



Local Development Plan 2030

Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment Report of the Draft Plan Strategy

September 2019

www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/planning



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

Have your say

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is consulting on the Mid and East Antrim Local Development Plan – Draft Plan Strategy 2030.

Pre-Consultation

To allow everyone time to read and digest the draft Plan Strategy we are publishing it in advance of the formal eight week period of public consultation. This period of pre-consultation will run from 17 September 2019 to 15 October 2019.

Please note that no representations should be made during this period, as they will not be considered outside of the formal consultation period.

During this pre-consultation period, Council's Local Development Plan team will facilitate a series of public engagement events, exhibitions and drop-in information sessions. Arrangements for these events will be published on our website and in local newspapers in the week commencing 16 September 2019.

The aims of these events are to:

- Promote understanding of the draft Plan Strategy;
- Explain how it will be tested at Independent Examination; and
- Provide guidance on the submission of representations to the public consultation.

Formal Consultation

The draft Plan Strategy will be open for formal public consultation for a period of eight weeks, **commencing on 16 October 2019 and closing at 5pm on 11 December 2019.**

Please note that representations received after the closing date on 11 December will not be considered.

The draft Plan Strategy is published along with a range of assessments which are also open for public consultation over this period. These include a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment), a draft Habitats Regulations Assessment, a draft Equality (Section 75) Screening Report and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

We welcome comments on the proposals and policies within our draft Plan Strategy from everyone with an interest in Mid and East Antrim and its continuing development over the Plan period to 2030. This includes individuals and families who live or work in our Borough. It is also important that we hear from a wide spectrum of stakeholder groups who have particular interests in Mid and East Antrim. Accordingly, while acknowledging that the list below is not exhaustive, we welcome the engagement of the following groups:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Voluntary groups | • Business groups |
| • Residents groups | • Developers/landowners |
| • Community forums and groups | • Professional bodies |
| • Environmental groups | • Academic institutions |

Availability of the Draft Plan Strategy

A copy of the draft Plan Strategy and all supporting documentation, including the Sustainability Appraisal Report, is available on the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council website:

www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/LDP

The draft Plan Strategy and supporting documentation is also available in hard copy or to view during office hours, 9.30am – 4.30pm at the following Council offices:

- **Planning Department, County Hall**, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1QF
- **The Braid**, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena, BT43 5EJ
- **Carrickfergus Museum and Civic Centre**, 11 Antrim Street, Carrickfergus, BT38 7DG
- **Smiley Buildings**, Victoria Road, Larne, BT40 1RU

The draft Plan Strategy and supporting documentation can be made available in different formats upon request.

Contact Details

All responses to this public consultation should be submitted to the Planning Team via the following options:

By the online consultation portal: consult.midandeantrim.gov.uk

By Email: planning@midandeantrim.gov.uk

By Post:

Local Development Plan Team

County Hall

182 Galgorm Road

Ballymena

BT42 1QF

When making a response to the consultation on the draft plan Strategy, we would encourage you to use the online consultation portal and to read carefully the guidance that accompanies it before completing it. Using the online consultation portal will help the Independent Examiner to understand what part of the plan you consider to be unsound and what suggested change you wish to make to it.

Aims of the Public Consultation

The public consultation on the Draft Plan Strategy aims to:

- Encourage full public participation in this stage of the Local Development Plan process and to stimulate ongoing interest and involvement in the Plan process;
- Promote a sense of ownership of the Local Development Plan;
- Facilitate the Independent Examination of the draft Plan Strategy to ensure its soundness; and
- Provide a robust foundation for work on the Local Policies Plan, the next stage in the Plan process.

How will the Council deal with your comments?

Subsequent to the eight week consultation period, there will be a further eight week period allowed for counter-representations.

All representations and counter-representations will be analysed by our Local Development Plan team and a Public Consultation Report will be prepared and presented to Elected Members. This may result in amendments to the draft Plan Strategy, before its formal submission to the Department for Infrastructure, in advance of the Independent Examination.

It should be noted that your responses are public documents that will be made available for public inspection and Independent Examination. All responses will therefore be held on a database in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

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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. International sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites.

