



Local Development Plan 2032 Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment

October 2019

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Local Development Plan 2032

Draft Plan Strategy

October 2019

Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Have your say

Making a Representation to the draft Plan Strategy

The draft Plan Strategy provides the strategic direction for the Council area over a 15 year period, which will be reviewed following adoption of the Local Policies Plan.

Regulation 16 of the Local Development Plan (LDP) Regulations 2015 states that any person may make representations about the draft Plan Strategy document. The Council is conducting a 13 week period of consultation on the draft Plan Strategy from 11 October 2019 – 10 January 2020. Whilst the formal (statutory) period for consultation is eight weeks, the council is adding an additional week to allow for the Christmas period.

Formal Consultation

The draft Plan Strategy will be published for formal consultation on Friday 8th November 2019 closing at 5pm on Friday 10th January 2020. Please note that representations received after the closing date on 10th January 2020 will not be considered.

The Department for Infrastructure Development Plan Practice Note 09 'Submission and Handling of Representations', sets out the following requirements for the submission of any representation to the draft Plan Strategy.

In accordance with best practice, your representation:

- must be submitted in full during the public consultation period
- should demonstrate why the draft Plan Strategy is not sound and/or justify how any proposed changes make the draft Plan Strategy more sound
- should demonstrate how any proposed change(s) meet the requirements of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and is more appropriate in terms of meeting the sustainability objectives of the draft Plan Strategy.

The main test for the Plan Strategy is **soundness** which is assessed at Independent Examination (see the Department for Infrastructure's Development Plan Practice Note 06 Soundness). It involves testing the principles, content and preparation process of the draft Plan Strategy against a list of key criteria.

When telling us of any changes that should be made to the Plan Strategy to make it more sound, you must take into account the tests of **soundness**. Please indicate if you would like your representation to be dealt with at Independent Examination as a written or oral representation.

You can make a representation in the following ways:

Online:

- the online survey to the draft Plan Strategy and online survey to the Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment, Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment, Section 75 Equality Impact Screening Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment are available on the Council's website at www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk following commencement of the formal consultation period.

By email:

- the above forms are also available on the Council's website which can be returned by email to LDP@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk following commencement of the formal consultation period.

By mail:

Write to us at: Local Development Plan Team
Civic Headquarters, Lagan Valley Island,
Lisburn, BT27 4RL

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Non-Technical Summary

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Regulation 43 of the Habitats Regulations, which implements a requirement of the Habitats and Birds Directives, requires an appropriate assessment to be undertaken of plans and projects which are likely to have a significant effect on an international site in Northern Ireland, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This is known as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and provides for assessment of the implications of a land use plan for international sites in view of their conservation objectives. For this report international sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPAs) and Ramsar sites.

This draft HRA Report is prepared in support of the draft Plan Strategy for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Local Development Plan (LDP). It records the assessment of the draft Plan Strategy and its potential impacts on international sites.

Overview of draft Plan Strategy

The draft Plan Strategy provides a plan-led policy framework for making day-to-day decisions to help Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (the Council) deliver sustainable development for employment, homes and infrastructure in a high quality environment across the Council area. It sets out how the area will change and grow until 2032. The nature of the draft Plan Strategy is that it has the potential to have a significant effect on some international sites, therefore we are undertaking a HRA in our role as a competent authority to ensure the legal requirements of the Habitats Regulations are fully met.

International Sites Overview

A total of 15 international sites that have a theoretical connection to the plan area were identified. On further review it was found that 13 of these sites might be affected by the draft Plan Strategy. There are only two international sites partly within the council area, Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. Sites beyond the Council area with an ecological connection were also included, for example Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site which is connected via the River Lagan. On a precautionary basis, all sites within 10km of the plan area were also considered. Appendix 4, Maps 2 to 5 illustrate these sites in relation to the Council area.

Screening of the Plan

All of the Plan Strategy proposals were reviewed, from the Vision and Plan Objectives and the Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy in Part 1, to the Operational Policies in Part 2. Following the screening of plan proposals it was found that there is potential for likely significant effects to arise from ten operational policies: ED5 Major Economic Development in the Countryside; MD3 to MD5 Minerals Development policies; TOU2 to TOU7 Tourism policies; UT1 Utilities; and these were screened in for appropriate assessment.

Appropriate Assessment

Those policies screened in were assessed under four groups: Major Economic Development in the Countryside; Minerals Development; Tourism; and Utilities. Mitigation measures were identified to strengthen the protection afforded to international sites by these policies through amendments to the policies and clarification in the Justification and Amplification.

Conclusions of the HRA

Assuming that the recommended mitigation measures are all accepted, and the plan amended accordingly, it is possible to ascertain that the draft Plan Strategy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international sites. Following public consultation and independent examination of the draft Plan Strategy the HRA will be finalised and adopted by the Council and published alongside the adopted Plan Strategy.

1 Introduction

Local Development Plan 2032

The draft Plan Strategy is the first document in a two-stage process, the second being the Local Policies Plan. Together these will constitute the Council's new Local Development Plan (LDP). It follows the publication of the Preferred Options Paper on 30th March 2017. The draft Plan Strategy takes account of the particular characteristics of our district and the views of our residents, Council members and key consultees. It provides the statutory policy framework for the future development of the Council area from 2017-2032 aligned with the Council's Community Plan. The draft Plan Strategy sets out how the area will develop and grow over the period up to 2032.

The draft Plan Strategy is set out in two parts which are subdivided as follows:

Draft Plan Strategy PART 1

- Chapters 1&2 Introduction, Policy and Spatial Context
- Chapter 3 Vision and Plan Objectives
- Chapter 4 Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy
- Chapter 5 Monitoring and Review

There are 5 appendices that provide detail that informs the draft Plan Strategy. Those of particular relevance to this HRA are Appendix D - Evaluation of Settlement Characteristics and Appendix E - Monitoring Framework.

Draft Plan Strategy PART 2 Operational Policies

Preamble Context for operational policies, how all policies must be considered.

Operational Policies Topic-based and grouped under the six plan objectives as follows:

- A. A Quality Place - Enabling Sustainable Communities and Delivery of New Homes
 - 1. Housing in Settlements
 - 2. Community Facilities in Settlements
 - 3. Development in the Countryside
- B. A Thriving Place - Driving Sustainable Economic Growth
 - 4. Economic Development
 - 5. Minerals Development
- C. A Vibrant Place - Growing our City, Town Centres, Retailing and Other Uses
 - 6. Town Centres, Retailing and Other Uses
- D. An Attractive Place - Promoting Sustainable Tourism, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation
 - 7. Tourism
 - 8. Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation
- E. A Green Place - Protecting and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment
 - 9. Historic Environment and Archaeology
 - 10. Natural Heritage
- F. A Connected Place - Supporting Transport and Other Infrastructure
 - 11. Access and Transport
 - 12. Renewable Energy
 - 13. Telecommunications
 - 14. Utilities
 - 15. Waste Management
 - 16. Flooding
 - 17. Advertisements

Our Council area extends to 520 km² and shares a land boundary with five Council areas: Belfast City Council; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council; Ards and North Down Borough Council; and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Existing Plans and Local Policies Plan

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) was intended to be the Development Plan on its adoption in September 2014. This Plan was subsequently declared unlawful following a successful legal challenge and therefore remains in its entirety unadopted. As a result, the existing Development Plans covering the Council area are as follows:

- Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001
- Lisburn Area Plan (LAP) 2001
- Carryduff Local Plan 1988-1993
- Ballymacoss Local Plan
- Lisburn Town Centre Plan
- Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan 2005.

Transitional arrangements will apply in relation to the existing Plan designations. Once the Plan Strategy is adopted the Development Plan will consist of the Plan Strategy and any old Development Plan, with the Plan Strategy having priority in the event of a conflict. The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 state that the old Development Plans will cease to have effect on adoption of the new LDP at Local Policies Plan (LPP) stage.

The LPP will set out the Council's local policies with site specific proposals for the development and use of land within the Council area and contain designations and zonings to deliver the vision, plan objectives and operational policies of the LDP. Another draft HRA will be prepared to assess the potential impacts of the draft LPP on international sites.

Requirement for HRA

The Habitats¹ and Birds Directives² are implemented through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations. Regulation 43 of the Habitats Regulations requires an appropriate assessment to be undertaken of plans and projects which are likely to have a significant effect on an international site in Northern Ireland, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This is known as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and provides for assessment of the implications of a land use plan for international sites in view of their conservation objectives. International sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPAs) and Ramsar sites. This draft HRA Report is prepared in support of the draft Plan Strategy, it records the assessment of the draft Plan Strategy and its potential impacts on international sites.

Step 1: Deciding whether a plan should be subject to HRA

The European Commission (EC) Guidance (referenced in Appendix 1) does not specify the scope of a plan which should be subject to the Directive and related transposing legislation but it does state that the key consideration is whether it is likely to have a significant effect. The HRA Handbook F.3. recommends reviewing proposals against a number of questions. These may lead to plans being exempted, eliminated or excluded from the need for HRA. The draft Plan Strategy does not directly relate to the management of any international site therefore it cannot be exempted from the requirement of the Habitats Regulations. The draft Plan Strategy is part of the LDP and clearly represents a strategic and local development plan. The requirement for planning permission to be determined in light of the relevant land use plan, necessarily means that LDPs have considerable influence on development decisions and that, as such, they must be subject to HRA in their own right.

¹ Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

² Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version)

The outcome of this step is that the draft Plan Strategy requires HRA as a strategic and local development plan.

Approach to HRA

The overall approach for this HRA has been developed in accordance with the Directives and Habitats Regulations. The HRA follows the guidance set out in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook³ (the HRA Handbook) and is also informed by the reference material in Appendix 1. Current subscribers to the Handbook include DAERA which represents the Statutory Nature Conservation Body for Northern Ireland. The approach is detailed in Appendix 2 of this report where case law relevant to HRA for plans is also referred to.

The nature of the draft Plan Strategy is that it has the potential to have a significant effect on the selection features of some international sites therefore we are undertaking a HRA in our role as a competent authority. Shared Environmental Service (SES) based in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council provides support to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council on HRAs for plans and projects. SES has therefore, in conjunction with the Council, prepared this draft HRA for the draft Plan Strategy to ensure the legal requirements of the Habitats Regulations are fully met.

HRA is an iterative process carried out in parallel with plan preparation. HRA baseline information was provided for preparation of the Preferred Options Paper. LDPs must also be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) during their preparation with reports required at defined stages. The Sustainability Appraisal process both informed, and was informed by, the HRA process.

Following public consultation and independent examination of the draft Plan Strategy the HRA will be finalised and adopted by the Council and published alongside the adopted Plan Strategy. Regulation 43 (4) of the Habitats Regulations allows for the competent authority to obtain the opinion of the general public on the HRA if it considers it appropriate. Therefore comments are also invited on this draft HRA.

Context for draft HRA

Appendix 2 explains that the requirement for planning permission to be determined in light of the relevant land use plan, necessarily means that LDPs have considerable influence on development decisions and that, as such, must be subject to HRA in their own right. Many policies represent a continuation of a previous policy, however each was considered on its own merits in the assessment. Many of the proposals affect multiple locations or locations which have not been defined at draft Plan Strategy.

Previous Plans

Extant plans will continue to have effect until the next stage i.e. LPP. This is set out in the transitional arrangements in The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015⁴. Under the transitional arrangements applications submitted following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy, will be assessed against that document and the extant statutory Plan for the area. This means that spatial designations in the extant plans will continue to have effect until the next stage, LPP. In preparing the LPP existing and proposed zonings will be reviewed and key site requirements identified where appropriate.

In light of this, the individual zonings that are being carried forward at Plan Strategy have not been assessed in detail in this HRA. They have however been reviewed at a high level to highlight aspects that should be considered in the HRA for the LPP. It is therefore important that the conclusions of this HRA are not relied upon, when LPPs are subject to assessment at a later date, to assert that extant

³ Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) *The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook*, February 2019 edition UK: DTA Publications Ltd.

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/62/schedule/made>

zones and allocations are compliant with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations as the scope of the work undertaken has not included them.

Other Regulations

An assumption is made that existing regulations and legislation that are independent of planning are implemented and enforced by the relevant authority. These include Water Order discharge consents, abstraction licensing, marine licensing and Pollution Prevention Control permits for which HRA may also be required. NI Water is responsible for public wastewater treatment works and is a competent authority. It must approve all connections to mains sewerage and will not do so where there is insufficient network or treatment capacity.

Consideration of Mitigation

A ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in 2018 known as '*People over Wind*' clarified how mitigation should be assessed through HRAs as detailed in Appendix 2. In light of this, measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been adverse effects on the integrity of international sites are not taken into account in Stage 1 and instead will be assessed at Stage 2 appropriate assessment. Stage 1 Assessment does consider essential features and characteristics of the plan and takes account of regional and strategic context and other regulatory controls that will apply to development under the plan.

HRA at other Stages of Plan Making and Development Management

The LPP will be subject to HRA, at which stage revised or new zonings and local policies will be assessed. The need for HRA will also be considered for individual projects at the development management stage and assessment carried out where required.

Climate Change

It is acknowledged that increased levels of development that will arise from the plan have the potential to add to anthropogenic drivers of climate change. However the causes of climate change are global and much of the action required must take place at national and international levels as well as at the local level. The conservation objectives for SPAs do not refer to climate change. Those for SACs address climate change as follows: '*Northern Ireland faces changes to its climate over the next century. Indications are that we will face hotter, drier summers, warmer winters and more frequent extreme weather events.*' The action recommended is '*When developing SAC management plans, the likely future impacts of climate change should be considered and appropriate changes made.*' Therefore, while climate change is acknowledged, specific measures have not been addressed in the conservation objectives. If future site-specific evidence or management plans for international sites identify climate change adaptation measures these will be taken into account when this HRA is finalised to assess whether any draft Plan Strategy policies inhibit the potential of selection features to adapt to climate change. Such information about climate change will also be considered at LPP stage.

2 Identification of international sites potentially affected

'Long-list' of international sites

Step 2a: 'Long-list' of international sites that should be considered in the HRA

International sites that are connected with the Council area were firstly identified. These include sites within or immediately adjacent to the Council area; with an ecological connection such as a hydrological link; those within 10km; and those that are connected by infrastructure. Ecological connection includes pathways through rivers or marine waters and supporting habitat for site selection features. All sites within 10km of the Council area were included to consider potential impacts of aerial emissions. Infrastructural connectivity is related to the potential linkage of sites to the Council area by infrastructure services such as water abstraction or wastewater discharges which are discussed further in Section 3. The outcome is a 'long-list' of 15 sites that are in or potentially connected to the Council area. Appendix 4, Maps 2 to 5 illustrate these sites in relation to the Council area.

Table 1 Sites Connected with Council Area

Site Name	Connection with plan area			
	Within or Adjacent	Ecological	Within 10km	By Infra-structure
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA		●	●	●
Belfast Lough Ramsar		●	●	●
Belfast Lough SPA		●	●	●
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar	●	●	●	●
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	●	●	●	●
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC		●	●	●
Strangford Lough Ramsar		●	●	
Strangford Lough SPA		●	●	
Strangford Lough SAC		●	●	
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA		●	●	●
Montiaghs Moss SAC		●	●	
Aughnadarragh Lough SAC			●	
Outer Ards Ramsar		●	●	●
Outer Ards SPA		●	●	●
Eastern Mourne SAC				●

Step 3: Gathering information about the international sites

Information for each site identified at Step 2a was compiled on selection features, conservation objectives, conservation status, potential threats to site integrity from planning related development and location relative to the plan area and any plan designations. This is presented by site in Appendix 3. This information about international sites will be important as a starting point for HRA at LPP when locations for plan designations can be assessed in more detail.

'Short-list' of international sites

Step 2b: 'Short-list' of sites that should be considered in the HRA

Taking account of the information gathered in Step 3, and the 'long-list' of sites identified at Step 2a, a further scan was carried out to determine the effects that could potentially affect international sites as a result of the plan. This step is recorded in Appendix 3, Table A.3.1. The outcome is summarised in Table 2 which records ten potential mechanisms through which impacts could affect the 15 international sites listed. It was found that some potential effects cannot affect any of the 'long-list' sites. The potential effects are as follows and are discussed in Section 3:

- Direct Impacts
- Aquatic Environment
- Marine Environment
- Coastal Processes
- Mobile Species
- Recreational Pressure
- Growth - Water Supply
- Growth - Wastewater
- Growth - Aerial Emissions
- Aerial Emissions (other)

Table 2 Potential Effects on International Sites

	Direct Impacts	Aquatic Environment	Marine Environment	Coastal Processes	Mobile Species	Recreational Pressure	Growth - Water Supply	Growth - Wastewater	Growth - Aerial Emissions	Aerial Emissions (other)
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA		•	•					•		
Belfast Lough Ramsar		•	•					•		•
Belfast Lough SPA		•	•					•		•
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar	•	•			•	•		•		•
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	•	•			•	•		•		•
Strangford Lough Ramsar		•	•					•		•
Strangford Lough SPA		•	•					•		•
Strangford Lough SAC		•	•					•		•
East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA		•	•		•			•		•
Montiaghs Moss SAC										•
Aughnadarragh Lough SAC										•
Outer Ards Ramsar			•							
Outer Ards SPA			•							

As a result of this step it was found that, while there are theoretical pathways to a number of international sites, it is not conceivable that the draft Plan Strategy would generate additional development to an extent that it could undermine the conservation objectives for the following sites:

- Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
- Eastern Mourne SAC

Step 4: Discretionary discussions on the method and scope of the appraisal

The Statutory Nature Conservation Body is represented by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Marine and Fisheries Division of the Department of Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). NIEA has published Conservation Objectives for SACs and SPAs and further

information that NIEA may hold about international sites which is not in the public domain was requested. NIEA provided a spreadsheet on Condition of Features in Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and international sites in 2017 and provided updates where available in February 2019. Before the HRA is finalised NIEA will be asked for any more up to date information on international sites and selection features. DAERA will also be invited to comment on the draft HRA during the consultation period.

3 Potential Impacts of Development

The scanning and site selection table A.3.1, Appendix 3, has identified the potential mechanisms through which the Plan might exert an influence over international sites. These are summarised in Section 2, Table 2 which identifies the sites that could be affected by each impact. This section discusses the potential for each of these effects to arise from the draft Plan Strategy and informs Sections 4 and 5.

Direct Effects

All sites within the plan area are potentially vulnerable to direct impacts. These can lead to degradation or loss of habitat or direct effects on species. There are no European sites wholly within the LDP area. The only European sites partially within the LDP area are Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. Direct effects on international sites will be considered in screening the draft Plan Strategy in Section 4 and will be considered at LPP when reviewing or allocating zoned land.

Effects upon the aquatic and marine environment

This covers direct impacts upon the aquatic or marine environment from contamination of surface water or changes in flow regime. Indirect impacts from water supply or disposal of wastewater are covered separately below. While there a number of freshwater, wetland and marine sites that are hydrologically linked to the plan area, such effects are generally limited to proposals in close proximity to an international site. Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/Ramsar site could theoretically be vulnerable to direct effects on the aquatic environment. The LDP does not extend to any coastal area therefore the plan has no direct impacts on the marine environment. Maps 6 and 7 illustrate the major catchments and river sub-basins within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

Water pollution causes deterioration of (or failure to improve) water quality, due to direct runoff of pollutants including fuel, chemicals and sediments from development during construction or operation. Development on brownfield sites may lead to risk of release of contaminants which needs to be assessed and, where necessary, remediation carried out. For individual projects, water quality impacts are addressed through HRA and by the conditioning of pollution prevention measures through the requirement to submit, for example, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and/or a Construction Method Statement (CMS).

Zoned housing areas are identified in the existing area plans and will continue to apply until the Local Policies Plan is developed. At that stage existing housing zonings will be reviewed and, where required, new land zoned. A proportion of these areas already have planning permission and in some areas are already developed.

Housing land is distributed within the settlement hierarchy. An element of housing in the countryside is also allowed for, to sustain the rural area in accordance with the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). The Settlement Hierarchy is identified in the Spatial Strategy Map in Part 1 of the draft Plan Strategy. In Lisburn, Castlereagh and Carryduff some of the zoned housing areas are potentially hydrologically connected to the coastal international sites. Zoned housing land at Glenavy and Lower and Upper Ballinderry may be hydrologically connected to Lough Neagh. Feumore is a small settlement partly within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site. There is very limited scope for development within the settlement limit and the location is such that HRA will be triggered at application stage. Theoretically there may be pathways from undeveloped housing land during construction and operation for pollutant release to coastal international sites and to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/Ramsar. This is subject to HRA for development management and to other regulatory consents.

Existing areas for Employment and Industry are identified in the Spatial Strategy Map. Growth is anticipated to occur at the two Strategic Mixed Used sites at West Lisburn/Blaris and Purdysburn/Knockbracken. The Maze provides an additional land reserve for regionally significant

proposals. As for housing there may be pathways from undeveloped economic/industrial land to coastal European sites.

A number of areas of zoned economic land are identified in the existing area plans and remain undeveloped. At LPP stage existing and proposed economic and mixed use zonings will be reviewed and key site requirements may be identified, this will be subject to HRA.

It is generally considered unlikely that the proposals and policies within the Draft Plan Strategy will result in effects on the aquatic and marine environment however these will be reviewed at LPP when reviewing or allocating zoned land.

Effects upon the coast

This includes direct impacts upon coastal processes. Such effects are generally limited to proposals in close proximity to an international site. The LDP area does not extend to any coastal area.

Effects on mobile species

Most animal species range beyond the international sites for which they are selection features. Land which is outside the boundary of a designated site but provides functional support for those selection features is referred to as supporting habitat. Potentially development can affect such supporting habitat or the selection features utilising it.

Mobile species in the Council area include whooper swans, a selection feature of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site, that use fields adjacent to Portmore Lough and in the Lagan valley south of Halfpenny Gate. Flight paths for whooper swan could potentially be disrupted by development such as wind turbines and overhead electricity lines. These potential impacts are assessed under RE1 Renewable Energy Development and UT1 in Section 4.

It is generally considered unlikely that the proposals and policies within the Draft Plan Strategy will result in effects on mobile species outside international sites, however potential impacts are assessed under RE1 Renewable Energy Development and UT1 in Section 4 and supporting habitat will be a consideration at LPP when reviewing or allocating any zoned land.

Effects of recreational pressure

This impact mechanism is directly related to general increases in housing development and associated increases in recreational pressure from new residents moving into an area. It may also arise where there are specific proposals to focus recreational development. Recreation has the potential to have a significant effect if it is intensified to a degree that it causes erosion, habitat damage or persistent disturbance, or if the water sports season is extended to when wintering birds are present.

The population of the Council area is expected to grow to 159,847 by 2032, a projected population increase of 12%. The only European sites partially within the LDP area are Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site which includes Portmore Lough Nature Reserve. There is one access point to Lough Neagh at the Sandy Bay Marina. The shoreline of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg in the Council area is approximately 9.1 km long which limits the scope for further recreational development. Population growth in the main urban areas could theoretically increase recreational pressure at Strangford Lough. The closest urban area is Dundonald which is over 5km from Strangford Lough. Of the zoned housing land in Dundonald more than half is already developed. Therefore, while it may slightly increase occasional visitors it will not generate a significant increase in regular visitors. In addition A Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Plan for Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area was prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI (May 2018) which informs management of visitor pressures. Potential recreational impacts are assessed under the policies for 7. Tourism and 8. Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation in Section 4.

It is generally considered unlikely that the level of growth enabled by the draft Plan Strategy will result in recreational pressures that could undermine conservation objectives of any site however potential

recreational impacts are assessed under the policies for tourism and open space, sport and outdoor recreation in Section 4. Impacts of recreation will be a consideration at LPP when reviewing or allocating any zoned land.

Effects of development growth

This impact mechanism is directly related to general increases in housing and economic development and associated increases in demand for water and treatment of wastewater from new residents or businesses moving into an area or expansion of existing businesses. The Housing Growth Indicators identified a future need for 10,500 dwelling units across the Council area. Currently, when taking account of existing commitments and allowing for strategic housing growth to support the economic proposals at West Lisburn, there is a future potential of 11,578 dwelling units which closely reflects the overall strategic housing allocation (SHA) for the plan of 11,550 dwelling units. The Maze Lands are recognised as a site of regional significance for economic development and the two 'Major Employment Locations', West Lisburn/Blaris and Purdysburn are identified to drive a range of opportunities for job creation.

