural and vegetation community types which have been influenced in their development by differences in the underlying soils and past management. The native trees, particularly those with old growth characteristics, support rich lichen and fungal communities and a diverse woodland breeding bird assemblage. Nationally important maternity roosts for Barbastelle and Bechstein's bat occur within the woodland.

The designated features are:

H9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex

S1308 Barbastelle bat, *Barbastella barbastellus*

S1323 Bechstein's bat, *Myotis bechsteini*

**The site conservation objectives are:**

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

**The potential significant effects are:**

- Direct loss of commuting / foraging paths
- Lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration.

In themselves these may be minor but in combination with other plans and proposed developments within 12km of the SAC this may result in significant effects.

**The reasons for the designation of The Mens SAC are as follows:**

The Mens is an extensive area of mature beech woodland. It qualifies as an SAC for both habitats and species. It is important for its size, structural diversity and the extremely rich fungal and lichen floras which occur here. It is developing a near-natural high forest structure, in response to only limited silvicultural intervention over the 20th century, combined with the effects of natural events such as the 1987 great storm. The site also supports an important population of barbastelle bat.

The qualifying features are:

H9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex

S1308 Barbastelle bat, *Barbastella barbastellus*

**The site conservation objectives are:**

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

**The potential significant effects are:**

- Direct loss of commuting / foraging paths

- Lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration.

In themselves these may be minor but in combination with other plans and proposed developments within 12km of the SAC this may result in significant effects.

#### **Relevant Mitigation Measures:**

The Barbastelle bat main flightlines from both Ebernoe Common Sac and the Mens SAC were surveyed and mapped in 2008 (see 'BARBASTELLE BATS IN THE SUSSEX WEST WEALD 1997 – 2008' by Frank Greenaway, report to The West Weald Landscape Project, November 2008) The flightlines at that date did not extend to either Plaistow or Ifold. The likelihood of the site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan causing significant disruption is therefore small but cannot be discounted completely due to changes in use over time since 2008 or from occasional use by the qualifying species. Therefore the Plan incorporates precautionary mitigation measures.

The Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Plan Policy EH3: Protection of trees, woodlands and natural vegetation resists development that damages or results in the loss of trees / hedgerows unless the need for development clearly outweighs the loss. In these cases replacement planting that supports biodiversity will be required. Policy EH2: Protection of the natural environment requires that development does not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as hedgerows and historic shaws. Policy EE4: Little Springfield Farm (Brownfield Site) requires that there is no harmful impact on the adjoining ancient woodland and the housing allocation, Policy H1: Land opposite The Green, requires development to retain existing mature trees and hedges, include suitable native-species landscaping.

In support of the allocation of the nearby adopted site Policy PL1 – Little Springfield Farm, Ifold in the Chichester Site Allocations DPD, an Appropriate Assessment has already been done of the likely significant effects of that proposal. Wording has been added to Policy PL1 requiring any application to take account of any adverse effect on foraging and commuting bat species associated with Ebernoe Common SAC and The Mens SAC.

The South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan (submission version, with adoption due Summer 2019) Policy SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Policy SD11: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows support developments within the National Park that retain, protect and enhance biodiversity features such as commuting routes through sites. The loss or damage of non-protected trees, woodland or hedgerows should be avoided but if it is unavoidable appropriate replacement or compensation will be required. Policy SD10: International Sites requires development proposals within identified conservation areas and on greenfield sites or sites with or in close proximity to suitable commuting and foraging habitat, to have due regard to the possibility that Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats will be utilising the site. Such proposals are required to incorporate necessary surveys, retain key features (foraging habitat and commuting routes) and provide a suitable buffer to safeguard against disturbance.

The Reasons for designation of Arun Valley SPA / SAC / Ramsar site are as follows:

The SPA is designated for the following features of interest:  
Bewick's swan, *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* - A037, nb  
Waterbird assemblage

The SAC is designated for the following features of interest:  
Little whirlpool ram's-horn snail *Anisus vorticulus*

*Anisus vorticulus* occurs across a range of sites in southern and eastern England. The Arun valley

is one of the three main population centres for this species in the UK. This SAC includes two of its core sites in the wash lands of the Arun floodplain (Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wild Brooks SSSIs). Both SSSI component sites are comprised of a series of wet meadows dissected by a network of ditches. Within the Arun valley these two SSSIs have had the strongest and most consistent presence of *Anisus vorticulus*.

The Ramsar site is designated for the following features of interest:

Waterbird assemblage - Wintering

Wetland invertebrate assemblage

Wetland plant assemblage

The Site Conservation Objectives are:

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

The document from Natural England “Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features” sets a number of targets for the site under the supporting processes objective above. These cover hydrology and flow, water quantity, area depth and water quality.

The hydrology of the river Arun is the major factor affecting these targets and this in turn is affected by the abstraction at Hardham for the supply of drinking water.