This draft HRA Report is prepared in support of the draft Plan Strategy for Mid and East Antrim Borough 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 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (the Council) deliver sustainable development for employment, homes and infrastructure in a high quality environment across the Borough. It sets out how the area will change and grow until 2030. 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 22 international sites that have a theoretical connection to the plan area were identified. On further review it was found that 15 of these sites might be affected by the draft Plan Strategy. These include sites ranging from large sites such as Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site to the much smaller Main Valley Bogs SAC, one component of which is in our Borough. Sites beyond the Council area with an ecological connection were also included, for example Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC which is connected via rivers and Lough Neagh. 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 Borough.

Screening of the Plan

All of the Plan Strategy proposals were reviewed, from the Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives, through the Spatial Growth Strategy and Countryside Strategy, to the General Policy for all Development and Strategic Subject Policies. Following the screening of plan proposals it was found that there is potential for likely significant effects to arise from 14 policies: SGS8, TOU2 to TOU8, MIN1 to MIN4, OSL5, TR7 and these were screened in for appropriate assessment.

Appropriate Assessment

Those policies screened in were assessed under six groups: Tourism Opportunity Zones; Vulnerable Areas, Wider Impacts of Tourism; Minerals Development; Sport and Outdoor Recreation; and Transport Infrastructure. Mitigation measures were identified to strengthen the protection afforded 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 2030

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has prepared a draft Plan Strategy, the first formal stage of the new Local Development Plan 2030, for public consultation. The Local Development Plan (LDP) is a spatial land use plan, which is primarily about ensuring sustainable development and improving the wellbeing of communities in Mid and East Antrim. Through guiding future development and use of land in our towns, villages and rural areas, the Local Development Plan will provide certainty as it will be the first thing to be taken into account by the Council when taking planning decisions in the Borough. The draft Plan Strategy follows on from the publication of our Preferred Options Paper (POP) in June 2017 and extensive engagement with the public, stakeholders and our elected Members.

The draft Plan Strategy is presented as a single volume comprising 11 chapters in two parts.

- PART 1
- Chapters 1-3 Regional and local policy context and profile of the Borough
 - Chapter 4 Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives
 - Chapter 5 Spatial Growth Strategy and Countryside Strategy

- PART 2
- Chapter 6 General Policy for All Development
 - Chapters 7-11 Strategic Subject Policies

There are 11 appendices that provide detail that informs the Spatial Growth Strategies and Strategic Subject Policies. Those of particular relevance to this HRA are Appendix A: Broad methodology for Strategic Housing Allocation; and Appendix B: Tourist Amenities in the Countryside - Sustainability Assessment.

Our Borough extends to 1,045 km² and shares a land boundary with three Council areas: Mid Ulster District Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Existing Plans and Local Policies Plan

The existing area plans that apply to Mid and East Antrim Borough are:

- Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001, adopted in 1989
- Larne Area Plan 2010, adopted in 1998
- Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001, adopted in March 2000

The status of each of these plans is described in 2.2 of the draft Plan Strategy. The adopted Plan Strategy will replace the strategic elements of the existing development plans relevant to Mid and East Antrim.

These existing plans, in effect, represent the Local Policies Plan (LPP) until such time as it has been prepared. Local designations and associated policies will remain in place until superseded by the adoption of the Mid and East Antrim LPP.

The 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.

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) 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 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, must be subject to HRA in their own right. 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 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 Mid and East Antrim Borough 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 POP. 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

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)

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

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 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

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

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 22 sites that are in or potentially connected to the Council area, 1. Appendix 4, Maps 2 to 5 illustrate these sites in relation to the Borough.

Table 1 Sites Connected with Council Area

Site Name	Connection with plan area			
	Within or Adjacent	Ecological	Within 10km	By Infrastructure
Antrim Hills SPA	●	●	●	●
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	●	●	●	●
Belfast Lough Ramsar Site	●	●	●	●
Belfast Lough SPA	●	●	●	●
Copeland Islands SPA		●		
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA	●	●	●	●
Garron Plateau Ramsar Site	●	●	●	●
Garron Plateau SAC	●	●	●	●
Larne Lough Ramsar Site	●	●	●	●
Larne Lough SPA	●	●	●	●
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site	●	●	●	●
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	●	●	●	●
Main Valley Bogs SAC	●	●	●	
North Channel SAC	●	●	●	●
Skerries and Causeway		●		
Outer Ards Ramsar Site		●	●	
Outer Ards SPA		●	●	
Red Bay SAC			●	
The Maidens SAC		●	●	
Dead Island Bog SAC			●	
Wolf Island Bog SAC			●	
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC		●		

Step 3: Gathering information about the international

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.