Water Supply

It is the responsibility of NI Water to ensure that a safe supply of drinking water for the population is maintained. The Council area is supplied by a series of impounding reservoirs and water treated at water treatment plants. Water is supplied from Lough Neagh through Dunore Point and Castor Bay Water Treatment Works. The Council area is also supplied by Fofanny Dam which is adjacent to Eastern Mourne SAC. There is no evidence that there will be a deficit in water supply during the plan period.

NI Water published a draft Water Resource & Supply Resilience Plan (WR&SR Plan) for public consultation until 27th September 2019. This draft Plan shows how the company will manage and develop water resources to make sure there is enough water to meet future supply needs. The draft WR & SR Plan takes into account changes in population, housing, water usage and incorporates any predicted changes to our climate. This includes how water supplies would be maintained during critical periods such as severe winters, drought and also includes a drought plan. The WR & SR Plan acknowledges the need to take account of adopted and emerging Local Development Plans to ensure it complies with the area's aims, objectives and long term vision in terms of growth, constraints and opportunities.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment has been carried out to consider the potential of the options contained within the WR & SR Plan and the Drought Plan to significantly affect internationally important nature conservation sites (SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites), either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

This concludes:

'Three water resource options and five resilience options have been assessed in this HRA screening report. For four options it was determined there were no, or very weak pathways to European sites and no further assessment within the HRA process was required. However, four options included in the draft WR & SR Plan were identified as requiring HRA Stage 2 AA [appropriate assessment]. For these options, LSEs [likely significant effects] could be mitigated through the implementation of standard mitigation such as adherence to noise and vibration management plans, species protection plans and pollution management plans. No in-combination effects were identified for the options included in the draft WR & SR Plan. However, project-level HRA should revisit the potential for in-combination effects, once an appropriate level of detail about the timing and design of projects is available.'

In light of the sufficiency of the water supply to the Council area over the plan period and the HRA of the WR&SR Plan effects that might undermine the conservation objectives can be excluded.

Waste Water Treatment

NI Water also provides sewerage services. NI Water's sewerage network capacity mapping tool has identified capacity issues in parts of the Lisburn and Moneyreagh wastewater network. There is no capacity at Mullaghglass and St. James. There are capacity constraints for some smaller settlements, Feumore, Legacurry and Lurganville. Newtownbreda Drainage Area Plan (DAP) has identified significant deficiencies within the existing sewerage network. Parts of the sewerage network are operating significantly above design capacity, increasing the risk of out of sewer flooding and pollution to local environment.

The Water Utility Regulation Group of DAERA regulates sewage discharges and is a competent authority under the Habitats Regulations. Every consent granted outlines the required quality and quantity of the discharge into the water environment and takes into account the requirements of relevant European directives.

Where a potential development cannot connect to the mains sewerage network, or where NI Water has indicated that consented capacity at the receiving works is limited or restricted, or there are network constraints, then a project will not be able to proceed unless it satisfies operational policy WM2. This requires *'Development relying on non mains sewage treatment will only be permitted where it is demonstrated to the Council and its statutory consultees that there is sufficient capacity to discharge effluent to a watercourse and that this will not create or add to a pollution problem.'* This means that, should there be credible evidence of a real risk to any international sites, then sufficient information will be available to assess whether the development could have a likely significant effect and whether that can be mitigated by a suitable wastewater treatment solution. The Justification and Amplification (J&A) adds that *'The method of non mains sewage disposal must be to the satisfaction of the Council's Environmental Health Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. A consent to discharge under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 will also be required from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the onus is on the developer/householder to ensure such consent is, or can be agreed for the development proposed.* Therefore there are sufficient measures to ensure that development that might undermine the conservation objectives of international sites cannot proceed.

Aerial emissions (traffic)

Housing and economic development tends to be linked with increased traffic and emissions from traffic have been shown to be linked to impacts on vegetation within 200m of the road edge. Beyond 200m significant vegetation level effects associated with traffic emissions (including deposition) have not been observed in scientific studies. The level of growth as a result of the draft Plan Strategy will not lead to a significant increase in traffic compared to current levels and no new roads are proposed or can be anticipated adjacent to any international site.

It is generally considered unlikely that water supply, wastewater treatment or aerial emissions arising as a result of the level of growth enabled by the draft Plan Strategy will result in such pressures that could undermine conservation objectives of any site.

Aerial Emissions (Other)

Deposition of aerial pollutants can damage habitats and species through toxic effects and nutrient enrichment. Nitrogen deposition is identified as a threat for many international sites. Livestock production is a significant source of nitrogen deposition, particularly in the form of ammonia. For the purposes of screening for this HRA sites within 10km have been considered. The current advice from DAERA is that all livestock developments within 7.5km of an international site should be modelled for ammonia distribution. Potential effects of aerial emissions from agriculture on international sites will be considered in screening the draft Plan Strategy in Section 4.

4 Screening draft Plan Strategy for Likely Significant Effects

Overview of screening

Step 5: Screening the draft/proposed plan for likely significant effects

The approach to screening the proposals is detailed in Appendix 2. All of the Plan Strategy proposals were reviewed, from the Vision and Plan Objectives and the Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy in Part 1, to the Operational Policies in Part 2. Appendix 5 presents the full review of the draft Plan Strategy. The outcome of the screening of proposals and policies is summarised below and informed by the findings of Section 3 above.

Screening introductory chapters (Chapters 1 to 2)

These chapters introduce the plan and present the regional and local policy context and profile of Council area. They are administrative text that does not direct development and therefore they are not subject to further assessment.

Screening the Vision and Plan Objectives (Chapter 3)

The Vision is an overall aspiration for the Council area. Delivery of the Vision is through the Plan Objectives and the Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy in Part 1 and the Operational Policies in Part 2. There are six Plan Objectives, each followed by a series of sub-objectives which illustrate the main objective. The objectives all represent general policy statements, which state a direction, without details of how they will be delivered. Some Plan Objectives are possible drivers of potential effects, however for all these objectives the implications can be assessed under related policies. Examples of plan objectives that are potential drivers of growth are some for delivery of housing under A Quality Place; for economic growth under A Thriving Place; and for tourism or outdoor recreation under An Attractive Place.

Screening the Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy (Chapter 4)

SP01 to SP07 are strategic high-level policies which provide a framework for delivering sustainable growth, place-making and well-being and they are delivered through subsequent policies. These policies are therefore screened out of further assessment. The spatial strategy is a set of high level statements which are delivered through the Strategic Policies and Operational Policies. This also sets out the settlement hierarchy. While it is a possible driver of potential effects implications will be assessed under related policies. The remaining strategic policies are grouped under the six Plan Objectives identified under the Spatial Strategy. All were found to be general statements of policy which, in themselves, cannot lead to development but will be delivered through operational policies. Some are potential drivers of potential effects which will be assessed through the operational policies and some refer to spatial designations which are discussed further below.

A Quality Place (SP08 –SP10)

The Strategic Housing Allocation is set out in Table 3 in SP08. No greenfield extension of settlements is required to allow for future housing growth. Housing in the countryside is provided for in SP09 however it is constrained through operational policies. Approvals will be monitored through the annual housing monitor and the related policies subject to review if the annual average build in the countryside exceeds 54 units. SP10 is a general statement of policy providing for community infrastructure. The strategic housing policies are possible drivers of potential effects and implications are considered in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment capacity in Section 3.

A Thriving Place (SP11 – SP13)

These strategic policies relate to economic growth in settlements and the countryside with SP13 providing for minerals development. The Plan retains a supply of employment land, both developed/undeveloped, which will continue to meet the district's economic needs throughout the period of the plan. Strategic Mixed Use (SMU) sites will serve to attract inward investment while Local

Employment sites will help support local employment needs through providing a range of sites suitable for all economic sectors. All sites will be subject to review at the Local Policies Plan.

The SMUs are SMU01 West Lisburn/Blaris and SMU02 Purdysburn/Knockbracken. The two existing rural Local Employment Sites at Glenavy Road, Moira and Crossnacreevy provide opportunities for start-up/small-medium businesses for uses which, because of their size or scale, would not be suitable within the nearby settlement. There is no direct pathway from the SMUs or either Local Employment site to any international site.

The strategic policy for mineral development SP13 has been informed by regional and local policy, which aims to support sustainable economic growth whilst recognising the limits of our natural resources and the need to protect and improve the quality of our natural environment. Further work in identifying mineral safeguarding areas and areas of mineral constraint will be taken forward at the Local Policies Plan stage. There are two sand processing sites at Sandy Bay which are within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site but are excluded from the SPA.

These strategic policies for economic growth are all general statements of policy however they are also possible drivers of potential effects for which implications will be assessed under related operational policies.

A Vibrant Place (SP14 –SP15)

SP14 aims to protect and enhance the range of town centre uses and SP15 seeks to promote the evening and night-time economy in the city and town centres to promote their vitality and vibrancy. It also identifies SMU03 Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre. Retailing in the countryside will be by exception based on an identified need only. These strategic policies, in themselves, cannot lead to any development or change.

An Attractive Place (SP16 –SP17)

SP16 seeks to facilitate sustainable tourism growth by identifying appropriate opportunities and safeguarding tourism assets from harmful development. A key asset is Lagan Valley Regional Park, for which there is a pathway to Belfast Lough SPA and related sites, and where opportunity exists to further enhance its tourism/recreational potential. These opportunities will be further explored at the Local Policies Plan stage which will be subject to HRA. The Lagan Navigation consists of the potential restoration of the 27 mile route from Belfast Harbour through Lisburn and on to Lough Neagh and its reopening would create opportunities for water-based tourism and outdoor recreation. This could have implications for Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site and Belfast Lough SPA and related sites, however it is a long term aspiration which is not reflected in current tourism strategies. The current focus is on the Discover Waterways Lisburn project within Lisburn.

SP17 will support development proposals that protect and enhance existing open space, provide new open space, support and protect a network of accessible green and blue infrastructure and support and promote the development of strategic and community greenways. These general statements of policy, in themselves, cannot lead to any development or change.

A Green Place (SP18 –SP19)

SP18 is intended to protect and enhance the historic environment and archaeological remains. SP19 is to protect and enhance natural heritage. Both policies are general statements of policy that are broadly protective and, in themselves, cannot lead to any development or change.

Local Development Plan designations under SP19 include Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) one of which, Portmore Lough, includes all of the portion of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site in our Council area and also extends inland from these international sites. Other designations are Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) within or adjoining settlements, Landscape Wedges and Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCIs). These designations are carried forward from the existing development plan however further work in reviewing existing and future AoHSVs, LLPAs, Landscape

Wedges and SLNCs will be assessed as part of the Local Policies Plan which will also be subject to HRA.

A Connected Place (SP20 –SP24)

These strategic policies provide for infrastructure. SP20 provides for accessibility while promoting public transport, active travel and a shift away from private car dependency. SP21 facilitates the delivery of renewable energy generation in the most appropriate locations to help meet the regional target for renewable energy production. SP22 supports development proposals that facilitate the delivery of sustainable telecommunications and other utilities infrastructure requirements to meet need and encourage future proofing while minimising environmental impacts. SP23 aims to facilitate the delivery of waste management infrastructure in the most appropriate locations while ensuring environmental protections are in place. SP24 supports development proposals that reduce the risks and impacts of flooding and encourages the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems. These are all strategic high-level policies, the delivery of which is detailed through operational policies, and are therefore screened out of further assessment.

Screening the Operational Policies (Part 2)

Part 2 contains 114 operational policies in topic-based sections grouped under the six Plan Objectives identified under the Spatial Strategy.

A Quality Place

A Quality Place includes policies for 1. Housing in Settlements, 2. Community Facilities in Settlements and 3. Development in the Countryside. The Housing and Community Facilities in Settlements policies are all ones that list the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals and cannot affect any international sites.

COU1 is a general statement which introduces the Development in the Countryside operational policies and states that any proposal for development in the countryside will also be required to meet all of the general criteria set out in Policies COU15-COU16. COU15 relates to design and visual integration while COU16 states that a development proposal will be unacceptable where the provision of non mains sewerage is not available, or cannot be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment.

COU12 allows for agricultural and forestry development however criterion e) states it must not have an adverse effect on the natural environment and the J&A highlights that ammonia will be a consideration for developments relating to the housing of livestock and the storage and spreading of manure and slurry. In view of this specific reference to ammonia in the J&A it is clear that it will be a consideration, NH1 will apply where an international site may be affected, and COU12 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

The remaining Development in the Countryside policies also list general criteria for testing the acceptability and sustainability of proposals. Many of the policies significantly constrain development, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1, cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites. The Development in the Countryside policies are all screened out of further assessment.

A Thriving Place

A Thriving Place includes policies for 4. Economic Development and 5. Minerals Development. The last Economic Development policy, ED9, is a general plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy which will apply to all development under policies ED1 to ED8 and requires protection of the natural environment, including the water environment. ED1 and ED2 apply to settlements most of which have no direct pathway to international sites. Feumore however is a small settlement partly within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site. There is very limited scope for development within the settlement limit and the location is such that HRA will be triggered at application stage therefore ED1 and ED2 are screened out of further assessment.

ED3, ED4 and ED6 list the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. They imply support for economic development in the countryside under certain circumstances and are also subject to ED9. In light of the constraints on development allowed under these policies, and in view of other policies including ED9 and NH1, they cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites. ED7 constrains alternative uses on zoned or other land and ED8 avoids incompatible development, neither can affect any international sites.

The remaining policy in this group, ED5, allows for light or general industrial development that comprises 5,000 square metres or more gross floor space or the area of the site is or exceeds 1 hectare. It is also subject to ED9, however it is not known where or what development might be allowed therefore it might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. ED5 is therefore screened in for further assessment.

In the Minerals Development group MD1 is a general plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy which will apply to all development under policies MD3 and MD5 to MD8. *'Minerals development within or in close proximity to an area that has been designated, or is proposed for designation to protect its landscape, scientific or natural heritage significance will not normally be granted permission (with the exception of valuable minerals as set out in policy MD4) where this would prejudice the essential character of the area and the rationale for its designation.'*

MD2, MD7, and MD8 are also general plan-wide environmental and safeguarding policies, in the interests of environmental protection, safety and amenity, that cannot lead to development or other change. While restoration proposals under MD9 could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites the credible evidence of a real risk to international sites is low. It is considered that MD1 and policy NH1 will provide sufficient protection to avoid restoration proposals coming forward which represent a risk to international sites therefore this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites. MD6 constrains development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas and in itself the policy cannot lead to any development or change.

MD3 implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside Areas of Minerals Constraint (AoMC) with minor exceptions within AoMCs. No AoMCs are shown on the Plan Strategy Map Viewer but it is stated in the J&A that they may include designated sites and Areas of High Scenic Value, one of which overlaps Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. However, the J&A states *'Where a designated area covers expansive tracts of land, the Council will carefully consider the scope for some minerals development that avoids key sites and that would not unduly compromise the integrity of the area as a whole or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.'* This could apply to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. Although MD3 is subject to MD1, the exceptions might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. MD3 is therefore screened in for further assessment.

MD4 implies that the extraction and processing of valuable minerals may be permitted anywhere in the council area and it is not subject to MD1. *'There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however, in considering a proposal where the site is within a designated area in the Local Development Plan, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning.'* MD4 is therefore screened in for further assessment.

In MD5 Council will apply a presumption against unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. This policy therefore implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted although this may not arise within the life of the Plan Strategy. MD5 is subject to MD1 however there remains potential for an internal conflict with policy NH1. MD5 is therefore screened in for further assessment.

A Vibrant Place

A Vibrant Place includes policies for 6. Town Centres, Retailing and Other Uses. These policies set out general criteria for what is acceptable as retailing, business or community development, with a

presumption in favour of town centres and settlements. Those exceptions allowing for retail development elsewhere are constrained such that development arising will be small scale and cannot have a likely significant effect or undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

An Attractive Place

An Attractive Place includes policies for 7. Tourism and 8. Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. TOU7 is an overarching protective policy that requires any proposal for a tourism use, outlined in Policies TOU1 to TOU6, to meet all the TOU7 criteria including: i) it does not adversely affect features of the natural or historic environment and j) it is capable of dealing with any emission or effluent in accordance with legislative requirements. The tourism policies, other than TOU1, are not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. If all the potential impacts of tourism, including disturbance, are not highlighted there is a risk of internal conflict with policy NH1 and TOU7 does not provide sufficient protection to ensure no likely significant effects. TOU7 is therefore screened in for further assessment.

TOU1 is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals which allows for tourism development in settlements. There are no locations where such development could have direct effects on an international site other than Feumore small settlement which is within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site. Given the policy caveats and the low levels of risk TOU1 cannot have a likely significant effect or undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

TOU2 to TOU6 are not spatially specific and the scale of development is hard to predict, particularly for TOU6 which allows for major tourism development the nature of which is unknown. All these policies could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. TOU2 to TOU6 are therefore screened in for further assessment. The final policy, TOU8 Safeguarding of Tourism Assets, is both a protective policy and one that cannot lead to development or other change.

OS1 Protection of Open Space is also a protective policy and one that cannot lead to development or other change. OS6 applies to all outdoor recreation development and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. Proposals for outdoor recreational use in the countryside will be permitted where all the criteria are met including: a) there is no adverse impact on features of importance to natural environment/nature conservation, or the historic environment. The J&A states '*Special care will be exercised in areas of nature conservation, heritage importance or landscape amenity value. Proposals in such areas will also need to be considered in relation to the Council's operational policies relating to the Historic Environment and Natural Heritage (Policies HE1-HE15 and NH1-NH6).*'

Each of the policies OS2 to OS5 lists the general criteria for testing the acceptability and sustainability of proposals. All specifically include criteria within the policy that are protective of the natural environment in terms of disturbance and/or pollution. In addition OS4, Facilities ancillary to Water Sports, specifies that there must be no conflict with the provisions of any local management plan associated with the body of water. The J&A goes on to clarify: '*Management plans drawn up for particular water areas, for example River Basin Management Plans or natural heritage designations such as Ramsar sites, seek to control and address the compatibility of varying demands on waterbodies.*' Although this does not specify the SPA Conservation Objectives document published by DAERA it can be taken to be included. The OS policies, and OS6 which applies to all outdoor recreation in the countryside, contain protective caveats such that they and NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection and these policies cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

A Green Place

A Green Place includes policies for 9. Historic Environment and Archaeology and 10. Natural Heritage. The Historic Environment and Archaeology policies are all general environmental safeguarding

policies other than HE14 which lists general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. The historic environment policies were therefore screened out of further assessment.

NH1 European and Ramsar Sites – International, and NH3 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance – National are general statements of policy which cannot have any adverse effect on an international site. They restate the legal and policy requirements of the Habitats Regulations and the SPPS in relation to international and national sites. The remaining NH policies are general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policies, which cannot have any adverse effect on an international site and some of which may afford protection to supporting habitat for site selection features.

A Connected Place

A Connected Place includes policies for 11. Access and Transport, 12. Renewable Energy, 13. Telecommunications, 14. Utilities, 15. Waste Management, 16. Flooding, 17. Advertisements. The Access and Transport policies are all ones that are either general statements of policy or list the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals and cannot affect any international sites.

RE2 is also a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site. RE1 is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. The generation of energy from renewable resources will be permitted provided the proposal, and any associated buildings and infrastructure, will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on: c) biodiversity or the natural or historic environment; d) local natural resources, such as air quality or water quality. A potential impact of renewable energy is disruption of flight paths but, due to limited potential for wind turbine development, there is a low risk that this would have a likely significant effect and this would be addressed through criterion c). In view of the policy caveats and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

TEL1 Telecommunications Development and AD1 Amenity and Public Safety list the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals and cannot have any likely significant effect.

UT1 Utilities requires that proposals for all overhead electricity lines and associated infrastructure will be subject to criteria including: b) avoidance of areas of nature conservation, the historic environment or archaeological interest. This does not make it clear that site selection features may occur outside international sites. There is therefore a risk, albeit a low one, of conflict between this policy and NH1. UT1 is therefore screened in for further assessment.

The Waste Management policies are all ones that list the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. WM1 details criteria for environmental protection and applies to WM2 and WM3. The second part of WM2 Treatment of Waste Water, relating to non mains sewage treatment, also serves as a general plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy. WM4 includes an environmental protection criterion and WM5 avoids conflicting land uses and in itself cannot lead to any development or change. In view of the policy caveats, WM1 and NH1 the waste management policies cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

FLD2 and FLD3 are general statements of policy and FLD1 and FLD5 list general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. FLD4 is a general plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy which only allows culverting in exceptional circumstances. There are no international sites that could be adversely affected by any exceptions in FLD4. Therefore none of the flooding policies can have an effect on or undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Outcome of screening

Table 3 summarises the six operational policies that are screened in for further assessment. These will be assessed in relation to the sites listed in Table 2, and their selection features and conservation objectives which are presented in Appendix 6.

Table 3 Policies having a likely significant effect and requiring further assessment

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening Comment (from Appendix 5)
ED5 Major Economic Development in the Countryside	This policy allows for light or general industrial development in the countryside that comprises 5,000 square metres or more gross floor space; or the area of the site is or exceeds 1 hectare. Such proposals will be assessed to take account of environmental impacts. It is also subject to ED9, however it is not known where or what development might be allowed, therefore it might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1.
MD3 Areas of Mineral Constraint	This policy implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside Areas of Minerals Constraint (AoMC) with minor exceptions within AoMCs but it is not entirely clear where the AoMCs are. The J&A states <i>'Where a designated area covers expansive tracts of land, the Council will carefully consider the scope for some minerals development that avoids key sites and that would not unduly compromise the integrity of the area as a whole or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.'</i> This could apply to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. Although MD3 is subject to MD1, the exceptions might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1.
MD4 Valuable Minerals	This policy implies that the extraction and processing of valuable minerals may be permitted anywhere in the council area. <i>'There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however, in considering a proposal where the site is within a designated area in the Local Development Plan, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning.'</i> This might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1.
MD5 Unconventional Hydrocarbon Extraction	This policy states that Council will apply a presumption against unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. This policy therefore implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted although this may not arise within the life of the Plan Strategy. It is subject to MD1 however there remains potential for an internal conflict with policy NH1.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening Comment (from Appendix 5)
TOU2 Proposals for Tourism Amenity in the Countryside; TOU3 Proposals for Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside; TOU4 Self-Catering Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside; TOU5 Holiday Parks in the Countryside; TOU6 Proposals for Major Tourism Development in the Countryside; TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development	<p>TOU2 to TOU6 are not spatially specific and the scale of development is hard to predict, particularly for TOU6 which allows for major tourism development the nature of which is unknown. All these policies could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. TOU2 to TOU6 are subject to TOU7 however there remains potential for an internal conflict with policy NH1.</p> <p>TOU7 is an overarching protective policy however it does not highlight all the potential impacts of tourism, including disturbance, therefore there is a risk of internal conflict with policy NH1 and TOU7 does not provide sufficient protection to ensure no likely significant effects.</p>
UT1 Utilities	<p>Proposals for all overhead electricity lines and associated infrastructure will be subject to criteria including b) avoidance of areas of nature conservation, the historic environment or archaeological interest. This does not make it clear that site selection features may occur outside international sites. There is therefore a risk of conflict between this policy and NH1.</p>

Consideration of in combination assessment with other plans and projects in screening

Consideration must be given to any cumulative effects of proposals during plan preparation. These include potential cumulative effects within the plan and in combination effects with other relevant plans and projects. All policies which have been screened out at this stage are assigned to a screening category which allows them to be recognised as unlikely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination. Those policies screened in are all included on the basis of their effects 'alone', Category I, and are brought forward to appropriate assessment. As such, no further 'in-combination' assessment is required in respect of the policies which have been screened out as having no likely significant effect. Policies identified as having a likely significant effect are considered further as part of the appropriate assessment in Section 5.

5 Appropriate Assessment

Step 6: The Appropriate Assessment

Following the screening of plan proposals it has been found that there is potential for likely significant effects to arise from ten operational policies:

- ED5 Major Economic Development in the Countryside
- MD3 Areas of Mineral Constraint
- MD4 Valuable Minerals
- MD5 Unconventional Hydrocarbon Extraction
- TOU2 Proposals for Tourism Amenity in the Countryside
- TOU3 Proposals for Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside
- TOU4 Self-Catering Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside
- TOU5 Holiday Parks in the Countryside
- TOU6 Proposals for Major Tourism Development in the Countryside
- TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development
- UT1 Utilities

Protective Measures in the draft Plan Strategy

Policy NH1 European and Ramsar Sites – International, states the existing requirements of the Habitats Regulations and of the SPPS which reiterates those legislative requirements. The J&A directs where further information on these international sites can be found.