Relevant Mitigation Measures.

The Plaistow and Ifold NP does not currently contain relevant mitigation measures. Subject to Natural England’s comments below mitigation policy will need to be added to the plan to ensure that the increase in water demand from the new homes is offset by reduction in demand elsewhere in the WRZ, through increased water efficiency or other relevant mitigation measures.

#### **Stage 4 – Appropriate Assessment to be carried out by the Competent Authority (the local planning authority) in liaison with Natural England**

##### **Conclusion**

The Plaistow & Ifold Neighbourhood Plan may have a likely significant effect in combination with other proposals on the Ebernoe Common SAC and The Mens SAC. This is in relation to the potential impact upon Barbastelle and Bechstein’s Bat flightlines due to the relatively close proximity to two SACs.

The site at Springfield Farm contains currently vacant premises which may provide roosting space, it is connected to Waphurst Wood to the south and there is a small waterbody situated nearby. Land opposite the Green in Plaistow is bordered by mature hedgerows and Beggars Copse / Long Copse are close by and likely to provide suitable habitat for bats.

The preservation of features of relevance to commuting bats (along with a suitable buffer) should be possible without significant deliverability implications for the proposals, but bat surveys should be conducted on all relevant sites to determine the precise requirements.

In relation to the impact from lighting, development proposals should demonstrate that all

opportunities to minimise or remove the need for lighting are taken. This includes external lighting but also the spill from internal lighting for example through roof lights and conservatories.

To safeguard against noise and vibration during construction relevant applications should be accompanied by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which details the measures to be taken to minimise environmental impact from the construction phase of the development.

With the inclusion of the mitigation measures set out above in the Neighbourhood Plan, Chichester District Council concludes that the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan **will not lead to any significant or adverse effects on the integrity of the Ebernoe Common SAC and The Mens SAC.**

Without mitigation measures to ensure that water demand overall does not increase as a result of the plan (acting in combination with other plans and programmes in the Sussex North WRZ), it is not possible at the present time (June 2021) to conclude that an adverse effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley SPA/SAC/Ramsar site will not occur.

Having made this assessment and consulted with Natural England and fully considered any representation received (see below), the authority **does not at this stage agree** to the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

#### Natural England Officer Comments:

Natural England agrees with your authority's conclusions.

We agree that in the absence of mitigation it is not currently possible to conclude that an adverse effect on the Integrity of the Arun Valley SPA/SAC/Ramsar site will not occur.

We further advise that effective mitigation to ensure that the plan will not increase water demand in the Sussex North WRZ needs to be addressed strategically through the current Local Plan Review and in partnership with neighbouring LPAs within Sussex North. Natural England will continue to work in partnership with your authority and neighbouring authorities to secure a Sussex North water neutrality strategy and associated policy for this complex issue.

Once secured the strategy and policy will be applicable to Neighbourhood Plans within Sussex North.

We have provided your authority with advice on potential mitigation measures to consider for current applications within Sussex North although again we have advised that mitigation should be secured strategically at the Local Plan level. Our advice includes a combination of maximising water efficiency of new builds to achieve a target of 90L per person per day and, in addition, providing water offsetting. Measures include ensuring new builds incorporate rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling as well as water efficient fixtures.

Offsetting includes retrofitting of water efficient fixtures to Council- owned properties or other properties where they have control of the fixtures or can reasonably certain there is control of the fixtures for the likely time required (through to 2030). These must be located within Sussex North Area and be over and above measures included in Southern Water's Water Management and Business Plan.

Offsetting needs to be in place until a long term, more sustainable water supply can be secured.

All mitigation needs to be sufficiently certain in order to satisfy the requirement of the Habitats Regulations

Date: 11 June 2021

Does the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Neighbourhood Plan require amending as a result of the Appropriate Assessment and / or Natural England's comments?

**Yes**

If 'YES', what needs to change?

A) Mitigation measures for bats

Policy EH2 – Protection of Natural Environment should include reference to the need for a Construction Environmental Management Plan

Policy EH3 – Protection of trees, woodlands and natural vegetation should include reference to the relevance of trees and hedgerows for flightlines and foraging paths for bats as well as a need to secure an appropriate buffer from development.

Policy EH5 – Lighting Emissions should include reference to the need to reduce lighting for the benefit of important local bat communities.

Policy EH5 – Lighting Emissions should include requirements to minimise light spill from internal lighting.

B) Mitigation measures for Water Resources

Until replaced with a strategic scheme of mitigation or a more sustainable source of water supply, the plan should ensure that developments mitigate water resource impacts through a combination of maximising water efficiency of new builds to achieve a target of 90L per person per day and, in addition, providing water offsetting. Measures include ensuring new builds incorporate rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling as well as water efficient fixtures.