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

Taking account of in 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. 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)
Antrim Hills SPA	•	•			•	•	•		•	•
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA		•	•	•	•	•		•		
Belfast Lough Ramsar	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Belfast Lough SPA	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	
Garron Plateau Ramsar Site	•	•				•	•		•	•
Garron Plateau SAC	•	•				•	•		•	•
Larne Lough Ramsar	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Larne Lough SPA	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•
Main Valley Bogs SAC	•	•				•			•	•
The Maidens SAC		•	•	•	•	•				
Dead Island Bog SAC										•
Wolf Island Bog SAC										•

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:

- North Channel SAC
- Skerries and Causeway
- Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
- Copeland Islands SPA
- Outer Ards Ramsar Site
- Outer Ards SPA
- Red Bay 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. 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 are 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. Marine sites that are immediately adjacent to our coast could theoretically be vulnerable, as could the Lough Beg component of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/Ramsar site.

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. Of the existing zonings none are in close proximity to freshwater international sites. In Larne and Carrickfergus some of the zoned housing areas are potentially hydrologically connected to the coastal international sites. Therefore there may be pathways from undeveloped housing land during construction and operation for pollutant release to coastal international sites. This is subject to HRA for development management and to other regulatory consents.

A number of areas of zoned economic land are identified in the existing area plans and remain undeveloped. Within Larne and Carrickfergus land zoned for industry and mixed use include areas situated adjacent to Larne Lough and Belfast Lough. There may therefore be pathways from undeveloped economic/industrial land to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site, East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA and Belfast Lough SPA/Ramsar site. 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 considered 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. Those marine sites that are immediately adjacent to our coast

could theoretically be vulnerable. This potential risk is addressed through a specific policy CS9 Development at Risk from Land Instability or Coastal Erosion. It is generally considered unlikely that the proposals and policies within the Draft Plan Strategy will result in effects on coast processes however these will be considered at LPP when reviewing or allocating any zoned land on the coast.

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 uses fields adjacent to Lough Beg. A Special Countryside Area is designated through the draft Plan Strategy at Lough Beg and CS2 Special Countryside Areas and CS3 Areas of Constraint on High Structures largely constrain development that could affect this species. With the addition of NAT1 and project level mitigation there cannot be an effect on whooper swan supporting habitat.

Light-bellied brent goose, a selection feature of Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site, may forage in grassland/arable land. No such land has been allocated for development around Larne Lough. At LPP records of supporting habitat used by these species will be checked to inform the screening of any such areas that are considered for development.

Hen harrier and merlin from Antrim Hills SPA range beyond the international site. Development that leads to loss of substantial areas of foraging/breeding habitat could theoretically have an adverse impact however the plan does not promote and will not lead to extensive development and habitat loss.

The listed bird features of the Belfast Lough SPA/Ramsar site include waders that seek refuge at high tide in supporting habitat outside the SPA boundary. This can include fields or playing fields which provide a degree of security from predators due to their openness. OSL1 is a presumption against loss of open space other than in exceptional circumstances. A desktop check of existing zoned land finds that much of the potential supporting habitat is zoned as open space and will therefore be subject to OSL1. There is one partially developed area of economic land in Carrickfergus Area Plan (CS08 Larne Road, Kilroot) which contains farmland which conceivably may provide supporting habitat. Information on known high tide wader roosts will be therefore be sought to inform HRA at LPP.

The NI Marine Map Viewer identifies seal haul out locations within Larne Lough and Belfast Lough. No land is zoned for development in the intertidal zone however some zoned land is immediately adjacent to the coast. Information on known grey seal haul out sites will be therefore be reviewed to inform HRA at LPP.

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 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 projection is for an increase of 2.2% by 2030. While this may marginally increase recreation within international sites such as Antrim Hills SPA this will largely be confined to limited

areas within public land such as forestry. There is existing foot and cycle access along the coast in the urban areas of Greenisland, Carrickfergus and Larne and growth of the residential population cannot lead to a significant increase in recreation along coastal paths.