'NH1 European and Ramsar Sites - International

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on:

- a) *a European Site (Special Protection Area, proposed Special Protection Area, Special Areas of Conservation, candidate Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Community Importance)*
- b) *a listed or proposed Ramsar Site.*

Where a development proposal is likely to have a significant effect (either alone or in combination) or reasonable scientific doubt remains, the Council, through consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), is required by law to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. Only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, can the Council agree to the development and impose appropriate mitigation measures in the form of planning conditions.

In exceptional circumstances, a development proposal which could adversely affect the integrity of a European or Ramsar Site may only be permitted where:

- a) *there are no alternative solutions*
- b) *the proposed development is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest*
- c) *compensatory measures are agreed and fully secured.*

As part of the consideration of exceptional circumstances, where a European or a listed or proposed Ramsar site hosts a priority habitat or priority species listed in Annex I or II of the Habitats Directive, a development proposal will only be permitted when:

- a) *it is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or there is a beneficial consequence of primary importance to the environment*
- b) *agreed in advance with the European Commission.'*

The Preamble to Part 2 of the draft Plan Strategy sets out how the operational policies apply to development. It makes clear that all policies, including NH1, apply to any development that will be brought forward under the adopted Plan Strategy.

'For the purposes of ensuring sustainable development these operational policies must not be read in isolation from one another. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in the operational policies, where relevant to the development.'

For most policies the fact that NH1 must also apply is sufficient. However, for those policies that have the greatest potential to enable development that could have an adverse effect on an international site, it is advisable to indicate the need to comply with NH1 within the policy and/or highlight sites that may be affected in the J&A. This ensures that site selection features are a consideration when the proposal is being developed and reduces the potential for tensions between NH1 and other operational policies.

Mitigation measures

The consideration of measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a plan on an international site has been progressed to Stage 2 appropriate assessment. The first step in this appropriate assessment is to seek to incorporate mitigation measures which might be relied upon to avoid any adverse effects to the integrity of the international sites potentially affected. For this plan it was found that case-specific policy caveats will provide sufficient mitigation.

This section therefore considers each of the policies identified in Table 3 above in light of potential mitigation measures which might be incorporated into the plan. With the approach in Appendix 2, Step 6 in mind the policies which were identified as having a likely significant effect were considered further below.

Major Economic Development in the Countryside (ED5)

ED5 allows for major light or general industrial development in the countryside which may exceed 5,000 m² gross floor space or a 1 ha site area. The location, scale or nature of development that could be allowed under this policy is not known therefore it might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1.

It is possible that an application could be submitted for a proposal that could potentially have an adverse effect on the site integrity of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. There is a general reference in the policy to assessing environmental impacts and further reference to these in ED9. However the policy does not make clear the further tests that may be required to meet NH1. It is therefore recommended that ED9, which applies to ED5, is strengthened by adding a criterion to the policy box as follows:

ED9 Add a criterion to the policy: *'it meets the requirements of NH1'*.

This amendment highlights that NH1 will be an important consideration for all development under policy ED5.

Minerals Development

Three Minerals Development policies were screened in for further assessment. MD3 and MD5 are both subject to MD1 therefore they are assessed first followed by assessment of MD4.

MD3 implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside Areas of Minerals Constraint (AoMC) with minor exceptions within AoMCs but it is not entirely clear where the AoMCs are. Further, the J&A states *'Where a designated area covers expansive tracts of land, the*

Council will carefully consider the scope for some minerals development that avoids key sites and that would not unduly compromise the integrity of the area as a whole or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.' This could apply to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. Although MD3 is subject to MD1, the exceptions in MD3 might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. It is therefore recommended that MD1 is clarified as follows:

MD1 Add to the J&A: 'Our council area includes Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. All proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.

This amendment to MD1 highlights that NH1 will be an important consideration for all development under the policies to which it applies, and that there is potential for impacts on Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site.

MD5 Unconventional Hydrocarbon Extraction states *'Planning permission will not be granted for the exploitation of hydrocarbons which involve unconventional methods of extraction until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.'* This policy therefore implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted although this may not arise within the life of the Plan Strategy. It is subject to MD1 however there remains potential for an internal conflict with policy NH1.

It is not possible to predict the location, nature or scale of development that could be proposed under this policy. However SP13 in Part 1 states *'Lough Neagh and the area around Portmore Lough have lignite resources and could contain oil or gas at greater depths. This lignite deposit is a strategically significant resource albeit one that is highly unlikely to be developed in the near future.'* MD1, which applies to MD5, is explicit that *'Minerals development within or in close proximity to an area that has been designated, or is proposed for designation to protect its landscape, scientific or natural heritage significance will not normally be granted permission (with the exception of valuable minerals as set out in policy MD4) where this would prejudice the essential character of the area and the rationale for its designation.'* It is therefore recommended that, as above, MD1 is clarified as follows:

MD1 Add to the J&A: 'Our council area includes Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. All proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.

This amendment to MD1 highlights that NH1 will be an important consideration for all development under this policy.

MD4 Valuable Minerals implies that the extraction and processing of valuable minerals, may be permitted anywhere in the council area and it is not subject to MD1. *'There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however, in considering a proposal where the site is within a designated area in the Local Development Plan, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning.'* It is not clear whether 'statutory zoning' refers to plan, nature conservation or other designations.

It is not possible to predict the location, nature or scale of development that could be proposed under this policy and it is specifically stated that MD1 does not apply to MD4. The J&A does refer to *'Applications are likely to be subject to assessment under the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017'* however there is no reference to the Habitats Regulations. These issues might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. It is therefore recommended that MD4 is strengthened as follows:

MD4 Add to the policy: 'All proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.

This amendment highlights that NH1 will be an essential consideration for all development under this policy including its tests for exceptional circumstances.

Tourism

TOU2 to TOU6 are not spatially specific and the scale of development is hard to predict, particularly for TOU6 which allows for major tourism development the nature of which is unknown. All these policies could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site and for this reason were screened in for appropriate assessment.

The tourism policies could potentially have indirect effects on international sites through increasing visitor numbers and thus disturbance levels. Tourism and recreation is promoted on Lough Neagh but it does not have a recreation plan. Therefore, should the draft Plan Strategy enable development leading to a likely significant effect on the site selection features of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site, then there is potential for cumulative disturbance effects resulting in adverse effects on site integrity.

TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development applies to any proposal for a tourism use, outlined in Policies TOU1 to TOU6. Any extension/alteration to existing tourism uses will also be required to meet all the TOU7 criteria including: i) it does not adversely affect features of the natural or historic environment; j) it is capable of dealing with any emission or effluent in accordance with legislative requirements.

If all the potential impacts of tourism, including disturbance, are not highlighted there is a risk of internal conflict with policy NH1 and TOU7 does not provide sufficient protection to ensure no likely significant effects. It is therefore recommended that TOU7 is amended to highlight the requirement to comply with NH1 and to clarify that potential indirect effects of tourism, such as disturbance, will be a consideration as follows:

TOU7 Add a criterion to the policy: 'all proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.

TOU7 Add to the J&A: 'Our council area includes Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site which could be adversely affected by cumulative disturbance effects. Such disturbance could arise directly from a tourism development or indirectly through increasing visitor pressures beyond the development.'

These amendments highlight that NH1 will be an important consideration for all tourism development and that potential indirect disturbance of site selection features must be considered in applying all of the tourism policies.

Utilities

UT1 Utilities specifies that proposals for all overhead electricity lines and associated infrastructure will be subject to criteria including: b) avoidance of areas of nature conservation, the historic environment or archaeological interest. This does not recognise that site selection features may occur outside international sites. There is therefore a risk, albeit a low one, of conflict between this policy and NH1.

The bird features of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site are mobile and therefore vulnerable to disruption of flight paths. Whooper swans for example use supporting habitat outside Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site including fields in the Lagan valley south of Halfpenny Gate. This may be a consideration in routing overhead lines or mitigation in the form of line markers may be implemented. The policy caveats as written may be taken to imply that designated sites are the only consideration and lead to supporting habitat being overlooked. It is therefore recommended that a sentence to the following effect is added to the J&A paragraph 5 as follows:

UT1 Add to the J&A: 'The potential of overhead lines to disrupt the flight paths of birds, including site selection features of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site, is also a consideration.'

This amendment highlights that site selection features could be affected outside international sites.

Step 7: Amending the plan until there would be no adverse effects on site integrity

Integrity test taking account of mitigation measures

Having identified potential case specific policy restrictions and caveats in respect of aspects of the Plan which were identified as having a likely significant effect, it is now necessary to apply the integrity test, taking account of these mitigation measures. Following incorporation of the mitigation measures identified above the re-screening of the elements of the Plan which are affected by the mitigation measures is set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Applying the integrity test following incorporation of mitigation measures

Policy	Recommended mitigation measures	Integrity test conclusion
ED5 Major Economic Development in the Countryside	<i>ED9 Add a criterion to the policy: 'it meets the requirements of NH1'.</i>	With the amended wording of ED9 the need to comply with NH1 is highlighted for all the economic development policies to which it applies which include ED5. Policy NH1 can then be relied upon to ensure that policy ED5 will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.
MD3 Areas of Mineral Constraint MD5 Unconventional Hydrocarbon Extraction	<i>MD1 Add to the J&A: 'Our council area includes Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. All proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.</i>	With the amended wording of MD1 the potential for impacts on Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site and need to comply with NH1 are highlighted for the minerals policies to which MD1 applies, which include MD3 and MD5. Policies MD1 and NH1 can then be relied upon to ensure that policies MD3 and MD5 will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.
MD4 Valuable Minerals	<i>MD4 Add to the policy: 'All proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.</i>	With the amended wording of MD4 the need to comply with NH1 is highlighted. Policy NH1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy MD4 will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.
TOU2 to TOU7 Tourism policies	<i>TOU7 Add a criterion to the policy: 'all proposals that may affect a European or Ramsar site must meet the requirements of NH1'.</i> <i>TOU7 Add to the J&A: 'Our council area includes Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site which could be adversely affected by cumulative disturbance effects. Such disturbance could arise directly from a tourism development or indirectly through increasing visitor pressures beyond the development.'</i>	With the amended wording of TOU7 the need to comply with NH1 and potential effects of disturbance are highlighted. Policies TOU7 and NH1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policies to which TOU5 applies, TOU2 to TOU6, will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.

UT1 Utilities	UT1 Add to the J&A: <i>'The potential of overhead lines to disrupt the flight paths of birds, including site selection features of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site, is also a consideration.'</i>	The amendment to the J&A ensures that all potential impacts on site selection features will be considered. This will avoid internal conflict within the plan and Policy NH1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.
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Consideration of in combination effects

For all sites it was found that there are protective measures and overarching policies in the draft Plan Strategy that, with the proposed amendments, will ensure that development causing an adverse effect on site integrity cannot be approved. The policy amendments recommended to avoid adverse effects on site integrity all include specific reference to policy NH1 or will ensure that it is applied to development.

It will be important that HRAs for individual developments also consider in combination effects before planning permission is granted. It is not possible at this stage to predict or anticipate what other plans and projects may be relevant to any such future project HRA in respect of development provided for within this plan as this will be dependent on the timing of future planning applications.

Policy NH1 is explicit that a development proposal will be subject to appropriate assessment where it is *'likely to have a significant effect (either alone or in combination)'*. Policy NH1 therefore ensures that any development approved under the plan will have to demonstrate compliance with the 'in combination' provisions of the Habitats Regulations. There is therefore no risk of a residual effect at this draft Plan Strategy HRA stage, which might act in combination with other plans and projects, which would not be addressed at later assessment stages.

It is therefore concluded that, on the basis of the underlying reasoning supporting Principle 6 of Section C.8.1 of the HRA Handbook, reliance on Policy NH1 provides the basis upon which effects which might act in combination with other plans and projects can be ruled out. There will be greater opportunity to consider the potential for in combination effects at LPP, and to put in place measures to address any risks, for example through selection of planning designations or by including key site requirements. No further assessment in combination with other plans and projects is required at this stage.

6 Conclusions

Outcome of HRA

Step 8: Preparing a draft of the HRA Record

The draft Plan Strategy has been subject to screening under the Habitats Regulations. All proposals and policies have been considered in respect of the potential for likely significant effects upon any international site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Following the initial screening exercise, ten policies were identified as having a likely significant effect. Mitigation measures, in the form of suggested case-specific policy caveats, were identified in respect of all of these policies as part of an appropriate assessment. The rationale for these is set out in Section 5 and they are summarised in Table 4.

Assuming the recommended mitigation measures are all accepted and the plan amended accordingly, it is possible to ascertain that the Plan Strategy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international sites.

Following public consultation and independent examination of the draft Plan Strategy the HRA will be finalised and adopted by the Council and published alongside the adopted Plan Strategy.

The Local Policies Plan (LPP) is the second stage of the LDP and will identify settlement limits, zonings and environmental designations and, where appropriate, introduce local policies or key site requirements for these zonings and designations. Another draft HRA will be prepared to assess the potential impacts of the draft LPP on international sites. The information about international sites in Appendix 3, which will be updated, will be important as a starting point for the HRA at LPP. Following public consultation and independent examination of the draft LPP that HRA will be finalised and adopted by the Council and published alongside the adopted LPP.

Abbreviations

AoHSV	Areas of High Scenic Value
AoMC	Areas of Minerals Constraint
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CMS	Construction Method Statement
CSM	Common Standards Monitoring
DAERA	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EC	European Commission
FCS	Favourable Conservation Status
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
J&A	Justification and Amplification
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LDP	Local Development Plan
LLPA	Local Landscape Policy Areas
LPP	Local Policies Plan
NA	Not Applicable
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
pSPA	Proposed Special Protection Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SES	Shared Environmental Service
SLNCI	Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
WR&SR	Water Resource & Supply Resilience Plan
WWTW	Waste Water Treatment Works

Glossary

Adverse effect on site integrity	An effect on the qualifying features of an international site which would undermine the achievement of the conservation objectives for that site and which would have a negative effect on the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitats, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which the site is or will be designated.
Competent Authority	For the purposes of the Habitats Regulations the expression ‘competent authority’ includes government departments, district councils and statutory undertakers, and any trustees, commissioners, board or other persons who, as a public body and not for their own profit, act under any statutory provision for the improvement of any place or the production or supply of any commodity or service.
Cumulative Impact	A number of developments in a locality or a continuous activity over time that together may have an increased impact on the environment.
De Minimis	Having no appreciable effect.
Global Status	The global status is an expert judgement of the overall value of the international site for the conservation of the relevant Annex I habitat. Sites have been graded A, B or C.
International sites	Collective term that includes European SACs, SPAs, SACs, pSPAs, SCIs and Ramsar sites (the latter is a wider international designation).
Habitats Regulations	The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).
In combination effect	Refers to effects that may be likely significant effects when considered in combination with effects from other plans or projects.
Likely significant effect	An effect that cannot be ruled out on the basis of objective information. Likely in this context means there is a risk or possibility that an effect will be significant. An effect is significant if it would undermine an international site’s conservation objectives.
Mitigation measures	Measures to avoid, cancel or reduce the effects of a plan or project on an international site.
Natura 2000 (N2K)	The European network of special areas of conservation and special protection areas under the Wild Birds Directive, provided for by Article 3(1) of the Habitats Directive.
Ramsar site	Site listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance adopted at Ramsar, Iran in 1971. As a matter of policy these sites are treated in the same way as international sites.
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are sites that have been adopted by the European Commission and formally designated by the government of each country in whose territory the site lies.
Special Protection Area (SPA) The Directives	Area classified under Article 4 of the EU Birds Directive 1979 and 2009. Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version). These Directives are referred to as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive respectively and together are called ‘The Directives’ for the purposes of this report.

Appendix 1: References & Evidence Sources

In the absence of specific Northern Ireland guidance on carrying out Habitats Regulations Assessment for plans and programmes reference has been made to other sources of guidance and relevant documents including those listed below:

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 (2001), European Commission Environment DG

DAERA (2015 – 2017) Conservation Objectives (*Online*) Available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/protected-areas> (Accessed October 2019)

DAERA (2019) Data Layers for designated and proposed European and Ramsar sites Available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/download-digital-datasets> (Accessed October 2019)

Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans Guidance for Plan-Making Bodies in Scotland Version 3.0, (2015) Scottish Natural Heritage (Initially Prepared by David Tyldesley and Associates) (Accessed September 2019)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (Dates vary) Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS). (*Online*) Available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1393> (Accessed October 2019)

JNCC (Dates vary) Standard data forms generated from the Natura 2000 Database submitted to the European Commission. (*Online*) Available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-161> (Accessed October 2019)

NI Water (2019) draft Water Resource & Supply Resilience Plan <https://www.niwater.com/managing-northern-irelands-water-resources/> (Accessed October 2019)

Outdoor Recreation NI (2018) A Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Plan for Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area. Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership <http://www.strangfordlough.org/> (Accessed October 2019)

Spatial NI (2017) Data Layers for Local Government boundaries (*Online*) Available at <https://www.spatialni.gov.uk/> (Accessed October 2019)

Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) *The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook*, February 2019 edition UK: DTA Publications Ltd

Appendix 2: The Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment for Plans

Introduction

This appendix sets out the approach to carrying out Habitats Regulations Assessments for Local Development Plans (LDPs) in Northern Ireland in the context of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). It is informed by the Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook⁵ (HRA Handbook) which is regularly updated to reflect case law. The HRA Handbook is aimed at statutory bodies, local authorities, and other 'competent authorities'. It is a definitive source of detailed guidance that is regularly updated for good practice and monitored by a barrister specialising in environmental law and the Habitats Regulations in particular. In places reference is made to relevant sections of the HRA Handbook where more detail can be found and, at times, extracts of the HRA Handbook are quoted.

The context for HRA is set out firstly. This is followed by an overview of how HRA applies to plans and the consideration of mitigation. Finally the stages and steps for the HRA process, as applied to Local Development Plans in Northern Ireland, are detailed. HRA is an iterative process carried out in parallel with plan preparation. The HRA will be modified in light of consultation and representations on and any amendments to the draft Plan Strategy. The record of the HRA will be completed and published with the adopted plan (Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan).

The Directives and Regulations

The Directives are Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version). These Directives are referred to as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive respectively and together are called the Directives for the purposes of this report. The overall aim of the Directives is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to habitats and species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives. These designations form a suite of sites that are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

The Directives are implemented through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations. For the purposes of the Habitats Regulations the expression 'competent authority' is construed in accordance with Regulation 5. Competent authorities include government departments, district councils and statutory undertakers, and any trustees, commissioners, board or other persons who, as a public body and not for their own profit, act under any statutory provision for the improvement of any place or the production or supply of any commodity or service. Councils as planning authorities are competent authorities. Regulation 43 (1) of the Habitats Regulations requires competent authorities to make an appropriate assessment of plans and projects which are likely to have a significant effect on an international site in Northern Ireland, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. For this report international sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), proposed SPAs and Ramsar sites.

Applying HRA to Local Development Plans

LDPs are prepared under the provisions of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Planning Act) and the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (NI) 2015. The Planning Act requires the LDP

⁵ Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) *The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook*, February 2019 edition UK: DTA Publications Ltd.

to be produced in two stages – the first being the Plan Strategy, followed upon adoption, by the Local Policies Plan.

The approach to HRA for a plan differs to that for a project. In the case of projects the precise location of development is known and more detailed information is generally available, or can be obtained about construction, operation and other stages of the development thus enabling full assessment.

By comparison, a Plan Strategy is a strategic level plan setting out a framework for development but generally lacking detail of where and when developers will bring forward development. This will not be known until after the plan has been published. Therefore the approach to HRA for LDPs differs to that for projects. The plan does however steer how and where projects may be brought forward.

The assessment of strategic plans can present a challenge in terms of deciding what effects may come about as a result of the plan and which cannot occur due to other strategic and regulatory requirements with which the LDP and development management decisions must comply. The view could be taken that, given that a policy is included to meet the requirements of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), and that all planning applications must comply with the Habitats Regulations, then the draft Plan Strategy cannot result in an adverse effect on the integrity of any international site. However, this argument has been rejected by the Courts who have ruled⁶ that the requirement for planning permission to be determined in light of the relevant land use plan, necessarily means that those plans have considerable influence on development decisions and that, as such, land use plans must be subject to HRA in their own right. As a result, to terminate the HRA on this basis would not only be contrary to case law but it would also miss the opportunity to draw attention to the extent of international sites in, or connected to, the Council area and to inform land use planning in such a way as to minimise the regulatory burden of compliance with the Regulations at the later project HRA stage.

There are a number of pieces of case law that clarify how the Directives should be interpreted as applying to plans. The key points are summarised here, these are detailed in the Habitats Regulations Handbook and the relevant section of Handbook content is referenced accordingly (e.g. F.x.x or C.x etc.).

EC v UK⁷ detailed in F.10.1.5.

- A. Land use plans can potentially have significant effects on European sites, despite the subsequent need for planning permission at ‘project’ level stage.
- B. Assessment of land use plans must therefore be secured under the provisions of the Habitats Directive.
- C. The assessment of plans has to be tailored to the stage of plan making.
- D. The assessment should be ‘to the extent possible based on the basis of the precision of the plan’.

Feeney⁸ (UK High Court) F.10.1. reinforced this.

- ‘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.’

⁶ Refer para 55 in EC v UK Case C-6/04 (2005)

⁷ Case C-6/04: Commission of the European Communities v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland judgment of the Court 20 October 2005.

⁸ Sean Feeney v Oxford City Council and the Secretary of State CLG para 92 of the judgment dated 24 October 2011 Case No CO/3797/2011, Neutral Citation [2011] EWHC 2699 Admin

Boggis⁹ Court of Appeal & EC v UK C.7.5.2.

The implications for HRA of plans are that the HRA should be proportionate to the level of detail. There should be “*credible evidence that there was a real, rather than a hypothetical, risk*”

- The plan has weight as planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).
- HRA should concentrate on aspects of the plan that could, realistically, be likely to have a significant effect.
- A likely significant effect should not be assumed for:
 - policies and proposals that are no more than general policy statements or which express a general aspiration or intent;
 - policies which generate no more than theoretical risks, or vague or hypothetical effects; or
 - policies or proposals for which meaningful assessment can be made at this stage, where no particular significant effect on any particular international site can actually be identified.
- Reliance should not simply be placed on a general international site protection policy as this does not address potential tensions or conflicts in the plan between site protection and policies or proposals which could significantly affect international sites.
- Tensions in the plan must be resolved in favour of protecting the international sites from harm.
- Policies or proposals with a high potential for significant adverse effects on international sites should be removed or subject to mitigation measures.

Assessing and applying mitigation measures

CJEU Case C323/17 (People over Wind & Sweetman)¹⁰ C.5, F7.1

On 12 April 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) issued a judgment, *Case C323/17 (People over Wind & Sweetman)*, which ruled that Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 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. It is therefore no longer permissible to take account of measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a plan or project on an international site at the Stage 1 test of likely significance.

In light of this Stage 1 Assessment does consider essential features and characteristics of the plan; it also takes account of regional and strategic context and other regulatory controls that will apply to development under the plan. However measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been adverse effects on the integrity of international sites are not taken into account in Stage 1 and instead are assessed at Stage 2 appropriate assessment.

The consideration of mitigation differs between projects and plans, although for both cases it is not appropriate to take account of mitigation measures which might be incorporated into the plan at the screening stage. The first step in appropriate assessment is therefore to seek to incorporate mitigation measures which might be relied upon to avoid any adverse effects to the integrity of the international site.

⁹ Peter Charles Boggis and Easton Bavants Conservation v Natural England and Waveney District Council, High Court of Justice Court of Appeal case C1/2009/0041/QBACF Citation No [2009] EWCA Civ. 1061 20th October 2009

¹⁰ Case C-323/17 Request for a preliminary ruling, *People Over Wind* and Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta, 12th April 2018

Feeney v Oxford City Council¹¹ F10.1.

Case law has established that it is acceptable in principle to include policies within a Local Plan which are conditional upon certain conditions being met.

Abbotskerswell v Teignbridge (2014)¹² F10.1.

In this case the High Court specifically endorsed an approach which potentially relies upon matters being finalised after the adoption of the plan. The competent authority must however be satisfied that the measures can be delivered in practice.

This is captured in the HRA Handbook F.10.1 (emphasis added):

‘Because the integrity test incorporates the application of the precautionary principle as a matter of law, and because plan assessments are, by their nature, less precise than project assessments, it is important for the assessment process to eliminate the prospect of adverse effects on site integrity in so far as that is possible at the level of specificity inherent in the nature and purpose of the particular plan.’

F.10.1.2 of the Handbook refers to mitigation measures which might be relied upon to show that there would be no adverse effects on site integrity. Examples are provided as follows:

‘mitigation measures that may be introduced during or after the ‘appropriate assessment’ stage may be:

- a) Case-specific policy restrictions;*
- b) Case-specific policy caveats;*
- c) Prescribing how adverse effects on site integrity will be avoided by mitigation measures in a lower level or more detailed plan, to be confirmed by a more detailed Habitats Regulations Assessment at that level;*
- d) Deleting aspects of the plan that will probably fail the tests of the Directive at project application stage;*
- e) Ensuring that there are no proposals that could adversely affect the integrity of a European site that if retained in the plan may lead to a case for the proposal to be permitted, using the incorporation in the plan as the imperative reason of overriding public interest in its favour, because the plan relies on it being, or assumes that it will be, implemented;*

To be an appropriate restriction or caveat (in (a) or (b) above), enabling the plan-making body to ascertain no adverse effect on the integrity of a European site, the restriction must be:

- case-specific;*
- explicit; and*
- added to the policy and not merely added to the explanatory text or commentary, or not merely inserted into the implementation or monitoring chapters.’*

Co-ordination with other Habitats Regulations Assessments

The Habitats Regulations provides for co-ordination between competent authorities at Regulation 47. While Regulation 47 does not strictly apply to HRA for Local Development Plans it does establish the principle that a competent authority can place weight on a HRA carried out by another competent authority. This is subject to the proviso that the competent authority should be satisfied that the earlier HRA was robust and has not become outdated by further information or developments. No guidance has been issued by DAERA as allowed for under 47(3) however the Department for

¹¹ Sean Feeney v Oxford City Council and the Secretary of State CLG para 92 of the judgment dated 24 October 2011 Case No CO/3797/2011, Neutral Citation [2011] EWHC 2699 Admin

¹² Abbotskerswell Parish Council v Teignbridge District Council [2014] EWHC 4166 (Admin)

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published guidance¹³ in 2012 to meet the equivalent regulation for England. Paragraphs 5 – 7 of that guidance are referred to here as an expansion of how it interprets co-ordination between competent authorities.

'5. The Regulations transposing the Habitats Directive enable competent authorities to adopt the reasoning or conclusions of another competent authority as to whether a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, or will adversely affect the integrity of a European site. They also provide that a competent authority is not required to assess any implications of a plan or project that would be more appropriately assessed by another competent authority.'

6. Competent authorities should adopt the reasoning, conclusion or assessment of another competent authority in relation to the appropriate assessment requirements for a plan or project, if they can. This can happen when all or part of the appropriate assessment requirements have already been met by another competent authority. It could also happen if one competent authority is completing all or part of the appropriate assessment requirements on behalf of others. Competent authorities remain responsible for ensuring their decisions are consistent with the Habitats Directive, so must be satisfied:

- No additional material information has emerged, such as new environmental evidence or changes or developments to the plan or project, that means the reasoning, conclusion or assessment they are adopting has become out of date*
- The analysis underpinning the reasoning, conclusion or assessment they are adopting is sufficiently rigorous and robust. This condition can be assumed to be met for a plan or project involving the consideration of technical matters if the reasoning, conclusion or assessment was undertaken or made by a competent authority with the necessary technical expertise.*

7. Due to these conditions there may be cases where it is not appropriate to adopt the reasoning, conclusions or assessment of another competent authority, or it is only appropriate to adopt some elements of an earlier assessment. In addition, even where the conditions are met, a competent authority may need to undertake additional work to supplement the assessment they have adopted in order to meet the full appropriate assessment requirements.'

The application and implications of the DEFRA guidance has been considered in detail within Part C.12 of the HRA Handbook. Therefore it is accepted as good practice that consideration may be given to HRAs carried out by other competent authorities where they are applicable to development to be brought forward under the LDP.

HRA the Stages and Steps - Overview

HRA is normally described in four stages:

- Stage 1: Screening for likely significant effects;
- Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test;
- Stage 3: Alternative Solutions; and
- Stage 4: Imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures.

The approach to HRA for LDPs in Northern Ireland is described through 11 Steps across Stages 1 and 2. These steps are not named as such in the HRA Handbook however the section which applies to each step is referenced and Figure A.1.1 illustrates each step in the HRA process.

¹³ [Defra guidance on competent authority co-ordination](#), July 2012

Stage 1 involves firstly deciding whether a plan or project should be subject to HRA (Step 1). Steps 2, identifying international sites, and 3, gathering information about those sites, help to identify the international sites which the plan may affect and compiles information about those sites. Step 4 allows for discretionary discussion with the Statutory Nature Conservation Body and other stakeholders. The final step of Stage 1 is the preliminary screening of the plan to determine which elements of it are likely to have a significant effect on an international site and identify the sites that may be affected.

Stage 2 is referred to as 'appropriate assessment' and assesses the implications of the plan or project for international sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives. A plan can only proceed if it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of an international site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans.

If Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment finds that there would be an adverse effect on site integrity then alternative solutions which are financially, legally and technically feasible need to be considered further in Stage 3. Alternative solutions are already considered in preparation of many plans, for example through the Preferred Options Paper for Local Development Plans and in carrying out Strategic Environmental Assessment which requires consideration of reasonable alternatives. Compliance with regional policies and strategies also means that environmental effects will have been taken into account. It is therefore rare for HRAs for LDPs to progress beyond Stage 2.

Stage 4 applies in the event that there is an imperative reason of public interest which overrides the risk and harm to sites, and priority features where appropriate. It provides for compensatory measures to protect the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network to be identified, delivery detailed and the government notified. As already noted it is rare for HRAs for LDPs to progress beyond Stage 2. Stage 3 and 4 are not therefore detailed further in this approach.

Stage 1: Screening Plan for Likely Significant Effects

Step 1: Deciding whether a plan should be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment

This involves considering the nature of the plan and its individual proposals to determine whether there is a requirement to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and is further detailed in HRA Handbook F.2. and F.3.

The following questions help determine whether the document being reviewed is a plan in the context of the Directives.

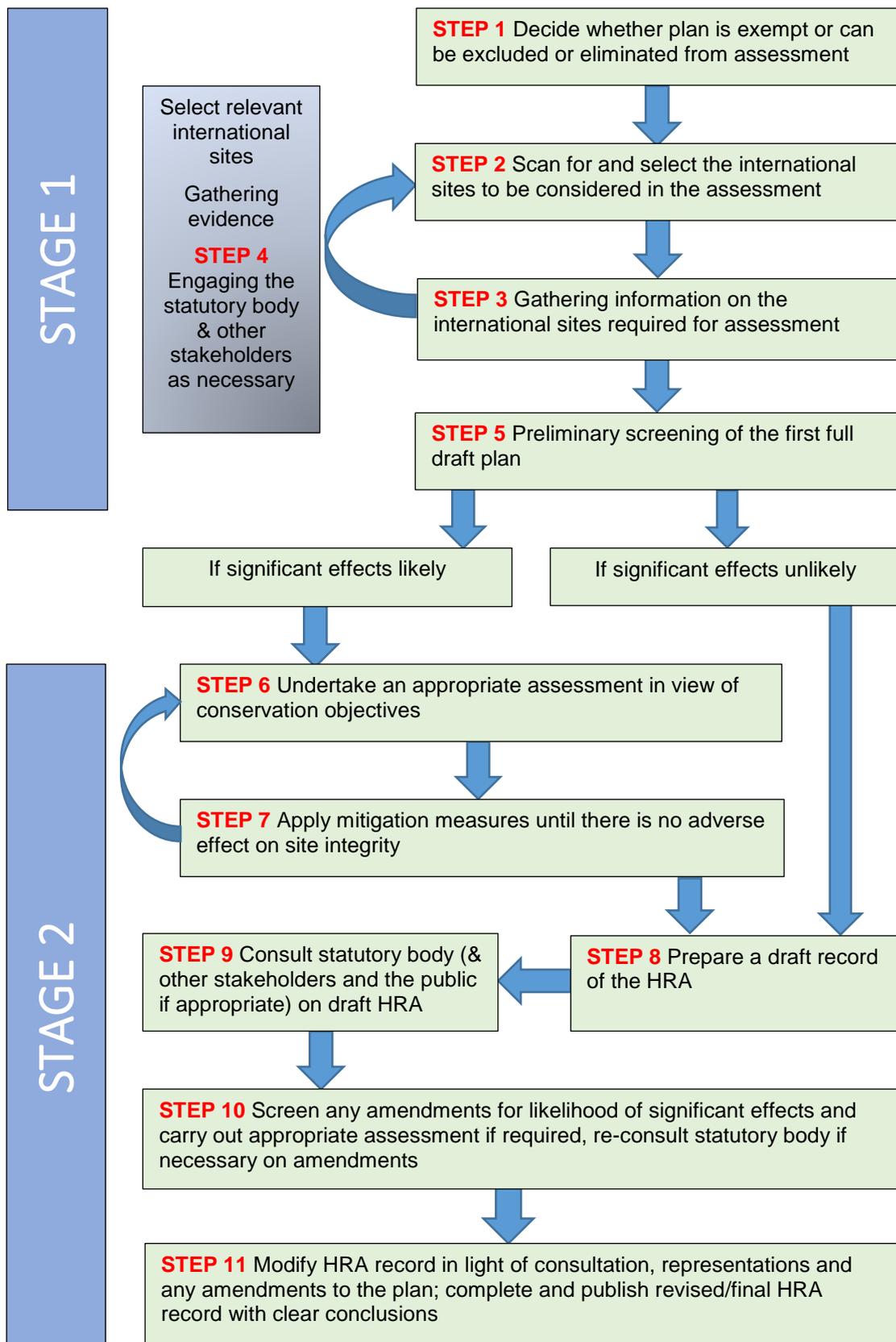
- Is the whole of the plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of an international site for nature conservation purposes?
- Is the plan a strategic development plan, local development plan, supplementary guidance?
- Is the plan a general statement of policy showing only the general political will or intention of the plan making body, and no effect on any particular international site can reasonably be predicted?
- Does the plan contain a programme, or policies, or proposals which could affect one or more particular international sites?

Step 1 is recorded at the end of Section 1 of this report. If it is found that the plan is not subject to HRA then the outcome is recorded and it is not necessary to progress beyond this step. In practice an LDP is a plan in the context of the Directives and subject to HRA.

Step 2: Scanning and selecting international sites potentially affected

This step follows the scan-collate-consider-select procedure set out in the HRA Handbook Figure F.4.3 and is carried out in parallel with Step 3. Step 2a is the scanning stage; Step 3 collates information; Step 2b involves considering the information and selecting the relevant sites that may be affected.

Figure A.1.1 Steps in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Process



Step 2a: 'Long-list' of sites with potential connection to plan area

International sites that are within the plan area, within a zone of influence beyond the plan area or connected to the plan area through ecology or infrastructure are identified. This is detailed in the HRA Handbook F.4 and presented in Section 2. Information is collected about this 'long-list' of sites in Step 3 and presented in Appendix 3.

Step 2b: 'Short-list' of sites that should be considered in the HRA

Taking account of the information gathered in Step 3 and the 'long-list' of sites identified at Step 2a a further scan is carried out to determine the effects that could potentially affect international sites as a result of the plan. This is carried out using the Scanning and Site Selection List in Figure F.4.4. of the HRA Handbook. As this takes account of the site selection features, pathways to sites and conservation objectives this is likely to find that some of the sites on the long-list can be eliminated from further assessment as there is no conceivable effect or their conservation objective could not be undermined. This step could potentially identify some sites that were overlooked at Step 2a.

This step is recorded in Appendix 3, Table A.3.1. Any sites that are eliminated as a result of this step are listed in Table A.3.2. The outcome is summarised in Section 2, Table 2.

Step 3: Gathering information about the international sites

This step is carried out in parallel with and informs Step 2. Information for each site on the long-list identified at Step 2a is compiled to include selection features, conservation objectives, conservation status, potential threats to site integrity from planning related development and location relative to the plan area and any plan designations. This is detailed in the HRA Handbook F.4 and presented in Appendix 3.

Step 4: Discretionary discussions on the method and scope of the appraisal

The Statutory Nature Conservation Body, represented by the Department of Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), may be consulted informally to ensure that the information at Step 3 is up to date and reflects known issues for the international sites. This provides the opportunity to invite comment on the scope of the HRA and potential in combination considerations.

Step 5: Screening the draft/proposed plan for likely significant effects

This step is detailed in the HRA Handbook F.6 Part A and F.7 advises how the outcome should be recorded. The screening of the whole plan is presented in Appendix 5 and the outcome summarised in Section 4 of the HRA. The HRA Handbook also presents principles, with reference to case law and government guidance, which inform screening and the interpretation of terms used; some relevant extracts are:

'As a result of European case law in Waddenzee, irrespective of the normal English meaning of 'likely', in this statutory context a 'likely significant effect' is a possible significant effect; one whose occurrence cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information. In this context it is permissible to ask whether a plan or project 'may have a significant effect'...(principle 3)'

'A significant effect is any effect that would undermine the conservation objectives for a European site... (principle 4)'

'An effect which would not be significant can properly be described as : as 'insignificant effect'; or a 'de Minimis effect; or a 'trivial effect'; or as having 'no appreciable effect'; but it is important to bear in mind that, in this context, all the terms are synonymous and are being used to describe effects which would not undermine the conservation objectives'....(principle 8)'

'Objective', in this context, means clear verifiable fact rather than subjective opinion. It will not normally be sufficient for an applicant merely to assert that the plan or project will not have an adverse effect on a site, nor will it be appropriate for a competent authority to rely on reassurances based on supposition or speculation. On the other hand, there should be credible

evidence to show that there is a real rather than a hypothetical risk of effects that could undermine the site's conservation objectives. Any serious possibility of a risk that the conservation objectives might be undermined should trigger an 'appropriate assessment' (principle 11).'

Draft Plan Strategies are set in the context of a vision and objectives which indicate the outcomes intended to be achieved through the plan. How these should be considered is set out in Sections F.6.2.2 and F.6.2.3 of the HRA Handbook as follows:

'...it is possible that the goals and objectives are the drivers for the possibility of a significant effect on a European site, but in most cases, it will be subsequent, more detailed policies or proposals that would have such implications, rather than the general goals or objectives. In most cases the general goals and objectives will be screened out, either because they will have no effect at all, or because they are general statements which are too vague to have a significant effect on a particular site. Even if they are the driver of the potential effect, it is likely that the plan will contain a more specific policy or proposal that would be the better target for assessment.'

The 'screening categories' in Part F of the HRA Handbook are used to provide a consistent and transparent approach to the screening process. The following categories are used to assess whether an overall plan and its individual proposals require HRA. They are explained in detail in the section of the HRA Handbook referenced.

- A. General statement of policy/general aspiration (screened out). F.6.3.1
- B. Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability/sustainability of proposals (screened out). F.6.3.2
- C. Proposal referred to but not proposed by the plan (screened out). F.6.3.3
- D. General plan-wide environmental protection/site safeguarding/threshold policies (screened out). F.6.3.4
- E. Policies or proposals which steer change in such a way as to protect international sites from adverse effects (screened out). F.6.3.5
- F. Policy that cannot lead to development or other change (screened out). F.6.3.6
- G. Policy or proposal that could not have any conceivable effect on a site (screened out). F.6.3.7
- H. Policy or proposal the (actual or theoretical) effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives (either alone or in combination with other aspects of this or other plans or projects) (screened out). F.6.3.8
- I. Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone (screened in) F.6.3.9
- J. Policy or proposal with an effect on a site but unlikely to be significant alone, so need to check for likely significant effects in combination F.6.3.10
- K. Policy or proposal unlikely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination (screened out after the in combination test). F.6.3.11
- L. Policy or proposal which might be likely to have a significant effect in combination (screened in after the in combination test). F.6.3.11
- M. Bespoke area, site or case-specific policies or proposals intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on an international site (screened in) F.6.3.12

In some cases more than one category may apply. Where it is the case that part of a policy is in one category e.g. B. 'policy listing general criteria', whereas another part is in another category e.g. H. 'cannot undermine the conservation objectives' then both categories are listed e.g. B/H. Where part of a policy is screened in then this part will be further assessed.

Consideration must be given to any cumulative effects of proposals during plan preparation as detailed in HRA Handbook F.6.3.11. These include potential cumulative effects within the plan and in combination effects with other relevant plans and projects. For those proposals falling under

categories A to H there is no likely significant effect alone and cannot be any effect in combination. Those under category I are deemed to have a likely significant effect alone and will be progressed to appropriate assessment therefore in combination assessment is not required at Stage 1. Those policies or proposals falling under category J do need to be assessed further to determine whether they fall into K or L when considered in combination.

If there are likely significant effects, either alone or in combination, then the sites and features which may be affected and potential impacts are summarised in preparation for Stage 2.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test

Step 6: The appropriate assessment

The summary from Step 5 is the starting point for the appropriate assessment. Step 6 assesses whether any likely significant effect could lead to an adverse effect on site integrity for each site. This is set out in the HRA Handbook F.6. PART B and in F.9.

Where it is found that there could be an adverse effect for any site then measures are identified to remove any potential for adverse effects as described above. Measures considered at appropriate assessment must be subject to 'a full and precise analysis of the measures capable of avoiding or reducing any significant effects'. These measures may include case-specific policy restrictions or caveats, adding mitigation in a further plan that will deliver the current plan, removing proposals that could have an adverse effect on site integrity, specific mitigation plans or a large scale mitigation strategy which includes measures to mitigate adverse effects of the current plan.

In considering in combination assessment at appropriate assessment principle 4 of C.8.1 in Section C.8 'The in combination assessment' of the HRA Handbook reads as follows:

'In deciding the required scope of an appropriate assessment one must always keep firmly in mind that the underlying purpose of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive is to ensure (subject to the operation of Article 6(4)) that a plan or project is authorised only to the extent that it will not, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the European site; the key purpose.

European Commission guidance and case law establishes that the underlying intention of the in-combination provision is to take account of cumulative effects. An appropriate assessment need not be extended further than is necessary to fulfil the key purpose.'

Principle 6 of Section C.8.1 of the HRA Handbook states that, following an appropriate assessment:

'...if on assessment alone it is ascertained that the subject plan or project will in fact have no effect at all on the European site, an adverse effect in combination is ruled out and no further assessment is required. The plan or project may be authorised.'

Step 7: Amending the plan until there would be no adverse effects on site integrity

Any mitigation identified in Step 6 is incorporated in the plan. This is further detailed in the HRA Handbook F.11 and presented in Section 5. In the case of a draft HRA the mitigation will be incorporated before the draft plan is finalised and adopted.

Step 8: Preparing a draft of the HRA Record

This is a draft report which records the HRA and supporting evidence and comprises this report with clear conclusions as set out in Section 6.

Step 9: Consultation

If the HRA is concluded at Stage 1 the HRA Report with a Statement of Finding of No Likely Significant Effects is published. Consultation is not required on this Stage 1 Test of Likely Significance in these circumstances however it is recommended that the record is published as a supporting document for the plan. If the draft plan is subject to consultation a draft Stage 1 HRA Report may be included in the

consultation with a note that it will be updated to take account of any changes in the proposals or international sites before the plan is finalised.

If the HRA progresses to Stage 2 then DAERA must be consulted on a draft Stage 2 HRA Report (also known as an appropriate assessment). Other stakeholders such as managers of international sites should be consulted where appropriate. Public consultation is not required on the draft Stage 2 HRA Report however it may be included as a supporting document for any public consultation on the draft plan and comment on it invited. It should be stated that the HRA will be updated to take account of any changes in the proposals or international sites before the plan is finalised.

Step 10: Proposed modifications

Modifications to a plan may come about as a result of consultation, independent examination or the outcome of the HRA and the approach to their consideration is set out in F.12 of the HRA Handbook. Representations by DAERA and other consultees are recorded with a note on if and how they have been addressed in the HRA. Further mitigation identified through Step 9, or a result of a revised HRA in light of modifications to the plan, is incorporated in the plan. Steps 6 - 8 are updated to reflect any additional mitigation and adverse effects reviewed.

Step 11: Modifying and completing the appraisal record

If it is found that there are no adverse effects on site integrity then the HRA may be concluded and a Stage 2 HRA Appropriate Assessment Report published to include a Record of No Adverse Effect on the Integrity of any international site under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

Appendix 3: Site information

An overview of the information to be presented for each site is firstly provided. This is followed by a record of Step 2b: 'Short-list' of sites that should be considered in the HRA. Information for each site identified in the 'long-list' identified in Section 2, Step 2a follows. This details selection features, conservation objectives, conservation status, potential threats to site integrity from planning related development and location relative to the plan area and any plan designations. This has informed the current draft HRA and will also provide baseline information for the HRA to be carried out for the LPP. The site information is grouped as follows.

Belfast Lough & Associated SPAs and Ramsar Sites	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
	Belfast Lough Ramsar Site
	Belfast Lough SPA
	East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA
	Outer Ards Ramsar Site
	Outer Ards SPA
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar Site	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site
	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC	Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
Strangford Lough SAC	Strangford Lough SAC
Strangford Lough SPA and Ramsar site	Strangford Lough SPA
	Strangford Lough Ramsar
Montiaghs Moss SAC	Montiaghs Moss SAC
Aughnadarragh Lough SAC	Aughnadarragh Lough SAC
Eastern Mournes SAC	Eastern Mournes SAC

Introduction to Site Information

Conservation Objectives

EU Member States have responsibility under the Habitats and Birds Directives to ensure that all habitats and species of Community Interest are maintained or restored to Favourable Conservation Status (FCS). Natura 2000 sites have a role to play in achieving this overall objective as the most important core sites for these species and habitats. Each site must therefore be managed in a way that ensures it contributes as effectively as possible to helping the species and habitats for which it has been designated reach a favourable conservation status.

In accordance with Article 6.1 of the Habitats Directive, Member States are required to implement, on each site, the necessary conservation measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the protected habitat types and species of Community Interest present. DAERA has commissioned management plans for many international sites. Those that are available will be taken into account when this HRA is finalised.

Member States must also prevent any damaging activities that could significantly disturb those species and habitats (Article 6.2) and protect the site from new plans and projects that are potentially damaging or likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (Article 6.3, 6.4).

To ensure that each Natura 2000 site contributes fully to reaching this overall target of FCS, it is important to set clear conservation objectives for each individual site. These define the desired state for each of the species and habitat types for which the site was designated. Conservation objectives are not published for Ramsar sites therefore the conservation objectives for the associated SAC/SPA were referred to.

Conservation Objectives have a role in:

- Conservation planning and management by guiding management to maintain habitats and species in, or restore them to, favourable condition;
- Assessing plans and projects, as required under article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive in light of the site's conservation objectives; and
- Monitoring and reporting by providing the basis for assessing the condition of a feature, the factors that affect it and the actions required.

Favourable Condition is defined as *'the target condition for an interest feature in terms of the abundance, distribution and/or quality of that feature within the site'*. The most recent condition assessment for site selection features was referred to where available in preparing this report.

Sources of information Northern Ireland sites

The appropriate assessments draw on or refer to source documents as detailed below. Digital maps for all sites can be viewed on the DAERA Natural Environment Map Viewer¹⁴ or downloaded from its digital datasets web page¹⁵. Maps are also provided in Appendix 4 to illustrate the relationship between the plan area and international sites. Additional, site specific, sources of information are listed for each site.

Special Areas of Conservation

An overview of each SAC can be found on the JNCC website at its section on UK Protected Sites¹⁶. Under 'General Site Character' there is a link to the Natura 2000 standard data form for that SAC. Further detail is provided on this website about the Annex I habitats and Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site. It also explains why the site is important and provides a link to information about that habitat in the UK context. Further information for each SAC can be found online through the DAERA Protected Areas page¹⁷. On each site page the link to guidance and literature allows the Reasons for designation, Conservation Objectives and site map to be accessed.

Special Protection Areas

A link to the Natura 2000 standard data form for each SPA can be found on the JNCC website at its section on UK protected sites. Further information for each site can be found through the DAERA Protected Areas page. On each site page the link to guidance and literature allows the SPA citation document and Conservation Objectives to be accessed.

Ramsar sites

A link to the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) for each Ramsar site can be found on the JNCC UK Protected Sites page. Further information for each site can be found through the DAERA Protected Areas page. On the DAERA site page the link to guidance and literature allows the Ramsar site citation document and map to be accessed.

Condition Assessment

DAERA has compiled and made available a spreadsheet, 'Condition of Features in ASSIs and N2Ks'. This details the most recent condition assessment for features, usually with an explanation of the reason why a feature is in unfavourable condition. This spreadsheet was referred to in compiling site information. DAERA also provided unpublished condition assessment reports for some individual sites and some site selection features such as marsh fritillary butterfly.