SGS9 Open Space Strategy and OSL2 will facilitate the development of regional and local community greenways as part of a green and blue infrastructure network. The LDP will support the delivery and protection of regional greenways proposed within the Borough including one from Ballymena to Cushendall. The proposed Ballymena to Cushendall Greenway passes through 1.5km of Antrim Hills SPA within the plan area (total greenway length is 30km). Proposals that protect, complement, extend or improve this route as part of the greenway network will be supported. The greenway is likely to follow the route of a disused railway and, although construction works will be required, it is considered that these works would be unlikely to cause disturbance to the SPA qualifying features, hen harrier and merlin, or cause loss of any supporting habitat due to the previous land-use. Increased recreation is also considered unlikely to be significant due to the linear nature of the greenway which will carry visitors through the area close to an existing road and is unlikely to cause disturbance or increase recreation beyond the greenway corridor.

The remaining areas of proposed greenway are all located outside international sites and will not increase recreation or disturbance to any international site. The LDP will also support the delivery and protection of local community greenways within settlements and potentially connecting to the regional network beyond settlements. These will be identified in the Local Policies Plan.

Open space is taken to mean all open space of public value. This includes not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which may offer opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and are often of significant amenity value. Linear open spaces and green corridors are also included. Zoned areas of open space in the existing area plans land use designations will be reviewed at LPP stage and potentially new areas of open space could be zoned.

SGS8 designates Tourism Opportunity Zones (TOZs) at Carnfunnock Country Park and the former Magheramorne Quarry although the extent of both TOZs has yet to be determined. These may enable development adjacent to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA that may cause habitat loss or disturbance to site features. The impacts of these policies is discussed in Section 5.

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 other than East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA and Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site. 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 draft Plan Strategy will make provision for 4,256 dwellings for the period 2018-2030 and 350-400 new dwellings in the countryside over the same period. The housing policy aims to create compact towns, focusing the growth, in the first instance, within the existing urban footprint of our towns with a population over 5,000, namely Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne and Greenisland. The allocation of economic land across the three main towns of Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne is 167ha.

Water Supply

It is the responsibility of NI Water to ensure that a safe supply of drinking water for the population is maintained. Mid and East Antrim is supplied with water from ten impounding reservoirs/loughs. There are also four Water Treatment Works (WTW) within the Borough: Dungonnell WTW, Dorisland WTW, Killylane WTW and Dunore Point WTW. Dungonnell and Killylane WTWs are supplied by reservoirs and catchments within Antrim Hills SPA and Dungonnell Reservoir is also within Garron

Plateau SAC and Ramsar site. Dorisland Reservoir sources water from the South Antrim Hills although not from any internationally designated area. Water is also supplied from Lough Neagh SPA and Ramsar site through Dunore Point (WTW). NI Water is satisfied with the sufficiency of the water supply to the Council area over the plan period therefore development under the plan is not expected to necessitate development of any new public water supplies.

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. The existing public sewerage network within the Larne catchment is currently operating above design capacity and after consulting with the environmental regulators Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), NI Water is not currently approving new connections to the existing public sewerage network. There are capacity constraints for some smaller settlements, Ballynafie, Cargan, Clogh, Grange and Moorfields. NI Water's sewerage network capacity mapping tool has identified capacity issues in parts of the Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Greenisland, Ballycarry, Portglenone, Carnlough & Glenarm waste water networks. The WWTWs discharge to a number of points within the wider Lough Neagh catchment and also to Larne Lough, Belfast Lough

The Water Utility Regulation Group (WURG) 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 Policy WW11. This requires *'the submission of sufficient information on the means of wastewater treatment and disposal*

that it 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 Council will consult with NIEA Water Management Unit and NI Water where appropriate. Applicants will also have to obtain a relevant waste management authorisation from NIEA i.e. discharge consent etc.'* Therefore there are sufficient measures to ensure that development that might undermine the conservation objectives 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 Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives through the Spatial Growth Strategy and Countryside Strategy to the General Policy for all Development and Strategic Subject Policies. Appendix 2 details the decision making categories and justification for the screening of each plan proposal. The outcome of the screening of proposals is summarised below and informed by the findings of Section 3 above.

Screening introductory chapters (Chapters 1 to 3)

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

Screening the Vision and Strategic Objectives (Chapter 4)

The Vision is an overall aspiration for the Borough. Delivery of the Vision is through the Spatial Growth Strategy and Countryside Strategy, the General Policy for all Development and Strategic Subject Policies. The Strategic Objectives all represent general policy statements which state a direction without details of how they will be delivered. Some strategic objectives are possible drivers of potential effects, however for all these objectives the implications can be assessed under related policies. Particular examples of such objectives are economic objectives a) relating to economic land and d) relating to tourism and social objective c). The Vision and Objectives are screened out of further assessment.