¹⁴ DAERA (2018) 'Natural Environment Map Viewer' Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/natural-environment-map-viewer>

¹⁵ DAERA (2018) 'Download Digital Datasets' Available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/download-digital-datasets> (accessed 23/01/2019).

¹⁶ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1458>

¹⁷ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/protected-areas>

Step 2b: 'Short-list' of sites that should be considered in the HRA

Taking account of the 'long-list' of sites identified in Section 2, the discussion of potential impacts of development in Section 3 and the site information in this Appendix, a further scan was carried out to determine the effects that could potentially affect international sites as a result of the plan. This was carried out using the Scanning and Site Selection List in Figure F.4.4. of the HRA Handbook as described in Appendix 2.

Table A.3.1 Scanning and site selection list for sites that could potentially be affected by the plan

Extract from The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, www.dtapublications.co.uk © DTA Publications Limited (November 2018) all rights reserved. This work is registered with the UK Copyright Service

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
1. All plans (terrestrial, coastal and marine)	Sites within the geographic area covered by or intended to be relevant to the plan	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
2. Plans that could affect the aquatic environment	Sites upstream or downstream of the plan area in the case of river or estuary sites	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Site Belfast Lough SPA East Coast Marine pSPA Strangford Lough SPA Strangford Lough SAC Strangford Lough Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
	Open water, peatland, fen, marsh and other wetland sites with relevant hydrological links to land within the plan area, irrespective of distance from the plan area	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Site Belfast Lough SPA East Coast Marine pSPA Strangford Lough SPA Strangford Lough SAC Strangford Lough Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
3. Plans that could affect the marine environment	Sites that could be affected by changes in water quality, currents or flows; or effects on the inter-tidal or sub-tidal areas or the sea bed, or marine species	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Site Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Strangford Lough SPA Strangford Lough SAC Strangford Lough Ramsar Site Outer Ards SPA Outer Ards Ramsar Site
4. Plans that could affect the coast	Sites in the same coastal 'cell', or part of the same coastal ecosystem, or where there are interrelationships with or between different physical coastal processes	None

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
5. Plans that could affect mobile species	Sites whose qualifying features include mobile species which may be affected by the plan irrespective of the location of the plan's proposals or whether the species would be in or out of the site when they might be affected	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Montiagh's Moss SAC
6. Plans that could increase recreational pressure on international sites potentially vulnerable or sensitive to such pressure	Such international sites in the plan area	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
	Such international sites within an agreed zone of influence or other reasonable and evidence-based travel distance of the plan area boundaries that may be affected by local recreational or other visitor pressure from within the plan area	None
	Such international sites within an agreed zone of influence or other evidence-based longer travel distance of the plan area, which are major (regional or national) visitor attractions such as international sites which are National Nature Reserves where public visiting is promoted, sites in National Parks, coastal sites and sites in other major tourist or visitor destinations	None
7. Plans that would increase the amount of development	Sites in the plan area or beyond that are used for, or could be affected by, water abstraction irrespective of distance from the plan area	None
	Sites used for, or could be affected by, discharge of effluent from waste water treatment works or other waste management streams serving the plan area, irrespective of distance from the plan area	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Site Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Strangford Lough SPA Strangford Lough SAC Strangford Lough Ramsar Site
	Sites that could be affected by the provision of new or extended transport or other infrastructure	None

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
7. cont., Plans that would increase the amount of development	Sites that could be affected by increased deposition of air pollutants arising from the proposals, including emissions from significant increases in traffic	Belfast Lough Ramsar Site Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Strangford Lough SPA Strangford Lough SAC Strangford Lough Ramsar Site Montiaghs Moss SAC Aughnadarragh Lough SAC
8. Plans for linear developments or infrastructure	Sites within a specified distance from the centre line of the proposed route (or alternative routes), the distance may be varied for differing types of site/qualifying features and in the absence of established good practice standards, distance(s) to be agreed by the statutory nature conservation body	None
9. Plans that introduce new activities or new uses into the marine, coastal or terrestrial environment	Sites considered to have qualifying features potentially vulnerable or sensitive to the effects of the new activities proposed by the plan	None (No such 'new' uses introduced by the draft Plan Strategy)
10. Plans that could change the nature, area, extent, intensity, density, timing or scale of existing activities or uses	Sites considered to have qualifying features potentially vulnerable or sensitive to the effects of the changes to existing activities proposed by the plan	None (recreational uses covered at 6 above)
11. Plans that could change the quantity, quality, timing, treatment or mitigation of emissions or discharges to air, water or soil	Sites considered to have qualifying features potentially vulnerable or sensitive to the changes in emissions or discharges that could arise as a result of the plan	Belfast Lough Ramsar Site Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Strangford Lough SPA Strangford Lough SAC Strangford Lough Ramsar Site Montiaghs Moss SAC Aughnadarragh Lough SAC
12. Plans that could change the quantity, volume, timing, rate, or other characteristics of biological resources harvested, extracted or consumed	Sites whose qualifying features include the biological resources which the plan may affect, or whose qualifying features depend on the biological resources which the plan may affect, for example as prey species or supporting habitat or which may be disturbed by the harvesting, extraction or consumption	Not applicable to land use plans

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
13. Plans that could change the quantity, volume, timing, rate, or other characteristics of physical resources extracted or consumed	Sites whose qualifying features rely on the non- biological resources which the plan may affect, for example, as habitat or a physical environment on which habitat may develop or which may be disturbed by the extraction or consumption	None
14. Plans which could introduce or increase, or alter the timing, nature or location of disturbance to species	Sites whose qualifying features are considered to be potentially sensitive to disturbance, for example as a result of noise, activity or movement, or the presence of disturbing features that could be brought about by the plan	None (recreational uses covered at 6 above)
15. Plans which could introduce or increase or change the timing, nature or location of light or noise pollution	Sites whose qualifying features are considered to be potentially sensitive to the effects of changes in light or noise that could be brought about by the plan	None
16. Plans which could introduce or increase a potential cause of mortality of species	Sites whose qualifying features are considered to be potentially sensitive to the source of new or increased mortality that could be brought about by the plan	None (recreational uses covered at 6 above)

Sites considered but eliminated

As Step 2b takes account of the site selection features, pathways to sites and conservation objectives it found that some of the sites on the long-list can be eliminated from further assessment as there is no conceivable pathway for an effect or their conservation objectives could not be undermined.

Table A.3.2 Sites Eliminated from Further Assessment

Site	Elimination Reason
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC	There is a theoretical pathway however it is not conceivable that the plan would generate additional development impacts to an extent that it could undermine the conservation objectives for this site.
Eastern Mourne SAC	There is a theoretical pathway however it is not conceivable that the plan would generate additional development impacts to an extent that it could undermine the conservation objectives for this site.

Belfast Lough and Associated SPAs and Ramsar Sites

Six sites have bird features that use Belfast Lough for feeding, loafing or rafting and therefore share the same pathway with the plan area. Therefore the information for these sites is presented together.

Site Name:	Belfast Lough SPA	Site Code:	UK9020290
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	432.14 ha
Year:	1998		
Site Name:	Belfast Lough Ramsar Site	Site Code:	UK12002
Status:	Designated Ramsar Site	Area:	432.14 ha
Year:	1998		
Site Name:	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	Site Code:	UK9020290
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	5592.99 ha
Year:	2009		
Site Name:	Outer Ards SPA	Site Code:	UK9020271
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	4753.82 ha
Year:	2002		
Site Name:	Outer Ards Ramsar Site	Site Code:	UK12018
Status:	Designated Ramsar Site	Area:	1154.16 ha
Year:	2005		
Site Name:	East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA	Site Code:	UK9020320
Status:	Proposed Marine Special Protection Area	Area:	96668.34 Ha
Year:	NA		
References & Evidence:	Contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey report, which is updated annually. See www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm .		
Map	Appendix 4, Map 2&4		

Summary Site Description

The site location and character is described here and site selection features are presented in the table following the descriptions. The boundary rationale and management considerations are detailed further in the Conservation Objectives.

Belfast Lough SPA

Belfast Lough is a large intertidal sea lough situated at the mouth of the River Lagan on the East coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough comprises a series of mudflats and lagoons. The outer lough is restricted to mainly rocky shores with some small sandy bays. Marine areas below mean low water are not included.

During the breeding season the area regularly supports:

- Common tern 5.8 % of the all-Ireland population (5 year mean 2010 - 2014),
- Arctic tern 1.5% of the all-Ireland population (5 year mean 2010 - 2014).

Over winter the area regularly supports:

- Bar-tailed godwit 1.2 % of the all-Ireland population (5 year mean 2010/11 - 2014/15).
- Redshank (Eastern Atlantic - wintering) 1.4% of the biogeographic population (5 year peak mean 1991/92 - 1995/96)
- Black-tailed godwit 2.2% of the biogeographic population (2010/11-2014/15).

Belfast Lough Ramsar Site

The Belfast Lough Ramsar site boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Belfast Lough SPA. All the features for which it was designated are also qualifying features for the SPA. The same site description therefore applies and it is assumed to be subject to the same threats and conservation objectives.

Belfast Lough Open Water SPA

The Belfast Lough open water area comprises the marine area below the mean low water mark. Seawards it extends to a boundary between the eastern limits on the north and south shores at Kilroot and Horse Rock respectively. Water depths within the site are generally between 1m and 10m. Shallow waters, less than 5m in depth, dominate the area with deeper waters confined to the central area of the lough, east of a line between Greenisland and Cultra.

Over winter the area regularly supports:

- Great crested grebe (North-western Europe - wintering) 0.35% of the NW European population 5-year mean 1996/97-2000/01

Outer Ards SPA

The coastal site extends from near Grey Point, Belfast Lough to north of Ballyquintin Point at the southern end of the Ards Peninsula. The site is contiguous with Belfast Lough SPA and Strangford Lough SAC/SPA. It comprises a variety of shoreline types including rock platforms, off-shore islands, boulder, gravel and sand beaches. While the wintering waterfowl utilise the open shore, breeding seabirds (tern species) are present on Cockle Island, Groomsport. A marine area has been included within the SPA adjoining the Cockle Island tern nest site.

During the breeding season the area regularly supports:

- Arctic Tern (Arctic - breeding/Southern Oceans - wintering) 4.7% of the all-Ireland breeding population 5-year mean (period not specified).

Over winter the area regularly supports:

- Golden Plover (North-western Europe - wintering) 1.1% of the all-Ireland population 5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96.
- Turnstone (Western Palearctic - wintering) 1.7% of the population 5-year peak mean 1991/92
- Light-bellied Brent Goose (Canada/Ireland) 1.1% of the population 5-year peak mean 1991/92 - 1995/96
- Ringed Plover (Europe/Northern Africa - wintering) 1.2% of the population 5-year peak mean 1991/92 - 1995/96

Outer Ards Ramsar Site

The Outer Ards Ramsar site boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Outer Ards SPA. All the features for which it was designated are also qualifying features for the SPA. The same site description therefore applies and it is assumed to be subject to the same threats and conservation objectives.

East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine Proposed SPA

The East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA includes coastal and near shore waters from Ringfad near Carnlough, Co. Antrim in the north, the marine area of Larne Lough, the marine area of Belfast Lough, waters around the Copeland Islands and offshore of the Ards Peninsula to Cloghan Head, near Ardglass in the south. The SPA covers a diverse range of seabed habitats, from extensive coastal fringing reefs to the fine silt of inner Belfast Lough. Within Belfast Lough muds grade into muddy sands toward the outer Lough, with extensive areas of cobbles and shell debris overlying the muddy sand.

The following table details the population of selection feature species for East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. It is sourced from the conservation objectives at April 2015.

East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (proposed)

Feature Type	Feature	Population
Species	Great Crested Grebe wintering population ^a	1646 individuals (5 year average 1995-2000)
Species	Red-throated Diver	142 individuals 5 year mean (2006/07 – 2008/08)
Species	Sandwich Tern	1656 pairs Breeding 5 year mean (2010 - 2014)
Species	Common Tern	908 pairs Breeding 5 year mean (2010 - 2014)
Species	Arctic Tern	1351 pairs Breeding 5 year mean (2010 - 2014)
Species	Manx Shearwater	4800 pairs Breeding 2000–2002
Species	Eider Duck	3126 individuals Wintering 5 year mean (2010/11 – 2014/15)
Habitat ¹	Habitat extent	
Roosting/loafing sites	locations of sites	

Selection Features

The following table lists the site selection features for sites connected to Belfast Lough. SPA selection features are subject to review and DAERA advised of some updated features in 2015. These are mainly additions but Great Crested Grebe was removed from the features for Belfast Lough SPA as its range was covered in Belfast Lough Open Water.

Habitat and roost sites are not a selection feature but are a factor and more easily treated as if they were a feature. No data is available for the SPA Review population and Common Standards Monitoring baseline. The three tern species and Manx Shearwater all breed in SPAs adjacent to East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA and feed in a wider area including East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. Wintering Eider Duck and Red-throated Diver also use the East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA waters.

Site Selection Features for Sites Connected to Belfast Lough

Qualifying interests	B/W	Belfast Lough SPA	Belfast Lough Ramsar Site	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA	Outer Ards SPA	Outer Ards Ramsar Site
Redshank	W	Y	Y				
Ringed plover	W					Y	Y
Turnstone	W					Y	Y
Golden plover	W					Y	Y
Black-tailed Godwit	W	Y	Y				
Bar-tailed Godwit	W	Y					
Great Crested Grebe	W			Y	Y		
Red-throated Diver	W				Y		
Eider Duck	W				Y		
Light-bellied Brent Goose	W					Y	Y
Common Tern	B	Y			Y		
Arctic Tern	B	Y			Y	Y	
Sandwich tern	B				Y		
Manx Shearwater	B				Y		

B - Breeding

W - Wintering

Conservation Objectives

The conservation objectives for the SPAs and their qualifying features are presented in the following table. The feature conservation objectives are the same for the majority of sites however there are some that are specific to sites with breeding species or a waterfowl assemblage. Although habitats are not directly protected under the Birds Directive as a selection feature they are a factor in the condition of bird features therefore DAERA includes objectives relating to habitat extent.

Conservation Objectives for SPAs Connected to Belfast Lough

OBJECTIVE	Belfast Lough SPA	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA	Outer Ards SPA
Conservation Objectives Version	V3	V2	V1 (Draft)	V4
Date (month-year)	04-15	04-15	04-15	04-15
To maintain each feature in favourable condition.	Y	Y	Y	Y
To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population				Y
To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species	Y	Y	Y	Y
To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;	Y	Y	Y	Y
To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and	Y	Y	Y	Y
To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:	Y	Y	Y	Y
Population of the species as a viable component of the site	Y	Y	Y	Y
Distribution of the species within site	Y	Y	Y	Y
Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species	Y	Y	Y	Y
Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species	Y	Y	Y	Y
To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or potentially usable by Feature bird species (X ha intertidal area), subject to natural processes	Y			Y
Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes	Y	Y	Y	Y
Roost Sites: Maintain or enhance sites utilised as roosts	Y			Y
Roosting/loafing sites: Maintain all locations of sites		Y	Y	

Source: DAERA Conservation Objectives

Conservation Status

No data is available for the SPA Review population and Common Standards Monitoring baseline for East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. Data for the other sites is presented in the following table.

Annual records of SPA features

Site	Species	2007 /08	2008 /09	2009 /10	2010 /11	2011 /12	CSM	5yr mean	%CSM	Status
Belfast Outer Lough	Great Crested Grebe	2148	1055	1174	325	780	1015	1096.4	108.2	Favourable
Belfast Lough	Redshank	1163	1381	1837	1331	771	2010	1296.6	64.51	Unfavourable
Outer Ards	Arctic Tern (B)	205	182	215	191	34	58	165.4	285.17	Favourable
	Light-bellied Brent Goose	946	781	593	649	1311	54	856.0	1585.2	Favourable
	Golden Plover	1148	721	439	362	181	735	570.2	77.58	Unfavourable
	Ringed Plover	125	308	278	265	120	380	219.2	57.68	Unfavourable
	Turnstone	930	1037	1000	780	692	846	887.8	104.94	Favourable

Belfast Outer Lough SPA: Monitoring Report 2013; Belfast Lough SPA: Monitoring Report 2013

All data from Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) annual core counts. CSM (Common Standards Monitoring baseline value) = minimum record 1991/1992 – 1997/1998. 5 yr mean = Mean annual counts for 5 years of most recently available data. %CSM = 5 year mean as a percentage of the CSM.

Outer Ards SPA Data for Arctic Tern are from National Trust annual nest monitoring (summers 2007 – 2011 for Arctic tern) Copeland Islands SPA CSM baseline value derived from historical data (1998-2002) for Arctic Tern and (2000-2002) for Manx Shearwater.

The unfavourable status of redshank in Belfast Lough SPA is thought to reflect the decline in redshank internationally however the Monitoring Report discussion goes on to conclude: *'This undoubtedly goes some way towards explaining recent UK and Ireland declines generally; however, given the even more severe recent downward trend in Belfast Lough compared with the UK and Ireland numbers it is likely that site-specific factors may be exerting an additional detrimental effect on the wintering population here (Cook et al. 2013)¹⁸.*

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Sites

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the sites. There is potential for alteration of habitat quality through diminution of water quality and the sites have historically been impacted by industrial and sewerage effluent. Development which significantly increases recreational activity on or adjacent to Belfast Lough could lead to disturbance.

Connectivity with the plan area

None of the Belfast Lough sites are directly adjacent to the plan area.

Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar Site

Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site share the same boundary and the plan area is hydrologically connected to Belfast Lough via the River Lagan. The plan area is 3.5km from Belfast Lough.

East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed) and related sites

East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed) is intended to subsume Belfast Lough Open Water SPA. It also adjoins all of the other SPAs and Ramsar sites above. The council area is hydrologically connected to Belfast Lough, East Coast Marine SPA (proposed) and Outer Ards SPA/Ramsar via the River Lagan.

Outer Ards SPA/Ramsar site

The plan area is hydrologically connected to Belfast Lough and Outer Ards SPA/Ramsar via the River Lagan.

¹⁸ Cook, A.S.C.P., Barimore, C., Holt, C.A., Read, W.J. & Austin, G.E. (2013). Wetland Bird Survey Alerts 2009/2010: Changes in numbers of wintering waterbirds in the Constituent Countries of the United Kingdom, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). BTO Research Report 641. BTO, Thetford. <http://www.bto.org/webs/alerts>.

Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar Site

Site Name:	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	Site Code:	UK9020091
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	40857 ha*
Year:	1996		
Site Name:	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar	Site Code:	UK12016
Status:	Designated Ramsar Site	Area:	50166 ha
Year:	1976		
ASSIs:	Lough Neagh ASSI		
References & Evidence:	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Conservation Objectives V4 01/04/2015 Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands JNCC: Version 3.0, 13/06/2008 Contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey report, which is updated annually. See www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm .		
Map	Appendix 4, Map 2&4		

*based on Standard Data Form (Conservation Objectives 41188 ha)

Summary Site Description

Lough Neagh is a large, shallow, eutrophic lake contained within Counties Antrim, Down, Londonderry and Tyrone. Lough Neagh is the largest freshwater lake in the UK and is one of the top ten sites in the UK for wintering waterfowl (based on annual mean numbers). The SPA also includes the smaller lakes, Lough Beg and Portmore Lough. The main habitats within the SPA are open water with beds of submerged aquatic vegetation, species-rich wet grassland, reedbed, islands, swamp, fen and carr woodland. The SPA supports internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl and is internationally important for a number of wildfowl species including Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Scaup and Goldeneye. It is also internationally important for breeding Common Tern. Adjoining agriculturally improved areas utilised by swans have not been included but are important as supporting habitat. The boundary rationale and management considerations are detailed further in the Conservation Objectives.

There are small variations in the boundaries around Lough Beg with the Ramsar site generally being slightly more extensive than the SPA. In addition to the bird features of the SPA the Ramsar criteria include the open water, wetland habitats, rare plant and invertebrate species and the fish pollan.

Selection Features

Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA

Feature Type	Feature	Population at designation	SPA Review population	
			1990s	2000s
Species	Common Tern breeding population (pairs)	200	185	93
	Great Crested Grebe breeding population	New feature	500	311
	Great Crested Grebe passage population	New feature	2440	No data
	Whooper Swan wintering population	923	1031	1504
	Bewick's Swan wintering population	251	136	1
	Golden Plover wintering population	Not listed	5298	6550
	Great Crested Grebe wintering population	741	1821	862
	Pochard wintering population	32165	26341	8250
	Tufted Duck wintering population	23476	22372	6897
	Scaup wintering population	2557	3798	5019
Assemblage species	Goldeneye wintering population	12479	10776	3961
	Little Grebe wintering population	390	465	347
	Cormorant wintering population	781	728	1368

Feature Type	Feature	Population at designation	SPA Review population	
			1990s	2000s
	Greylag Goose wintering population	129	176	1080
	Shelduck wintering population	165	159	140
	Wigeon wintering population	3447	3117	1830
	Gadwall wintering population	114	166	151
	Teal wintering population	1868	1596	1202
	Mallard wintering population	4982	5256	3786
	Shoveler wintering population	173	148	54
	Coot wintering population	6676	6993	1895
	Lapwing wintering population	Not listed	6899	5728
Waterfowl assemblage	Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population (Component species: Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Golden Plover, Great Crested Grebe (wintering) Pochard, Tufted Duck, Scaup, Goldeneye, Little Grebe, Cormorant, Greylag Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Coot, Lapwing)	79915	99221	No data

Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site (Brief summary)

Ramsar Criterion 1: A particularly good representative example of natural or near-natural wetlands.

Ramsar Criterion 2: Supports an appreciable assemblage of rare, vulnerable or endangered species or sub-species of plant or animal or an appreciable number of individuals of any one of these species.

Ramsar Criterion 3: This site is of special value for maintaining the genetic and ecological diversity of a region because of the quality and peculiarities of its flora and fauna.

Ramsar Criterion 4: This site is of special value as the habitat of plants or animals at a critical stage of their biological cycles.

Ramsar Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance: Species with peak counts in winter: 86,639 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003)

Ramsar Criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance. Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

- Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:
- Tundra swan, *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, NW Europe
- Species with peak counts in winter:
- Whooper swan, *Cygnus*, Iceland/UK/Ireland
- Common pochard, *Aythya ferina*, NE & NW Europe
- Tufted duck, *Aythya fuligula*, NW Europe
- Greater scaup, *Aythya marila*, W Europe
- Common goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*, NW & C Europe
- Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.
- Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:
- Great cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*
- Mute swan, *Cygnus olor*, Britain

Ramsar Criterion 7: The site supports a population of pollan *Coregonus autumnalis*, one of the few locations in Ireland and one of the two known locations in the UK (the other is Lower Lough Erne).

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

- To maintain each feature in favourable condition.

The SPA selection feature objectives are:

- To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species
- Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population
- To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species
- To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained,
- To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and
- To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:
- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species

The SPA selection feature component objectives are as above and:

Common Tern and Great Crested Grebe

- Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population

Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population

- No significant decrease in population against national trends

Habitat

- To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or potentially usable by Feature bird species subject to natural processes
- Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes
- Maintain or enhance sites utilised as roosts

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Sites

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the sites. Development on or adjacent to the sites could lead to direct or indirect damage to habitat features. Recreational activity on open water may cause disturbance to feature species or impact habitat through increased wave action from boats. Spread of invasive species could result from construction works or recreational activity. Potential for nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture or deterioration in water quality could cause degradation or loss of habitat.

Condition Assessment

Lough Neagh SPA: Monitoring Report 2013

Species	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	CSM	5 yr mean	% CSM	Status
Common Tern (B)	94	79	118	96	98	59	97.00	164.41	Favourable
Golden Plover	6475	3129	7097	4047	1539	1626	4457.40	274.13	Favourable
Bewick's Swan	0	0	0	0	0	23	0.00	0.00	Unfavourable
Whooper Swan	515	535	637	388	248	283	464.60	164.17	Favourable
Goldeneye	2993	4626	3684	3003	3437	6700	3548.60	52.96	Unfavourable
Great Crested Grebe (W)	236	1181	733	947	1030	110	825.40	750.36	Favourable
Great Crested Grebe (P)	634	676	nc	561	941	438	703.00	160.50	Favourable
Pochard	8878	8902	5770	9183	5027	19588	7552.00	38.55	Unfavourable
Scaup	4348	5587	6335	2989	2257	1215	4303.20	354.17	Favourable
Shelduck	131	87	193	188	126	107	145.00	135.51	Favourable
Tufted Duck	6336	5845	4995	9167	7669	17972	6802.40	37.85	Unfavourable
Waterbird assemblage	47771	48575	43168	43462	35837	75215	43762.60	58.18	Unfavourable

Connectivity with the plan area

Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/Ramsar Site

The western boundary of the council area extends for approximately 9.1 km within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/Ramsar and includes open water within Lough Neagh and Portmore Lough. This area of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/Ramsar is hydrologically connected to the Council area but has a relatively small catchment area which includes Crumlin River, Glenavy River, Crew Burn and Ballinderry River. Mobile species in the Council area include whooper swans, a selection feature of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site, that uses fields adjacent to Portmore Lough and fields in the Lagan valley south of Halfpenny Gate.

Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030244
Year:	2005	Area:	38.02 ha
ASSIs:	Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay ASSI		
References & Evidence.	Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay Conservation Objectives V2 01/04/2015		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay woodlands and wetlands have developed on a series of shorelines exposed by successive lowerings of Lough Neagh. The former lakebed has an undulating terrain consisting of raised ridges and wet, occasionally flooded hollows, with a resulting variation in the type of woodland cover. The present foreshore supports inundation willow/alder woodland along the shore and alder swamp woodland in the permanently flooded hollows behind, whilst the drier ridges support base-rich ash woodland. The diversity of woodland types is reflected in the rich flora and fauna, which includes a large number of rare species. The boundary rationale and management considerations are detailed in the Conservation Objectives.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion alvae</i>)	B	26 ha

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion alvae*) to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion alvae*) are:

- Maintain and expand the extent of existing swamp woodland. (There is an area of wetland and damp grassland which have the potential to develop into carr woodland)
- Maintain and enhance swamp woodland species diversity and structural diversity
- Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the swamp woodland, e.g. fen, swamp, especially where these exhibit natural transition to swamp woodland.
- Seek nature conservation management over adjacent forested areas outside the ASSI where there may be potential for woodland rehabilitation.
- Seek nature conservation management over suitable areas immediately outside the ASSI where there may be potential for woodland expansion.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Proposals to increase water extraction from the Lough will lower the summer water level but is unlikely to affect winter levels. The SAC is not within the plan area. Deterioration in water quality or changes to hydrology from the plan area would have to be significant and long-term to affect quality in Lough Neagh and this SAC.

Condition Assessment

Component Feature	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
SAC Feature Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion alvae</i>)	Unfavourable: No change	11/08/2011

Connectivity with the plan area

The plan area is connected to the SAC via hydrological and infrastructure pathways through Lough Neagh. The plan boundary is approximately 10.7 km from the SAC, therefore beyond the screening distance for any impact of aerial emissions.

Strangford Lough SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0016618
Year:	1996	Area:	15398.54ha
ASSIs:	Strangford Lough Part 1 ASSI Strangford Lough Part 2 ASSI Strangford Lough Part 3 ASSI Quoile ASSI Killard ASSI Ballyquintin Point ASSI		
References and Evidence.	Strangford Lough SAC Conservation Objectives V4 20/03/2017 (Revision November 2018)		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Strangford Lough is a large marine inlet on the east coast of County Down, of which about 50 km² lies between high water mark mean tide (HWMMT) and low water mark mean tide (LWMMT). Its northern end lies some 15 km east of Central Belfast (6 km from the outskirts). Strangford, Killyleagh, Whiterock, Comber, Newtownards, Greyabbey, Kircubbin and Portaferry are situated on the edge of the Lough. About 60,000 people live around its shores and about one million people live within one hour's drive.

Almost land-locked, Strangford Lough is separated from the Irish Sea by the Ards Peninsula to the east and is bounded to the south by the Lecale coast. It is connected to the open sea by the Strangford Narrows, an 8 km long channel with a minimum width of 0.5 km. The Lough is 30 km long from head to mouth and up to 8 km wide.

This sea inlet is made up of a drowned drumlin field (created by inundation of the landscape which emerged from under the melting ice-sheets of the Ice Age) which is for the most part less than 10 m in depth and a deeper Y-shaped channel (possibly an old river-valley or geological fault-line) which is up to 66 m deep. The surface of the bed and shore of the Lough ranges from bedrock in areas with strong currents to fine mud in sheltered waters. The narrow entrance channel is an important feature with extremely strong currents of up to 8 knots (4 m/sec).

The triangular area around the Lough mouth is subject to greater wave energy. It has broad, almost level rock platforms, steeply-shelving rocky shores, sandy beaches and a largely sandy sea-bed. The water in the Lough is virtually fully saline except at the mouths of the two moderate-sized rivers and several streams, which drain into it where it may be somewhat brackish.

The Lough supports an impressive range of marine habitats and communities with over 2000 recorded species. It is important for marine invertebrates, algae and saltmarsh plants, for wintering and breeding wetland birds, and for marine mammals. The area is considered to support a significant presence of Common seal *Phoca vitulina*.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Large shallow inlet and bay	A	15090.6 ha
Habitat	Coastal lagoons	B	45.0 ha
Habitat	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide	B	2000.0 ha
Habitat	Reefs	B	1600.0 ha
Habitat	Annual vegetation of drift lines	C	250 km
Habitat	Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)	C	75.0 ha
Habitat	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	C	30.0 ha
Habitat	Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	C	
Species	Harbour (Common) Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	C	210

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the

- Large shallow inlet and bay
- Coastal lagoons
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide
- Reefs
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*)
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks
- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Harbour (Common) Seal *Phoca vitulina*

to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for large shallow inlet and bay are:

- Maintain the extent of the large shallow inlet and bay
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the large shallow inlet and bay, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for coastal lagoons are:

- Maintain the extent of the coastal lagoons
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the coastal lagoons, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide are:

- Maintain the extent of mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for reefs are:

- To restore the reefs and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the reefs, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for annual vegetation of drift lines are:

- Maintain and enhance the extent of annual vegetation of drift lines subject to natural processes.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of annual vegetation of drift lines to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this community including the presence of notable species.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) are:

- To restore the Atlantic salt meadows and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.
- To maintain or enhance, as appropriate, the composition of the saltmarsh communities.
- To maintain transitions between saltmarsh communities and to other adjoining habitats.
- To permit the continued operation of formative and controlling natural processes acting on the saltmarsh communities.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Perennial vegetation of stony banks are:

- To restore the perennial vegetation of stony banks and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of perennial vegetation of stony banks to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this community including the presence of notable species.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand are:

- To restore the Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Harbour (Common) Seal *Phoca vitulina* are:

- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the Harbour (Common) Seal population.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, physical features used by Harbour (Common) Seals within the site

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Disturbance could arise from increasing the numbers of visitors. Strangford Lough is an attractive and popular venue for a variety of recreational pursuits, such as walking, bathing, sailing and wildlife watching. Walkers generally do not cause problems however their dogs can cause considerable disturbance to bird-life in certain sensitive locations. Although generally a benign activity, boating may result in a number of potentially harmful impacts on the Lough and its wildlife. Boating may cause noise and general disturbance to wildlife, particularly to breeding or over-wintering birds. It may

cause physical disturbance to the seabed and shore and it is often difficult to maintain water quality at anchorage's and harbours. Waste water discharges from the council area could also affect water quality.

Condition Assessment

Component Feature	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
Large shallow inlet and bay	Not assessed	
Coastal lagoons	Not assessed	
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide	Favourable: Un-classified* Favourable: Un-classified**	01/09/2016 01/09/2016
Reefs	Favourable: Un-classified* Favourable: Un-classified**	01/09/2016 01/09/2016
Annual vegetation of drift lines	Favourable: Un-classified**	11/09/2003
Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)	Unfavourable: Un-classified* Unfavourable: Un-classified** Unfavourable: Un-classified***	02/09/2014 01/08/2003 30/07/2013
Perennial vegetation of stony banks	Unfavourable: Un-classified***	30/07/2013
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	Unfavourable: Un-classified* Unfavourable: Un-classified***	02/09/2014 30/07/2013
Harbour (Common) Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Favourable: Un-classified* Favourable: Un-classified** Favourable: Un-classified***	31/03/2008 31/03/2008 31/03/2008

*Strangford Lough ASSI Part 1 **Strangford Lough ASSI Part 2 ***Strangford Lough ASSI Part 3

Connectivity with the plan area

The plan area is connected to the SAC via hydrological connections through the Comber, Blackwater, Glasswater and Ballynahinch Rivers and through waste water infrastructure. The plan boundary is approximately 3.8km from the SAC and therefore is within the screening distance for impact of aerial emissions.

Strangford Lough SPA and Ramsar Site

Status:	Designated Special Protection Area	Site Code:	UK9020111
Year:	1998	Area:	15580.79
ASSIs:	Strangford Lough Part 1 ASSI Strangford Lough Part 2 ASSI Strangford Lough Part 3 ASSI Quoile ASSI Killard ASSI Ballyquintin Point ASSI		
References and Evidence.	Strangford Lough Conservation Objectives V4 20/03/2017		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 2&4		

Summary Site Description

Strangford Lough is a large (150 km²) marine inlet on the east coast of County Down, of which about 50 km² lies between high water mark mean tide (HWMMT) and low water mark mean tide (LWMMT). It is connected to the open sea by the Strangford Narrows, an 8 km long channel with a minimum width of 0.5 km. The Lough is 30 km long from head to mouth and up to 8 km wide. The tidal flats of Strangford Lough form extensive areas around the northern and north-eastern shorelines. The Lough supports an impressive range of marine habitats and communities with over 2,000 recorded species. It is important for marine invertebrates, algae and saltmarsh plants, for a range of wintering and breeding waterbirds, and for marine mammals.

Selection Features

Feature Type	Feature	Population (5 year average 1995-2000) except where stated	Population at time of designation (ASSI)	Population at time of designation (SPA)	SPA Review population	Common Standards Monitoring baseline (min. peak 1991/92-1997/98)
Species	Sandwich Tern ^a	1405 (current population 2003)		593	593	346
Species	Common Tern ^a	894 (current population 2003)		603	603	560
Species	Arctic Tern ^a	272 (current population 2003)		210	210	47
Species	Golden Plover ^b	8401	7570	8277	6526	3123
Species	Bar-tailed Godwit ^b	1452	1587	1058	882	291
Species	Light-bellied Brent Goose ^a	12141	14400	10527	10527	8367
Species	Shelduck ^b	3081	1271	2358	3871	1755
Species	Knot ^a	9191	12294	8723	8723	4200
Species	Redshank ^a	3748	2591	3176	3176	2336
Assemblage species	Great Crested Grebe	102	35	94	90	40
Assemblage species	Cormorant	219		Not listed	183	123
Assemblage species	Greylag Goose	352	265	420	419	173
Assemblage species	Wigeon	2183	6655	1975	1921	1630
Assemblage species	Gadwall	82	107	110	108	63

Feature Type	Feature	Population (5 year average 1995-2000) except where stated	Population at time of designation (ASSI)	Population at time of designation (SPA)	SPA Review population	Common Standards Monitoring baseline (min. peak 1991/92-1997/98)
Assemblage species	Teal	2021	905	1662	1435	1133
Assemblage species	Mallard	1441	188	1562	1633	1238
Assemblage species	Pintail	264	196	214	209	159
Assemblage species	Shoveler	143	135	140	147	101
Assemblage species	Goldeneye	249	479	298	335	157
Assemblage species	Red-breasted Merganser	290	274	338	328	191
Assemblage species	Coot	414	898	510	392	222
Assemblage species	Oystercatcher	6621	3542	8248	5243	4125
Assemblage species	Ringed Plover	244	197	305	291	134
Assemblage species	Grey Plover	282	114	284	194	48
Assemblage species	Lapwing	9971	12644	9108	8359	3779
Assemblage species	Dunlin	7885	6220	6900	5317	2403
Assemblage species	Curlew	1761	1838	1980	1911	1344
Assemblage species	Turnstone	261	446	350	401	207
Waterfowl Assemblage	Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population ^a	55097	72880	70200	60220	35667
Habitat ¹	Habitat extent					
Habitat ¹	Roost site locations					

¹Habitat is not a selection feature but is a factor and is more easily treated as if it were a feature. Habitat extent is also used for breeding birds reported as an area.

Notes on SPA features – may not be applicable to all SPAs

The above table lists all relevant qualifying species for this site. As the identification of SPA features has and continues to evolve, species may have different status but all should be considered in the context of any HRA process. Ultimately all SPAs will be renotified to formalise species features.

a – species cited in current SPA citation and listed on current N2K data form: Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population a (Component species: Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Knot, Redshank, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Greylag Goose, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Shoveler, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Coot, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Curlew, Turnstone)

b – species selected post SPA designation through UK SPA Review 2001

c – species highlighted as additional qualifying features through the UK SPA Review 2015 or the UK marine SPA programmes.

Strangford Lough Ramsar

The site further qualifies under Criterion 1 by virtue of supporting a variety of important wetland features. Areas of fringing saltmarsh and freshwater habitats support a diversity of wetland plant

species. Strangford Lough supports one of the most extensive saltmarsh areas in Northern Ireland. The diversity of the marine habitats is internationally renowned.

Strangford also qualifies under Criterion 2a by supporting an important assemblage of vulnerable and endangered wetland plants and animal species. These include a number of marine sponges, marine hydroids, marine mollusc and sea urchins which are either restricted to Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland or, in some cases unknown or very rare elsewhere in the British Isles.

This site also qualifies under Criterion 3a by regularly supporting in winter over 20,000 waterfowl.

It qualifies under Criterion 3c by regularly supporting, in winter, internationally important numbers of Light-bellied Brent Geese, Knot and Redshank.

The final qualification under Criterion 3c is that the site regularly supports internationally important breeding populations of both Sandwich Tern and Common Tern along with nationally important numbers of Arctic Tern.

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objectives for this site are:

- To maintain each feature in favourable condition.

The SPA selection feature component objectives are:

- To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species
- Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population
- To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species
- To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;
- To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and
- To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:
 - Population of the species as a viable component of the site
 - Distribution of the species within site
 - Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
 - Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Sites

Disturbance could arise from increasing the numbers of visitors. Strangford Lough is an attractive and popular venue for a variety of recreational pursuits, such as walking, bathing, sailing and wildlife watching. Walkers generally do not cause problems however their dogs can cause considerable disturbance to bird-life in certain sensitive locations. Although generally a benign activity, boating may cause noise and general disturbance to wildlife, particularly to breeding or over-wintering birds.

Condition Assessment

Species	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	CSM	5 yr mean	% CSM	Status
Sandwich Tern (B)	1092	1137	1528	1398	1994	346	1429.8	413.24	Favourable
Common Tern (B)	1104	962	832	650	1174	560	944.4	168.64	Favourable
Arctic Tern (B)	582	663	628	316	645	47	566.8	1205.96	Favourable
Light-bellied Brent Goose	21885	24658	30487	25605	26041	8367	25735.2	307.58	Favourable
Bar-tailed Godwit	1378	529	1305	969	1158	291	1067.8	366.94	Favourable
Redshank	4099	3632	4029	4969	4488	2336	4243.4	181.65	Favourable
Shelduck	4201	3346	6084	5583	2825	1755	4407.8	251.16	Favourable
Knot	6220	5193	7360	6376	7452	4200	6520.2	155.24	Favourable
Waterbird assemblage	77553	66955	87771	86292	79823	54080	79678.8	147.34	Favourable

Connectivity with the plan area

The plan area is connected to the SPA via hydrological connections through the Comber, Blackwater, Glasswater and Ballynahinch Rivers. The plan boundary is approximately 3.8km from the SPA and Ramsar site, therefore within the screening distance for impact of aerial emissions.

Montiaghs Moss SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030214
Year:	2005	Area:	151.39 ha
ASSIs:	Montiaghs Moss ASSI		
References and Evidence.	Montiaghs Moss Conservation Objectives V2 01/04/2015 Survey for the protected Marsh Fritillary, (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>) butterfly within Northern Ireland (2016) DAERA		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Montiaghs Moss is a cutover lowland raised bog, consisting of an intricate mosaic of peat ramparts, trenches, pools and drains, interspersed with grassland, alder and willow carr and tall hedgerows. These habitats support a wide range of plants and animals, including many rarities. The area is particularly notable as one of the longest established colonies of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* in NI. The species was first recorded in 1983 and has been recorded annually since 1990 (except for 1997). It is believed that the colony here represents a metapopulation, with a comparatively large core permanent population. 89 webs were counted in 1999.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Species	Marsh Fritillary Butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	B	89 webs recorded in Aug/Sept 1999

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* are:

- To maintain (and if feasible enhance) population numbers and distribution.
- To maintain (and if feasible enhance) the extent and quality of suitable Marsh Fritillary breeding habitat, particularly suitable rosettes of the larval food plant *Succisa pratensis*.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. The only potential impacts arising from the Plan Strategy is nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture which could cause degradation or loss of habitat.

Condition Assessment

Component Feature	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
Marsh Fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	Unfavourable: Unclassified	18/03/2008

Web counts have declined from 2013 and none were recorded in 2016.

Connectivity with the plan area

The SAC is not within the plan area. The plan area is connected to the SAC via hydrological connectivity through watercourses and drainage channels. The plan boundary is approximately 1.5km from the SAC, therefore within the screening distance for impact of aerial emissions.

Aughnadarragh Lough SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030318
Year:	2005	Area:	12.8 ha
ASSIs:	Aughnadarragh Lough ASSI		
References and Evidence.	Aughnadarragh Lough Conservation Objectives V2 01/04/2015 Survey for the protected Marsh Fritillary, (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>) butterfly within Northern Ireland (2016) DAERA		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Aughnadarragh Lough is a complex site of high conservation value, with a variety of wetland habitats. The area is particularly notable as one of the longest established colonies of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* in Northern Ireland. The species was first recorded in 1984, with records in most years since then, and annually since 1990. In 1999, 48 webs were recorded in August/September.

The area is an inter-drumlin wetland with a mosaic of notable vegetation communities fringing the mesotrophic lake. Of particular importance is the marginal mossy fen, which is extensive to the south and east behind the swamp and tall herb fen that fringes Aughnadarragh Lough. The mossy fen is predominantly base-rich in type, with pockets of poor acid fen around a small remnant pocket of raised bog in the south. Wet woodland and scrub fringe the lough to the east and north. The range of vegetation types associated with the site makes it one of the most diverse wetlands in County Down.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Species	Marsh Fritillary Butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	B	48 webs were counted in 1999. 18 webs were counted in 2004

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

- To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly population to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* are:

- To maintain (and if feasible enhance) population numbers and distribution.
- To maintain (and if feasible enhance) the extent and quality of suitable Marsh Fritillary breeding habitat, particularly suitable rosettes of the larval food plant *Succisa pratensis*.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. The only potential impacts arising from the Plan Strategy is nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture which could cause degradation or loss of habitat.

Condition Assessment

Component Feature	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
Marsh Fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	Favourable: but the dramatic population crash in 2010 gives serious cause for concern.	02/06/2017

Connectivity with the plan area

The SAC is not within the plan area. The plan boundary is approximately 4.5km from the SAC, therefore within the screening distance for impact of aerial emissions. There is no hydrological pathways between the plan area and the SAC.

Eastern Mournes SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0016615
Year:	2005	Area:	7509.59
ASSIs:	Eastern Mournes ASSI		
References and Evidence.	Eastern Mournes SAC Conservation Objectives V2.1 11/10/2017		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

The Eastern Mournes consists of a compact range of mountains forming the highest ground in Northern Ireland. They are situated in the south-east of the Province in County Down, just west of Newcastle. Within the Mountain range, 12 peaks extend to over 600m, with Slieve Donard rising to 852m. The area is important geologically representing the largest outcrop of Tertiary granites in the British Isles covering some 150 sq. km. The Eastern Mournes host three distinct granite types with associated mineralogies. The Eastern Mournes SAC has a unique combination of upland habitats and associated vegetation communities including the largest extent of European dry heaths in Northern Ireland. This is mostly of the *Calluna/Erica cinerea* type, but includes *Ulex gallii/Erica cinerea* dry heath on the lower slopes. The dominance of *Erica cinerea* is a notable feature of the area and characteristic of dry heath in the oceanic climate of more western parts of the UK. The area supports a number of other vegetation communities including wet heaths and blanket bog, montane heaths and grasslands on the highest summits and plant communities associated with the cliffs and scree.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	European dry heaths	B	4680 ha
Habitat	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>	B	889 ha
Habitat	Active blanket bogs	C	318 ha
Habitat	Alpine and boreal heaths	C	32.1 ha
Habitat	Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands	C	32.1 ha
Habitat	Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	C	58.5 ha
Habitat	Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels	C	17.7 ha

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the

- European dry heaths
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
- Active blanket bogs
- Alpine and boreal heaths
- Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands
- Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation
- Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels

To favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the European dry heaths are:

- Maintain the extent of existing European dry heath vegetation.
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the European dry heath community types.

- Seek to expand the extent of the dry heath communities into degraded areas of species poor, dry acid grassland
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to the dry heath.
- Seek nature conservation management over suitable areas immediately outside the SAC where there may be the potential for dry heath rehabilitation.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the Northern Atlantic wet heath with *Erica tetralix* are:

- Maintain the extent of existing Northern Atlantic wet heath vegetation.
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the existing wet heathland.
- Seek to expand the extent of the wet heath communities into degraded areas of species poor, wet acid grassland.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to Northern Atlantic wet heath.
- Seek nature conservation management over suitable areas immediately outside the SAC where there may be the potential for wet heath rehabilitation.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Active blanket bog are:

- Maintain the extent of intact blanket bog and actively regenerating blanket bog vegetation.
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the blanket bog community types including the presence of notable species.
- Seek to expand the extent of actively regenerating blanket bog vegetation into degraded (non-active) areas of cutover bog.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to the blanket bog.
- Maintain the hydrology of the intact blanket bog peat mass.
- Seek nature conservation management over suitable areas immediately outside the SAC where there may be the potential for blanket bog rehabilitation.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Alpine and boreal heaths are:

- Maintain the extent of existing alpine and boreal heath vegetation.
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the existing alpine and boreal heaths.
- Seek to expand the extent of the alpine and boreal heath communities into degraded areas of species poor acid grassland.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to the alpine and boreal heaths.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands are:

- Maintain the extent of existing siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands.
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the siliceous alpine and boreal grassland community types.
- Seek to expand the extent of the siliceous alpine and boreal grassland communities into degraded areas of species poor, dry acid grassland.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to the siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation are:

- Maintain the existing acid rock chasmophytic Vegetation.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to the siliceous rocky slopes.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels are:

- Maintain the extent of existing siliceous scree (partially vegetated siliceous scree).
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the siliceous scree community types.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of other habitats of conservation interest, especially where these exhibit natural transition to the siliceous scree.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Within the Mourne Wall, the land is managed by NI Water for the purpose of water abstraction and supply. With growing water requirements, there is constant pressure to increase supply, increased levels of water abstraction may damage the heathland communities within the SAC.

Condition Assessment

Component Feature	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
European dry heaths	Unfavourable: Un-classified	30/09/2016
Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>	Unfavourable: Un-classified	30/09/2016
Active blanket bogs	Unfavourable: Un-classified	30/09/2016
Alpine and boreal heaths	Unfavourable: Un-classified	30/09/2016
Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands	Unfavourable: Un-classified	30/09/2016
Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	Favourable: Maintained	30/09/2016
Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels	Favourable: Maintained	30/09/2016

Connectivity with the plan area

The plan area is connected to the SAC by infrastructure through water abstraction from Fofanny Dam. The plan boundary is approximately 18km from the SAC, therefore beyond the screening distance for impact of aerial emissions.