Screening the Spatial Growth Strategy and Countryside Strategy (Chapter 5)

SGS1 Spatial Growth Strategy and SGS2 Settlement Hierarchy provide for growth therefore there is potential for development pressures affecting international sites. They are strategic high-level policies which provide a framework for delivering sustainable growth and they are delivered through subsequent policies. These policies are therefore screened out of further assessment.

SGS3 to SGS5 relate to provision for housing and SGS6 to strategic allocation of land for economic development. They do not in themselves deliver housing or economic development. They do however refer to, for example, the protection or phasing of housing allocations and to future allocations of economic land. Housing and economic land allocations are being brought forward from extant plans and will be reviewed and subject to HRA at LPP. These policies are therefore screened out of further assessment.

SGS7 Retail Strategy and SGS9 Open Space Strategy are also strategic high-level policies, the delivery of which is detailed through subsequent policies. These policies are therefore screened out of further assessment.

SGS8 Tourism Strategy introduces Tourism Opportunity Zones that are adjacent to designated sites therefore it has been screened in for further assessment. It also states that for international sites, which are identified as being in the 'Vulnerable Category', *'Tourism Development should not be approved within the majority of their extent.'* Therefore it does not exclude development in international sites.

The Countryside Strategy is presented as nine Strategic Policies. CS1 is a strategic high-level policy setting out land use priorities with reference to later policies within the plan. In itself (i.e. in the absence of these later policies) the policy cannot lead to any development or change. CS2 to CS8 are all policies that are primarily environmental safeguarding policies. Where they do allow for exceptions

these were found to contain measures such that the policies cannot undermine conservation objectives for any international site. These policies are therefore screened out of further assessment.

Screening the General Policy for all Development (Chapter 6)

GP1 General Policy for all Development is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy which will apply to all development. Criteria a) iv; d) iv, vi; and e) iii, iv all provide for general plan-wide environmental protection. In addition criterion e) ii states '*Essential infrastructure to facilitate the development must be available or, if lacking, there must be a firm commitment in regard to its timely provision*'. This is important for ensuring that infrastructure such as wastewater treatment capacity is in place. This policy is screened out of further assessment.

Screening the Strategic Subject Policies (Chapters 7 to 11)

Chapters 7 to 11 contain 85 subject policies grouped under five chapters. The overall finding for each chapter is as follows.

Chapter 7 Sustainable Economic Growth

Sustainable Economic Growth includes policies for Economic Development; Retailing and Town Centres; and Tourism and Minerals Development.

Most of the Economic Development policies list the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals and cannot affect any international site. ECD4 Economic Development in the Countryside is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It does however imply support for economic development in the countryside under certain circumstances and specifically refers to the requirement to meet the General Policy. In relation to f) Agricultural and Forestry Development it states '*A proposal for intensive farming or animal husbandry will be required to demonstrate that it will not result in any significant adverse environmental impact, including in relation to ammonia emissions.*' This applies to all designated sites and to priority habitats therefore it is not included specifically for international sites. In view of these caveats and policy NAT1, policy ECD4 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

The Retailing and Town Centre policies set out general criteria for what is acceptable, with an presumption in favour of settlements and town centres. Those exceptions allowing for retail development elsewhere are constrained such that development arising will be small scale.

TOU1 and MIN5 to MIN6 are either environmental safeguarding policies or ones that cannot lead to any development or change therefore they are screened out of further assessment. TOU2 Tourism Strategy applies to Tourism Opportunity Zones that are adjacent to designated sites therefore it has been screened in for further assessment. Both the tourism and minerals groups include an overarching protective policy, TOU3 and MIN1 respectively, which all the subsequent policies are subject to. It was found that there are limitations to these general policies such that they do not provide sufficient protection to ensure no likely significant effects. Therefore policies TOU3 and MIN1 and the policies to which they apply, TOU4 to TOU8 and MIN2 to MIN4 were screened in for further assessment.

Chapter 8 Building Sustainable Communities

Building Sustainable Communities includes policies for Housing; Open Space, Sport and Leisure; and Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities. These policies largely fall into general statements of policy or general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Those policies relating to housing in the countryside all place substantial constraints on development and are required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under these policies, and in view of other policies including NAT1, the housing policies are screened out of further assessment. Most of the Open Space, Sport and Leisure policies, along with COM1 Education, Health, Community and Cultural Facilities, are general statements of policy or general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Some could

theoretically impact international sites but the opportunity to do so is so unlikely that they are screened out of further assessment.

OSL5 Sport and Outdoor Recreation Facilities however applies to all sport and outdoor recreation development and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites either alone or in combination. OSL5 was therefore screened in for further assessment.

Chapter 9 Transportation, Infrastructure and Connectivity

Transportation, Infrastructure and Connectivity includes policies for Transportation; Flood Risk and Drainage; Renewable Energy; Telecommunications and Overhead Cables; Water and Wastewater Infrastructure; and Waste Management. All but one of these policies fall into general statements of policy; general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals; or general environmental safeguarding policies, and were screened out of further assessment.

TR7 Provision of Car Parks allows for provision of Park & Ride or Park & Share facilities. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites, for example through greenfield development adjacent to an international site. It does not refer to the General Policy or other provisions. TR7 was therefore screened in for further assessment.

Chapter 10 Stewardship of our Built Environment and Creating Places

Stewardship of our Built Environment and Creating Places includes Historic Environment; Advertisements; and Place-Making. The policies are either general environmental safeguarding policies or ones that cannot have a conceivable effect on any international site, therefore all were screened out of further assessment.

Chapter 11 Safeguarding our Natural Environment

Safeguarding our Natural Environment contains five policies to protect the natural environment. NAT1 to NAT3 reiterate the existing provisions of legislation and the SPPS. The remaining policies in this chapter are general environmental safeguarding policies.

Outcome of screening

Table 3 summarises those proposals and policies that are screened in for further assessment.

Table 3 Policies screened as having a likely significant effect

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening Comment
SGS8 Tourism Strategy	The policy promotes sustainable tourism however it identifies tourism opportunity zones that are adjacent to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. It also states that for international sites, which are identified as being in the 'Vulnerable Category', <i>'Tourism Development should not be approved within the majority of their extent.'</i> Therefore it does not exclude development in international sites. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU2 Tourism Development in Settlements and Tourism Opportunity Zones	There are two proposed Tourism Opportunity Zones, Carnfunnock Country Park and the former Magheramorne Quarry. These may enable development adjacent to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA that may cause habitat loss or disturbance to site features. Further assessment of this policy is required.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening Comment
TOU3 All Tourism Development in the Countryside	This applies to all tourism development in the countryside and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. All proposals for tourism development in the countryside must also: a) meet the General Policy; and b) accord with other provisions of the LDP. TOU3, and therefore this requirement, applies to policies TOU4 to TOU8. There is reference to Table 5.7 and to vulnerable areas, which include international sites, and where <i>'Tourism Development should not be approved within the majority of their extent.'</i> Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU4 Tourist Amenities in the Countryside	These are policies listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Through reference to TOU3 these policies must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. They are not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites directly or through indirect effects such as disturbance from recreation. Further assessment of these policies is required.
TOU5 Hotels, Guest Houses and Tourist Hostels in the Countryside	
TOU6 Self Catering Accommodation in the Countryside	
TOU7 New and Extended Holiday Parks in the Countryside	
TOU8 Major Tourism Development in the Countryside – Exceptional Circumstances	
MIN1 Mineral Development – Extraction and Processing of Hard Rock and Aggregates	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It requires that Council must be satisfied that the proposal will not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon: <i>'a) The natural environment, including the conservation of flora and fauna, natural habitats, biodiversity and earth science features; b) the water environment, including water quality and natural flow regimes.'</i> The J&A refers to the need for HRA where there could be a hydrological impact however it does not refer to other impacts such as habitat loss or disturbance. This might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MIN2 Valuable Minerals	This policy implies that exploitation of valuable minerals may be permitted outside SCAs. It is subject to MIN1 however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening Comment
MIN3 Hydrocarbons	MIN3 implies that exploitation of hydrocarbons through conventional methods of extractions may be permitted subject to compliance with MIN2. Council will apply a presumption against unconventional extraction of hydrocarbons and gases by methods such as hydraulic fracturing ('fracking'), until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. This policy implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted. It is subject to MIN2 which is subject to MIN1 however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MIN4 Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (ACMDs)	This policy implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside ACMDs with minor exceptions within ACMDs. Current ACMDs include part of Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar site and part of Antrim Hills SPA. This policy is subject to MIN1, however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
OSL5 Sport and Outdoor Recreation Facilities	This applies to all sport and outdoor recreation development and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. All proposals must meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP, and also meet the policies included relating to noise, floodlighting and water sports. The limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites however might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TR7 Provision of Car Parks	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites for example through greenfield development adjacent to an international site. It does not refer to the General Policy or other provisions. Further assessment of this policy is required.