Appendix 4: Maps

Map 1: The Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Local Development Plan Area

Map 2: SPAs in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Map 3: SACs in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

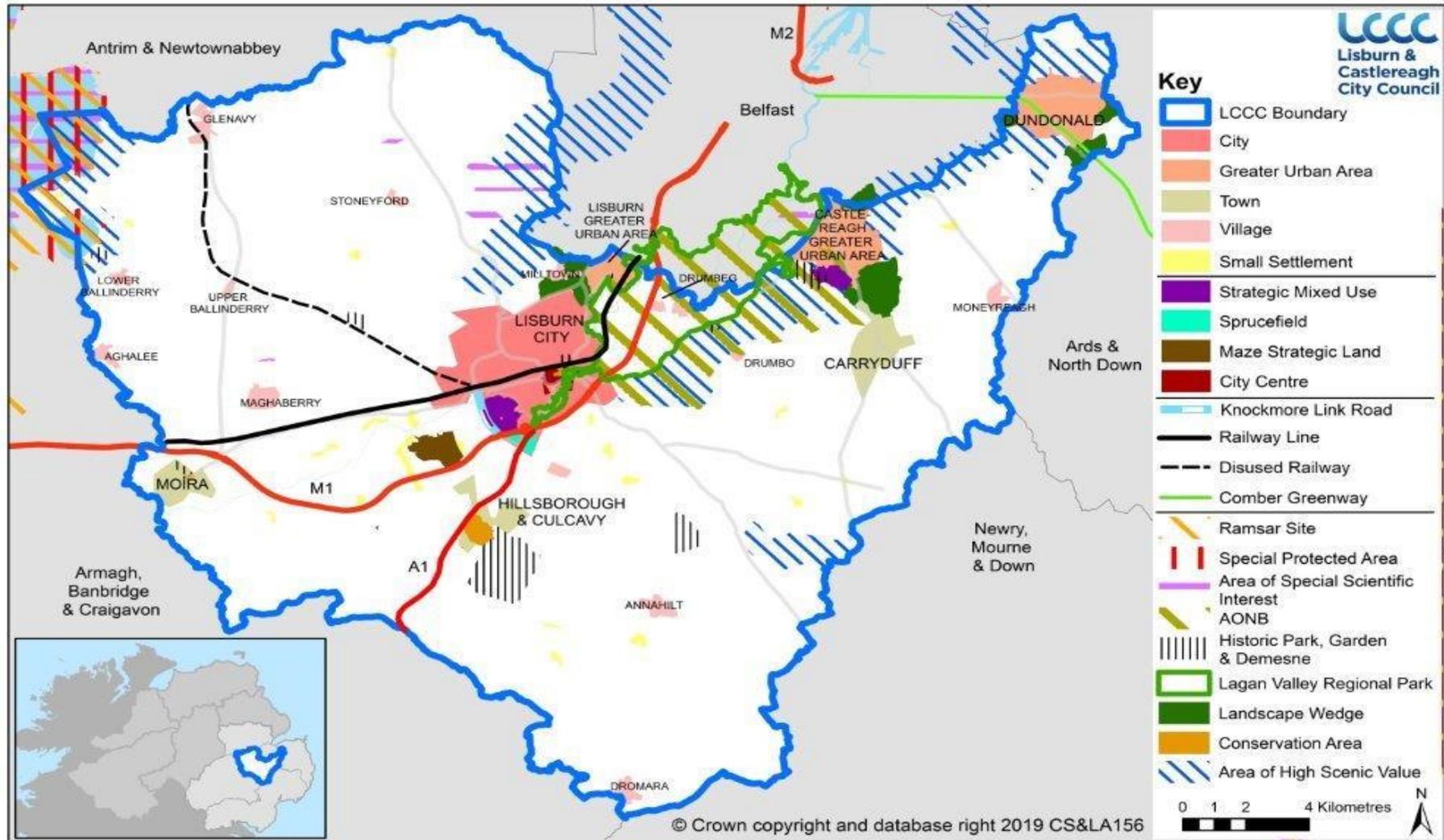
Map 4: Ramsar Sites in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Map 5: Marine SACs in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

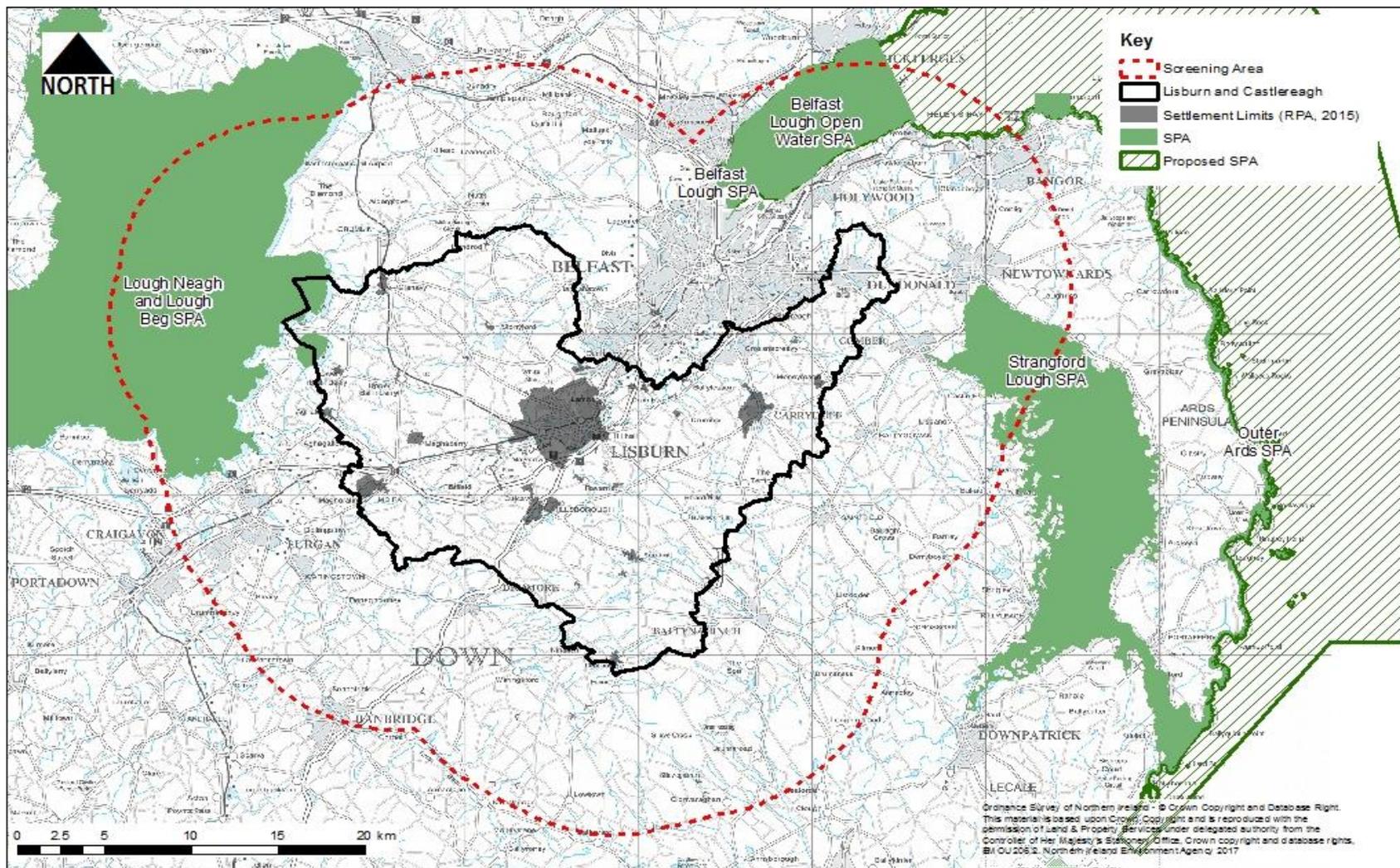
Map 6: Major Catchments within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area

Map 7: River Sub-basins within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area

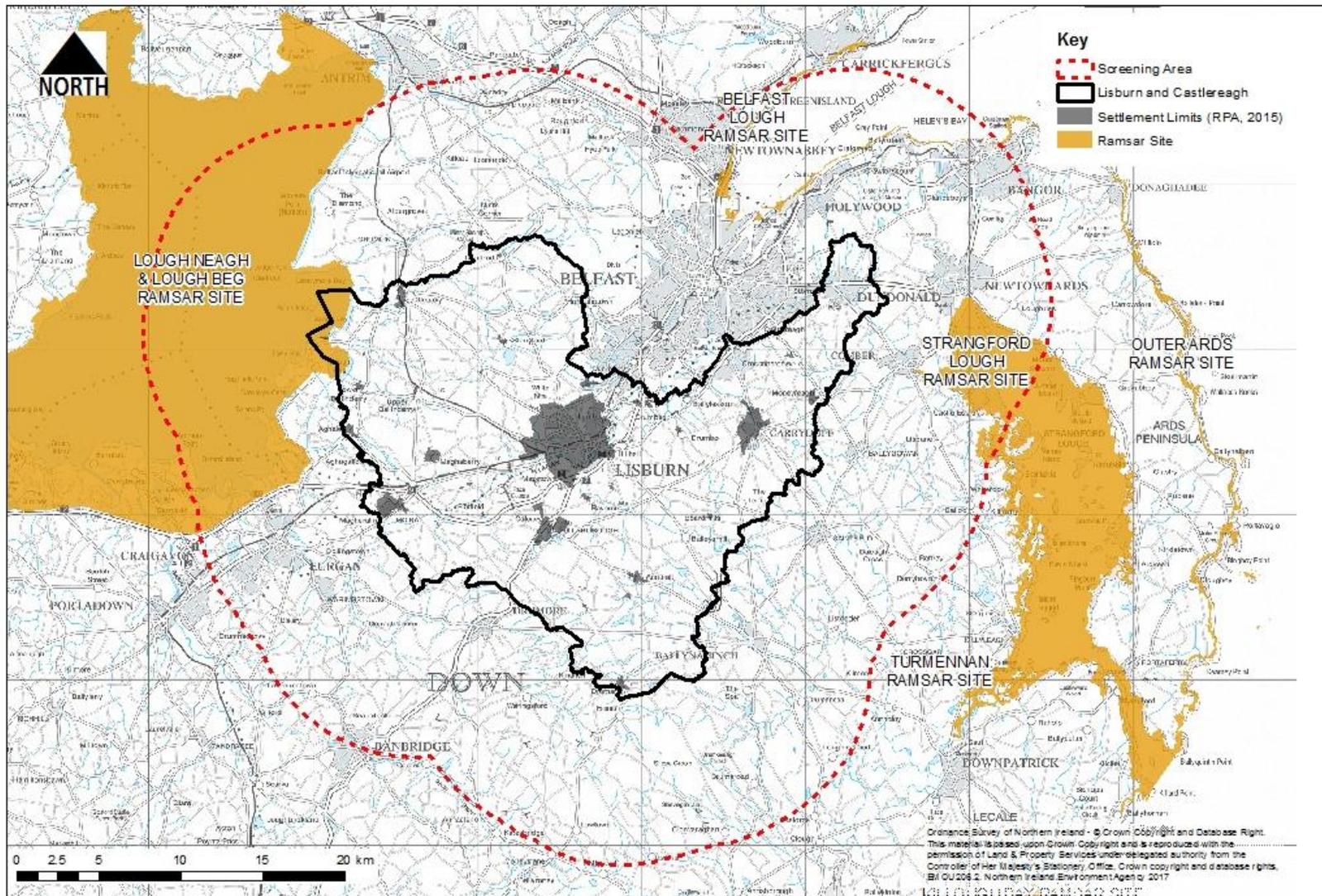
Map 1: The Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Local Development Plan Area



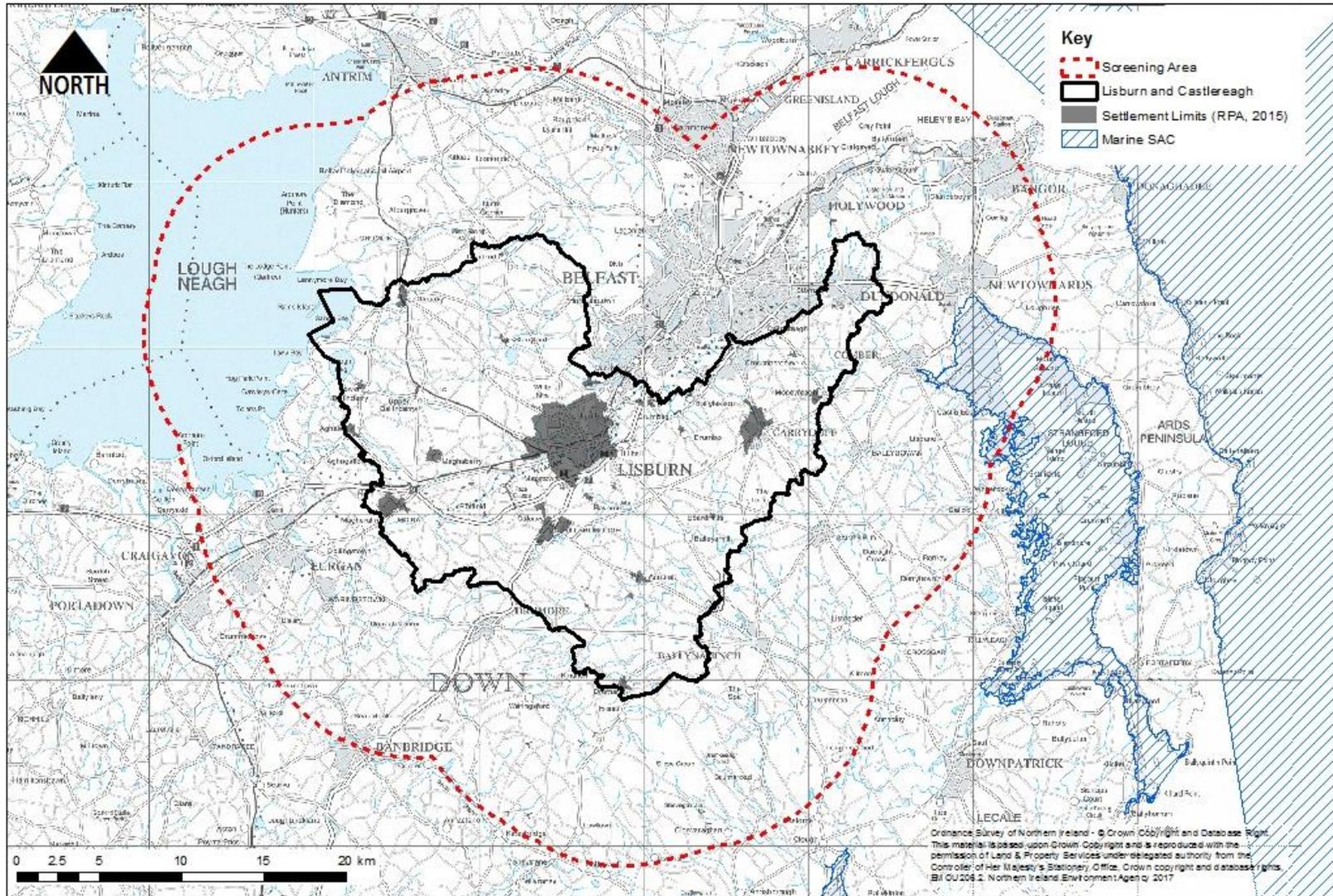
Map 2: SPAs in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council



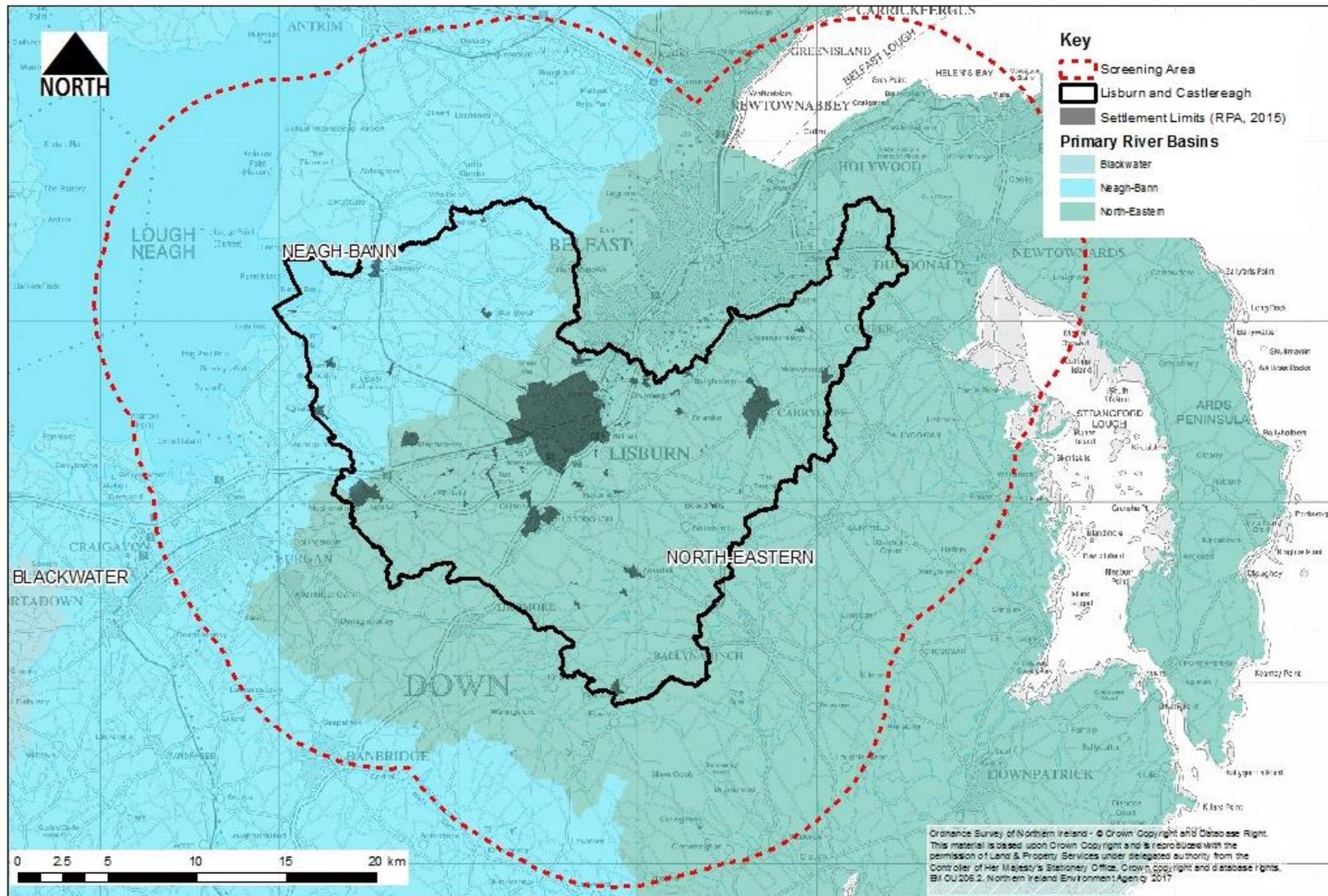
Map 4: Ramsar Sites in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council



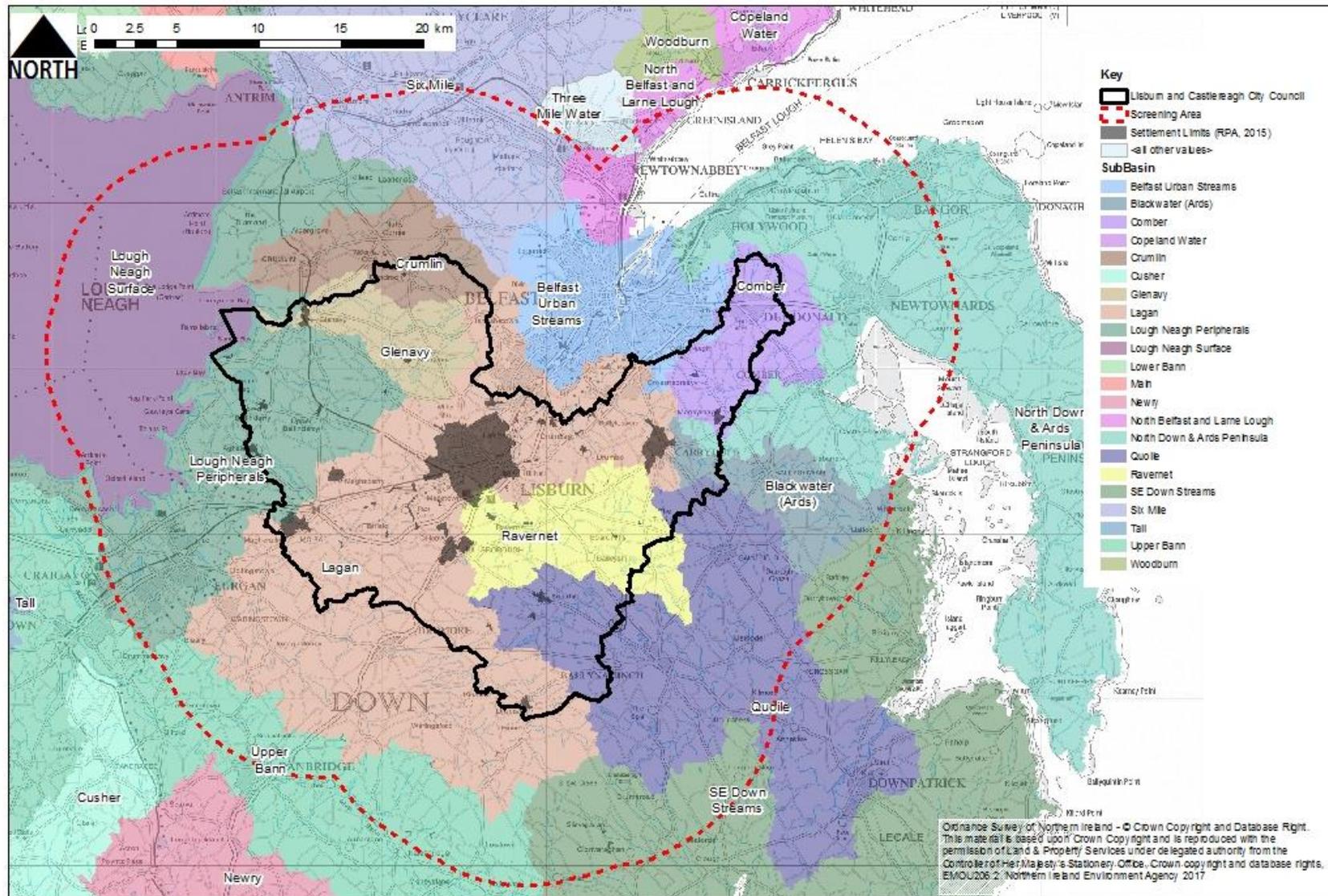
Map 5: Marine SACs in relation to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council



Map 6: Major Catchments within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area



Map 7: River Sub-basins within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area



Appendix 5: Review of draft Plan Strategy Proposals and Policies

The following categories are used to assess whether an overall plan and its individual proposals require HRA as described in Appendix 2. These are taken from Part F of the HRA Handbook where they are explained in detail in the sections referenced.