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 effects, 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 below.

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 14 policies: SGS8, TOU2 to TOU8, MIN1 to MIN4, OSL5, TR7.

Protective Measures in the draft Plan Strategy

Policy NAT1 European and Ramsar Sites – International, states the existing requirements of the Habitats Regulations and of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), which reiterates those legislative requirements. The J&A directs where further information on these international sites can be found.

Policy NAT1 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); or*
- 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, Council will 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 shall Council grant planning permission with conditions to secure necessary mitigation measures.

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

- i. there are no alternative solutions; and*
- ii. the proposed development is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and*
- iii. compensatory measures are agreed and fully secured.*

In such exceptional circumstances, where a European or 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:

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

Section 1.7 of the draft Plan Strategy sets out how the strategies and policies within the plan apply to development. 1.7.8 makes clear that all policies, including NAT1, apply to any development that will be brought forward under the adopted Plan Strategy.

All policies considered relevant to the proposed development will be taken into account by Council in the determination of a planning application. In assessing the proposal, Council will consider all relevant policies in the round. This means that applicants should not read policies in isolation, as more than one policy could apply to any proposal.

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

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. These 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.

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 7 in mind the policies and allocations which were identified as having a likely significant effect were considered further below.

Tourism Opportunity Zones

- SGS8 Tourism Strategy
- TOU2 Tourism Development in Settlements and Tourism Opportunity Zones

SGS8 designates Tourism Opportunity Zones (TOZs) at Carnfunnock Country Park and the former Magheramorne Quarry. The general location of these is shown (see District Proposals Maps) however the extent of both TOZs has yet to be determined and boundaries are not delineated. These enable development adjacent to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA that may cause habitat loss or disturbance to site features.

TOU2 indicates that key site requirements for TOZs may be drawn up at LPP. TOU2 reads as:

'A proposal for tourism development (including a tourist amenity or tourist accommodation) will be permitted ...where it is of high quality design, meets the General Policy, accords with other provisions of the LDP...'

'This policy will also apply within the designated Tourism Opportunity Zones at Carnfunnock Country Park and at the former Magheramorne Quarry, subject to meeting any key site requirements that may be introduced at Local Policies Plan stage.'

Carnfunnock Country Park TOZ

The extent of the Carnfunnock Country Park TOZ has not yet been determined however the Council has outlined its ideas for future development of the park. The Carnfunnock Development Plan report⁵ identifies development potential at Carnfunnock Bay:

'One of Carnfunnock's main assets currently underutilised is Carnfunnock Bay; this amenity and water-sporting potential is ready to be embraced by the country park and local community groups for future growth.'

The Carnfunnock Country Park Masterplan⁶ identifies potential at 17 to:

'improve connections between Carnfunnock Country Park and the slipway and amenity areas within Carnfunnock Bay'.

Carnfunnock Bay is within the East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA and connected to mobile features of The Maidens SAC, therefore significant effects from future development at this location cannot be ruled out. The Carnfunnock Development Plan report has not identified the SPA or SAC in its assessment of environmental designations.

⁵ www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/downloads/CCP - DEVELOPMENT PLAN REPORT FINAL DRAFT OCT 2017.pdf

⁶ www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/downloads/CCP - MASTER PLAN PANEL FINAL DRAFT OCT 2017.pdf

Magheramorne Quarry

Parts of the former Magheramorne Quarry site are within the boundary of Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar site and the East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA is immediately adjacent therefore significant effects from future development at this location cannot be ruled out. The extent of the TOZ has not yet been determined.