- A. General statement of policy/general aspiration (screened out). F.6.3.1
- B. Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability/sustainability of proposals (screened out). F.6.3.2
- C. Proposal referred to but not proposed by the plan (screened out). F.6.3.3
- D. General plan-wide environmental protection/site safeguarding/threshold policies (screened out). F.6.3.4
- E. Policies or proposals which steer change in such a way as to protect international sites from adverse effects (screened out). F.6.3.5
- F. Policy that cannot lead to development or other change (screened out). F.6.3.6
- G. Policy or proposal that could not have any conceivable effect on a site (screened out). F.6.3.7
- H. Policy or proposal the (actual or theoretical) effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives (either alone or in combination with other aspects of this or other plans or projects) (screened out). F.6.3.8
- I. Policy or proposal which may have a likely significant effect on a site alone (screened in) F.6.3.9
- J. Policy or proposal with an effect on a site but unlikely to be significant alone, so need to check for likely significant effects in combination F.6.3.10
- K. Policy or proposal unlikely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination (screened out after the in combination test). F.6.3.11
- L. Policy or proposal which might be likely to have a significant effect in combination (screened in after the in combination test). F.6.3.11
- M. Bespoke area, site or case-specific policies or proposals intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on an international site (screened in) F.6.3.12

In some cases more than one category may apply. Where it is the case that part of a policy is in one category e.g. B. policy listing general criteria, whereas another part is in another category e.g. H. cannot undermine the conservation objectives then both categories are listed e.g. B/H. Where part of a policy is screened in then this part will be further assessed.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
Local Development Plan 2032 Draft Plan Strategy - Part 1		
Chapter 1 Introduction	NA NA	Administrative text
Chapter 2 Policy and Spatial Context	NA NA	Regional and local context
Chapter 3 Vision and Plan Objectives		
The LDP Vision		
The Local Development Plan (LDP) will respond to the needs of the community in providing a sustainable economy, society and environment. It will support a thriving, vibrant and connected place in which people live, work, visit and invest; and an attractive, green and quality place which will enhance the wellbeing and quality of life for all.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
Plan Objectives		
A: A Quality Place - Enabling Sustainable Communities and Delivery of New Homes		
1. Support the existing settlement hierarchy, recognising Lisburn and Castlereagh as a growth area consistent with the RDS and reflective of its strategic location	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
2. Encourage the creation of accessible and connected places to sustain communities with good access to jobs, housing, public transport, education, community and recreation facilities	A Out	General statement of objectives.
3. Provide for strategic growth at West Lisburn/Blaris including the delivery of new homes	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
4. Support towns, villages and small settlements in the Council area as vibrant and attractive centres providing homes and services appropriate to their role in the settlement hierarchy whilst protecting their identity from excessive development	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
5. Provide appropriate opportunities for housing in settlements with a range of types and tenures, including affordable housing	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
6. Encourage good design and positive place-making in all development appropriate to its locality and context	A Out	General statement of objectives.
7. Support the provision of adequate infrastructure (including water, sewage and transport) for sustainable residential development	A Out	General statement of objectives.
8. Support vibrant rural communities with appropriate opportunities for dwellings and sustainable development in the countryside.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
B: A Thriving Place - Driving Sustainable Economic Growth		
1. Support a thriving and diverse economy with a sufficient supply of land and in locations for a range of employment uses facilitating the creation of new jobs and to encourage existing and new businesses to invest with confidence	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
2. Accommodate population growth to ensure a continuous supply of labour and allow the resident population the opportunity to avail of high quality employment opportunities in sustainable locations close to where they live	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
3. Promote Mixed Use development at strategic locations at West Lisburn and Purdysburn with appropriate employment uses to facilitate opportunities for economic growth and inward investment	A Out	General statement of objectives.
4. Promote access to higher and further education to meet employment needs	A Out	General statement of objectives.
5. Support Lisburn City, the towns and villages as employment and service centres for their surrounding hinterland	A Out	General statement of objectives.
6. Support the provision of infrastructure both physical and digital to facilitate employment growth, economic regeneration, inward investment and physical renewal	A Out	General statement of objectives.
7. Manage mineral resources in a sustainable manner, protecting and safeguarding vulnerable landscapes	A Out	General statement of objectives.
C: A Vibrant Place - Growing our City, Town Centres, Retailing and Other Uses		
1. Promote the regeneration of our city and town centres as quality places to live, work, shop and visit	A Out	General statement of objectives.
2. Promote Lisburn City Centre as a vibrant destination offering a mix of residential, shopping, employment, high grade office development, leisure and community uses; and better transportation linking people and places	A Out	General statement of objectives.
3. Support our towns and villages, encouraging appropriate retailing, offices, mixed use and housing opportunities	A Out	General statement of objectives.
4. Promote regeneration and reuse of existing buildings and previously developed land for mixed use development, whilst maintaining environmental quality and protecting residential amenity	A Out	General statement of objectives.
5. Promote a vibrant and thriving night-time economy in our city and town centres to support economic growth, furthering opportunity for enhancing their vitality and viability	A Out	General statement of objectives.
6. Support the role of Sprucefield as a regional retail destination at a key strategic location within Northern Ireland. where	A Out	General statement of objectives.
D: An Attractive Place - Promoting Sustainable Tourism, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation		
1. Support and develop tourism infrastructure as a key growth area	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
2. Facilitate tourism development whilst protecting heritage assets, encouraging development in appropriate locations, including a wide range of tourist accommodation	A Out	General statement of objectives.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
3. Safeguard key tourism/recreation assets from inappropriate development	A Out	General statement of objectives.
4. Support the recreation and leisure offer to grow in a sustainable manner	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
5. Protect and enhance open space recognising its value in promoting health and well-being and resolving flood issues through the introduction of sustainable urban drainage infrastructure	A Out	General statement of objectives.
6. Support and encourage accessibility to open space including the Lagan Valley Regional Park and Lagan Navigation as key assets within the Council area.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
E: A Green Place - Protecting and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment		
1. Protect our historic and natural environment recognising their contribution to sustainable communities, economic growth, sustainable transport and health and well-being	A Out	General statement of objectives.
2. Protect, conserve and enhance our historic environment, optimising the use of brownfield sites and promoting heritage-led regeneration	A Out	General statement of objectives.
3. Recognise the value of our Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape/Village Character as important heritage assets	A Out	General statement of objectives.
4. Shape our places, the quality of new buildings and our town and village centres by promoting good design and maximise benefits to communities	A Out	General statement of objectives.
5. Protect our natural heritage assets and promote their sensitive reuse to help create a sense of place	A Out	General statement of objectives.
6. Ensure new development does not cause harm to biodiversity and other natural resources such as air, water and soil	A Out	General statement of objectives.
7. Protect and enhance our designated natural heritage assets including the Lagan Valley Regional Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and other high quality landscapes such as Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) and secure, through appropriate designations, to ensure they remain unspoilt for future generations.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
F: A Connected Place - Supporting Sustainable Transport and Other Infrastructure		
1. Support the growth of the Council area, exploiting its strategic location on Key Transport Corridors and the rail network	A Out	General statement of objectives. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
2. Designate and protect the location of strategic infrastructure, promote strategic transport schemes and linkages, maximising accessibility by sustainable modes across the Council area, ensuring infrastructure development is flood resilient	A Out	General statement of objectives.
3. Promote opportunities for sustainable travel through development of Active Travel Networks to support walking, cycling and public transport, reducing the need to travel by private car	A Out	General statement of objectives.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
4. Develop and promote strategic greenways to provide opportunities for walking, cycling, biodiversity, health and well-being	A Out	General statement of objectives.
5. Recognise the contribution green and blue infrastructure offers to human health and sustainable urban drainage	A Out	General statement of objectives.
6. Mitigate and adapt to climate change by minimising greenhouse gas emissions	A Out	General statement of objectives.
7. Support renewable energy infrastructure whilst affording protection to the environment	A Out	General statement of objectives.
8. Facilitate the delivery of telecommunications and utilities infrastructure throughout the Plan period	A Out	General statement of objectives.
9. Support effective waste management through reuse, recycling and reduction of waste to landfill, minimising environmental impacts	A Out	General statement of objectives.
10. Prevent inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding or that increase flood risk elsewhere, whilst managing flood risk and providing mitigation where necessary.	A Out	General statement of objectives.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
Chapter 4 Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy		
SP01 Sustainable Development	A Out	General statement of objectives.
SP02 Improving Health and Well-being	A Out	General statement of objectives.
SP03 Creating and Enhancing Shared Space and Quality Places	A Out	General statement of objectives.
SP04 Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth	A Out	General statement of objectives.
SP05 Good Design and Positive Place-Making	A Out	General statement of objectives.
SP06 Protecting and Enhancing the Environment	A Out	General statement of objectives.
SP07 Section 76 Planning Agreements	A Out	General statement of objectives. Sets out requirements to contribute to infrastructure in certain circumstances.
Spatial Strategy	A Out	General statement of policy. The spatial strategy is a set of high level statements which are delivered through the Strategic Policies and Operational Policies. This also sets out the settlement hierarchy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
SP08 Housing in Settlements	A Out	General statement of policy. Housing allocations as set out on the Strategic Housing Allocation in Table 3. No greenfield extension of settlement is required to allow for future housing growth. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be considered in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment capacity.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
SP09 Housing in the Countryside	A Out	General statement of policy. Approvals will be monitored through annual housing monitor and the related policies subject to review if annual average exceeds 54 units. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be considered in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment capacity in Section 3.
SP10 Education, Health, Community and Culture	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP11 Economic Development in Settlements	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
SP12 Economic Development in the Countryside	A Out	General statement of policy. Identifies two existing rural Local Employment Sites at Glenavy Road, Moira and Crossnacreevy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
SP13 Mineral Development	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies. Refers to lignite around Lough Neagh and Portmore Lough as ' <i>strategically significant resource albeit one that is highly unlikely to be developed in the near future.</i> '
SP14 Town Centres, Retailing and Other Uses	A Out	General statement of policy. Specific to town centres and Sprucefield within the settlement limit of Lisburn City.
SP15 Evening/Night-time Economy	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP16 Tourism	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
SP17 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP18 Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment and Archaeological Remains	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP19 Protecting and Enhancing Natural Heritage	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP20 Transportation Infrastructure	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP21 Renewable Energy	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
SP22 Telecommunications and Other Utilities	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP23 Waste Management	A Out	General statement of policy.
SP24 Flooding	A Out	General statement of policy.
STRATEGIC MIXED USE POLICIES		
SMU01 West Lisburn/Blaris	A Out	General statement of policy. Within Lisburn City settlement limit. No direct pathway to any international site. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be considered in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment capacity in Section 3.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
SMU02 Purdysburn/Knockbracken	A Out	General statement of policy. The SMU is within Castlereaigh Greater Urban Area settlement limit with no direct pathway to any international site. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be considered in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment capacity in Section 3.
SMU03 Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre	A/G Out	General statement of policy. No direct pathway to any international site.
Chapter 5 Monitoring and Implementation	NA NA	Administrative text about how plan will be monitored.
Local Development Plan 2032 Draft Plan Strategy - Part 2 Operational Policies		
A QUALITY PLACE		
1. HOUSING IN SETTLEMENTS		
HOU1 New Residential Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU2 Protection of Land Zoned for Housing	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU3 Site Context and Characteristics of New Residential Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU4 Design in New Residential Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU5 Public Open Space in New Residential Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. No settlements are adjacent to international sites and therefore it cannot affect any international sites.
HOU6 Design Concept Statements, Concept Masterplans and Comprehensive Planning	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for when a Design Concept Statement or Concept Masterplan will be required. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU7 Residential Extensions and Alterations	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU8 Protecting Local Character, Environmental Quality and Residential Amenity in Established Residential Areas	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU9 The Conversion or Change of Use of Existing Buildings to Flats or Apartments	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU10 Affordable Housing in Settlements	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
HOU11 Specialist Accommodation	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU12 Accommodation for the Travelling Community	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
2. COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN SETTLEMENTS		
CF01 Necessary Community Facilities in Settlements	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
CF02 Protection of a Local Community Facility	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
3. DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE		
COU1 Development in the Countryside	A Out	General statement which introduces the Development in the Countryside operational policies and signals that COU15 and COU16 apply to all development in the countryside.
COU2 New Dwellings in Existing Clusters	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
COU3 Replacement Dwellings	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU4 The Conversion and Reuse of Buildings for Residential Use	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU5 Affordable Housing	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU6 Personal and Domestic Circumstances	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU7 Dwellings for Non-Agricultural Business Enterprises	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
COU8 Infill/Ribbon Development	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU9 Temporary Caravan	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU10 Dwellings on Farms	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU11 Farm Diversification	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including COU16, WM2 and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU12 Agricultural and Forestry Development	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Criterion e) states it must not have an adverse effect on the natural environment and the J&A highlights that ammonia will be a consideration for developments relating to the housing of livestock and the storage and spreading of manure and slurry. In view of the policy caveats, J&A and policy NH1, this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU13 Necessary Community Facilities in the Countryside	B/H Out	This is a policy which, combined with COU2, lists the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU14 The Conversion and Reuse of Buildings for Non-Residential Use	B/H Out	This is a policy which, combined with COU4, lists the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals must comply with all policy requirements contained in relevant operational policies. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
COU15 Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
COU16 Rural Character and other Criteria	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Criteria where a new development proposal will be unacceptable include where the provision of non mains sewerage is not available, or cannot be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment. The J&A adds that proposals for development in the countryside must meet other planning and environmental considerations including those for drainage and sewerage. This policy does not result in development and therefore cannot affect any international sites.
A THRIVING PLACE		
4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
ED1 Economic Development in Cities and Towns	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals and will also be subject to ED9. It is confined to settlements that are not adjacent to international sites.
ED2 Economic Development in Villages and Small Settlements	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals and will also be subject to ED9. It is confined to villages and small settlements most of which are not adjacent to international sites. Feumore is a small settlement partly within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site. There is very limited scope for development within the settlement limit and the location is such that HRA will be triggered at application stage therefore it does not require further assessment.
ED3 Expansion of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It implies support for economic development in the countryside under certain circumstances and is also subject to ED9. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NH1, this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
ED4 Redevelopment of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It implies support for economic development in the countryside under certain circumstances and is also subject to ED9. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NH1, this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
ED5 Major Economic Development in the Countryside	I In	This policy allows for light or general industrial development in the countryside that comprises 5,000 square metres or more gross floor space; or the area of the site is or exceeds 1 hectare. Such proposals will be assessed to take account of environmental impacts. It is also subject to ED9, however it is not known where or what development might be allowed, therefore it might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
ED6 Small Rural Projects	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It implies support for a small community enterprise centre or a small rural industrial enterprise under certain circumstances and is also subject to ED9. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NH1, this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
ED7 Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It constrains alternative uses on zoned or other land. It cannot affect any international sites.
ED8 Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses	F Out	The policy is a strategic high level policy to avoid incompatible development. In itself (i.e. in the absence of other policies) the policy cannot lead to any development or change.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
ED9 General Criteria for Economic Development	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy which will apply to all development under policies ED1 to ED8. ED9 Criteria include c) it does not adversely affect features of the natural or historic environment; e) it does not harm the water environment; g) it is capable of dealing satisfactorily with any emission or effluent.
5. MINERALS DEVELOPMENT		
MD1 Environmental Protection	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy which will apply to all development under policies MD3 to MD8. The policy states 'Minerals development within or in close proximity to an area that has been designated, or is proposed for designation to protect its landscape, scientific or natural heritage significance will not normally be granted permission (with the exception of valuable minerals as set out in policy MD4) where this would prejudice the essential character of the area and the rationale for its designation.'
MD2 Visual Impact	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding policy in terms of visual impact and one that cannot lead to development or other change.
MD3 Areas of Mineral Constraint	I In	This policy implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside Areas of Minerals Constraint (AoMC) with minor exceptions within AoMCs. No AoMCs are shown on the Plan Strategy Map Viewer but it is stated in the J&A that they may include designated sites and Areas of High Scenic Value, one of which overlaps Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. However, the J&A states ' <i>Where a designated area covers expansive tracts of land, the Council will carefully consider the scope for some minerals development that avoids key sites and that would not unduly compromise the integrity of the area as a whole or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.</i> ' This could apply to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. Although MD3 is subject to MD1, the exceptions might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MD4 Valuable Minerals	I In	This policy implies that the extraction and processing of valuable minerals may be permitted anywhere in the council area and it is not subject to MD1. ' <i>There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however, in considering a proposal where the site is within a designated area in the Local Development Plan, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning.</i> ' This might lead to an internal conflict with policy NH1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MD5 Unconventional Hydrocarbon Extraction	I In	This policy states that Council will apply a presumption against unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. This policy therefore implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted although this may not arise within the life of the Plan Strategy. It is subject to MD1 however there remains potential for an internal conflict with policy NH1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MD6 Mineral Safeguarding Areas	F Out	The policy constrains development in the Mineral Safeguarding Areas. In itself the policy cannot lead to any development or change.
MD7 Safety and Amenity	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide safeguarding policy that cannot lead to development or other change.
MD8 Traffic Implications	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide safeguarding policy that cannot lead to development or other change.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
MD9 Restoration Proposals	D/H Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental policy however the restoration proposals could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. However the credible evidence of a real risk to international sites is low. It is considered that MD1 and policy NH1 will provide sufficient protection to avoid proposals coming forward which represent a risk to international sites therefore this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
A VIBRANT PLACE		
6. TOWN CENTRES, RETAILING AND OTHER USES		
TC1 Town Centre, Retailing and Other Uses	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TC2 Lisburn City Centre Primary Retail Core and Retail Frontage	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TC3 Town Centres	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TC4 District and Local Centres	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals at Forestside District Centre and Dundonald Local Centre.
TC5 Villages and Small Settlements	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Feumore is a small settlement partly within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site. There is very limited scope for development within the settlement limit and the location is such that HRA will be triggered at application stage therefore it does not require further assessment.
TC6 Petrol Filling Stations and Roadside Service Facilities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Allows for roadside service facilities however the constraints are such that there will be little opportunity for such development. Given the low levels of risk, policy NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE		
7. TOURISM		
TOU1 Tourism Development in Settlements	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Allows for tourism development in settlements. There are no locations where such development could have direct effects on an international site other than Feumore small settlement which is within Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site. The J&A states <i>'Consideration will also be given to environmental designations, which may preclude tourism development from particular areas, in order to safeguard its integrity, such as those of nature conservation importance.'</i> TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development also applies. Given these caveats and the low levels of risk, policies TOU7 and NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
TOU2 Proposals for Tourism Amenity in the Countryside	B/H In	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site however the amount of development is constrained by the criteria and TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development also applies. It is recommended that TOU7 is amended to highlight potential indirect effects of tourism. Given these caveats policies TOU7 and NH1 can then be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
TOU3 Proposals for Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside	B/H In	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site however the amount of development is constrained by the criteria and TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development also applies. It is recommended that TOU7 is amended to highlight potential indirect effects of tourism. Given these caveats policies TOU7 and NH1 can then be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
TOU4 Self-Catering Tourist Accommodation in the Countryside	B/H In	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site however the amount of development is constrained by the criteria and TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development also applies. It is recommended that TOU7 is amended to highlight potential indirect effects of tourism. Given these caveats policies TOU7 and NH1 can then be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
TOU5 Holiday Parks in the Countryside	B/H In	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site however TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development also applies. It is recommended that TOU7 is amended to highlight potential indirect effects of tourism. Given these caveats policies TOU7 and NH1 can then be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
TOU6 Proposals for Major Tourism Development in the Countryside	B/H In	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site however TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development also applies. It is recommended that TOU7 is amended to highlight potential indirect effects of tourism. Given these caveats policies TOU7 and NH1 can then be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
TOU7 General Criteria for Tourism Development	I In	Any proposal for a tourism use, outlined in Policies TOU1 to TOU6 and any extension/alteration to existing tourism uses will also be required to meet all of the criteria including: i) it does not adversely affect features of the natural or historic environment; and j) it is capable of dealing with any emission or effluent in accordance with legislative requirements. The policy is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA and Ramsar site. If all the potential impacts of tourism, including disturbance, are not highlighted there is a risk of internal conflict with policy NH1 and TOU7 does not provide sufficient protection to ensure no likely significant effects. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU8 Safeguarding of Tourism Assets	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide safeguarding policy and one that cannot lead to development or other change.
8. OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION		
OS1 Protection of Open Space	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy. It also constrains change of use therefore it one that in itself cannot lead to development or other change.
OS2 Intensive Sports Facilities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. In all cases, the development of intensive sports facilities will be required to meet all of the criteria including b) there is no adverse impact on features of importance to nature conservation or the historic environment. Given this criterion, and the low risk of such development being brought forward in or near international sites or supporting habitat, NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
OS3 Noise-Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Proposals for the development of sport or outdoor recreational activities that generate high levels of noise will only be permitted where all the criteria are met including: b) there is no conflict, disturbance or nuisance caused to farm livestock and wildlife; and c) there is no conflict, disturbance or nuisance caused to the enjoyment of the natural environment/nature conservation and the historic environment. Given these criteria NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
OS4 Facilities ancillary to Water Sports	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Development of facilities ancillary to water sports adjacent to inland lakes, reservoirs and waterways will be permitted where all of the criteria are met including: b) there is no adverse impact on features of importance to the natural environment/nature conservation, archaeology or the historic environment; d) it will not result in water pollution or an unacceptable level of noise or disturbance; and g) there is no conflict with the provisions of any local management plan associated with the body of water. The J&A goes on to clarify: <i>'Management plans drawn up for particular water areas, for example River Basin Management Plans or natural heritage designations such as Ramsar sites, seek to control and address the compatibility of varying demands on waterbodies.'</i> There is no specific reference to the conservation objectives for international sites however these would also be regarded as relevant local management plans and taken into account. Given these criteria and caveats NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
OS5 Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. The Council will only permit the development of floodlighting associated with sports and outdoor recreational facilities where its design and operation meets all the criteria including b) there is no adverse impact on the natural environment/nature conservation, visual amenity or character of the locality. Given this criterion, and the low risk of such development being brought forward in or near international sites or supporting habitat, NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
OS6 Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. This applies to all outdoor recreation development and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. Proposals for outdoor recreational use in the countryside will be permitted where all the criteria are met including: a) there is no adverse impact on features of importance to natural environment/nature conservation, or the historic environment. The J&A states ' <i>Special care will be exercised in areas of nature conservation, heritage importance or landscape amenity value. Proposals in such areas will also need to be considered in relation to the Council's operational policies relating to the Historic environment and Natural Heritage (Policies HE1-HE15 and NH1-NH6).</i> ' In light of these caveats NH1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites and the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
A GREEN PLACE		
9. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY		
HE1 The Preservation of Archaeological Remains of Regional Importance and their Settings	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE2 The Preservation of Archaeological Remains of Local Importance and their Settings	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE3 Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE4 Archaeological Mitigation	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE5 Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE6 Change of Use and/or Extensions or Alterations to a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE7 Control of Advertisements on a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE8 Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
HE9 Development affecting the Setting of a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE10 New Development in a Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character/Area of Village Character	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE11 The Control of Advertisements in a Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character/Area of Village Character	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE12 Demolition or Partial Demolition in a Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character/Area of Village Character	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE13 The Conversion and Reuse of Non-Listed Buildings	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
HE14 Enabling Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
10. NATURAL HERITAGE		
NH1 European and Ramsar Sites – International	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any adverse effect on an international site. It restates the legal and policy requirements of the Habitats Regulations and the SPPS in relation to international sites.
NH2 Species Protected by Law	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy. Affords additional protection to some site selection features such as whooper swan.
NH3 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - National	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which restates legal and policy requirements and cannot have any adverse effect on an international site. This policy applies to all ASSIs, some of which underpin international sites.
NH4 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - Local	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
NH5 Habitats, Species or Features of Natural Heritage Importance	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy. May afford protection to supporting habitat for site selection features.
NH6 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/site safeguarding policy.
A CONNECTED PLACE		
11. ACCESS AND TRANSPORT		
TRA1 Creating an Accessible Environment	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TRA2 Access to Public Roads	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
TRA3 Access to Protected Routes	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TRA4 Protection for New Transport Schemes	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TRA5 Strategic Greenways and Disused Transport Routes	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TRA6 Transport Assessment	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TRA7 Car Parking and Servicing Arrangements in New Developments	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TRA8 Active Travel Networks and Infrastructure Provision	A Out	This is a general statement of policy promoting provision of active travel opportunities which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TRA9 Park and Ride/Park and Share Car Parks	A Out	This is a general statement of policy enabling provision of parking to reduce car use. The transport routes and centres of population are such that it cannot have any effect on an international site.
TRA10 Provision of Public and Private Car Parks	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TRA11 Temporary Car Parks	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
12. RENEWABLE ENERGY		
RE1 Renewable Energy Development	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. The generation of energy from renewable resources will be permitted provided the proposal, and any associated buildings and infrastructure, will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on: c) biodiversity or the natural or historic environment; d) local natural resources, such as air quality or water quality. A potential impact of renewable energy is disruption of flight paths but due to limited potential for development there is a low risk that this would have a likely significant effect. This would be addressed through criterion c). In view of the policy caveats and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
RE2 Integrated Renewable Energy	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
13. TELECOMMUNICATIONS		
TEL1 Telecommunications Development	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
14. UTILITIES		
UT1 Utilities	I In	Proposals for all overhead electricity lines and associated infrastructure will be subject to criteria including b) avoidance of areas of nature conservation, the historic environment or archaeological interest. This does not make it clear that site selection features may occur outside international sites. There is therefore a risk of conflict between this policy and NH1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
15. WASTE MANAGEMENT		

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
WM1 Waste Management Facilities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. These include the facility will not cause demonstrable harm to human health and unacceptable adverse visual or environmental impacts, including surface or groundwater; and the facility will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on nature conservation interests. In view of these caveats and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
WM2 Treatment of Waste Water	B/D Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals which, in the case of WWTWs, is also subject to WM1. The J&S states ' <i>The method of non mains sewage disposal must be to the satisfaction of the Council's environmental Health Department and the Northern Ireland environment Agency. A consent to discharge under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 will also be required from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the onus is on the developer/householder to ensure such consent is, or can be agreed for the development proposed.</i> ' The second part of the policy, relating to non mains sewage treatment, also serves as a general plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy.
WM3 Waste Disposal	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability which is subject to WM1. In view of the caveats in WM1, and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
WM4 Land Improvement	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. The disposal of inert waste by its deposition on land will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that c) it will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact. In view of the caveat and NH1 this policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
WM5 Development in the Vicinity of Waste Management Facilities or Waste Water Treatment Works	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. In itself the policy WM5 cannot lead to any development or change.
16. FLOODING		
FLD1 Development in Fluvial (River) Flood Plains	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
FLD2 Protection of Flood Defence and Drainage Infrastructure	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
FLD3 Development and Surface Water (Pluvial) Flood Risk Outside Flood Plains	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
FLD4 Artificial Modification of Watercourses	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy.
FLD5 Development in Proximity to Reservoirs	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
17. ADVERTISEMENTS		
AD1 Amenity and Public Safety	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.

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