The planning history for the former Magheramorne Quarry is provided by way of background. The site lies on the western side of Larne Lough to the south of Glynn outside any settlement development limit and includes the former quarry to the south of the Larne/Belfast Road and a peninsula of reclaimed land adjacent to Larne Lough to the north of the Larne/Belfast Road. The Larne to Belfast railway line dissects the site. In addition, the site is bounded by Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar site. Quarrying at Magheramorne ended in 1980 and the works closed in 2001. Magheramorne Quarry is now widely recognised for its role as a filming location for Game of Thrones. The

An outline planning application F/2006/0131/O was approved in 2009 for the regeneration of the former Magheramorne works and Quarry - Incorporating a 'Mixed use Harbour Village', consisting of:

- 450 no. Dwellings
- Tourist Information Centre
- Public House
- Restaurants
- Retail Units
- Community Centre
- Hotel
- Harbourside Tourist Point with Viewing Tower
- Boating Facilities and Chandlery
- Heritage Railway and Visitor Centre
- Events Area
- Ecology/Art park
- Bird Watching and Interpretation Centre
- Film Studios and Back Lot
- Cycling Centre, (consisting of an Arena, Holiday Cabins, Sports Hotel, Service Complex including Café and Restaurant)
- Diving Centre
- Industrial Archaeology Park
- Visitor Accommodation/Facilities and Associated Infrastructure.

The building of houses is conditional on building other elements first. The harbour development and some of the recreation/tourism elements will increase recreation within Larne Lough and in marine areas beyond it. The outline planning permission was subject to HRA in 2008, however reserved matter applications will be also subject to HRA.

The HRA found for Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar site and Swan Island SPA (now in Larne Lough SPA):

'However, the proposal has the potential to impact upon the site selection features of the n2kn2k site through disturbance, pollution, changes in nutrient levels arising from sewage and run-off, sediment disturbance and habitat loss. The proposal has the potential to impact upon these features both during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.'

The HRA concluded that:

'The proposed development is unlikely to negatively impact upon the site selection features of Larne Lough ASSI/SPA provided that the following conditions are met:

1. *ALL mitigation measures set out in the Environmental statement Addendum (Chapter 2, Tables 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8) should be imposed as planning conditions.*

2. *A consent to discharge must be obtained from NIEA-WMU for the disposal of waste water and sewage and the conditions of this consent must be strictly adhered to.'*

One reserved matters application F/2013/0091/RM was approved in April 2016 for the cycling centre and 17km of downhill and cross country trails, skills area, finish arena, uplift track, car and coach parking and viewing platforms, elements that are within the quarry and not immediately adjacent to Larne Lough. That application was subject to HRA which found that there would be no a significant effect on any international site.

Whilst outline planning approval has been granted, development has not yet commenced and, in the meantime case law and policy has moved on. The HRA which was completed at the time relied on the use of mitigation measures to conclude no likely significant effects which is now contrary to current case law and policy. Furthermore the HRA was unable to undertake a full and thorough assessment in respect of the disposal of wastewater. With reference to the guidance on competent authority co-ordination therefore (refer to Appendix 2) it is not appropriate to 'adopt' the conclusion of the earlier HRA for the purpose of the HRA of the current land use plan. This is on the grounds that material information has since emerged which means that the reasoning and conclusions of the earlier assessment have since become 'out of date'. There are therefore extant permissions however HRA will be required for any reserved matters application.

SGS8 and Policy TOU2 may therefore enable development at Carnfunnock Bay or the former Magheramorne Quarry that could cause habitat damage or disturbance to site selection features. The J&A in 7.3.11 states that *'Within these Tourism Opportunity Zones, tourism development should be sustainable, environmentally sensitive and of high quality design. Proposals within Carnfunnock Country Park should be sensitive to its coastal location and historic and natural features and also comply with Policy HE2 Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes. Development at the former Magheramorne Quarry should protect the rich biodiversity and habitats within and adjacent to the site.'*

It is recommended that the policies are amended as follows:

SGS8 Add new paragraph: '5.6.12 European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for tourism to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats, or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Such potential effects will be considered through subject policies TOU3 and NAT1 and will inform any key site requirements for Tourism Opportunity Zones.'

This highlights at the strategic stage that there are potential effects on international sites which must be considered and if necessary assessed at the project level. It also ensures that international sites will be a consideration in developing any key site requirements at LPP.

TOU2: Add to policy box: '...subject to meeting Policy NAT1 and any key site requirements...'

This highlights that TOU2, which has a likely significant effect, must specifically consider international sites. Development must demonstrate compliance with NAT1 in order to be supported by this policy.

TOU2 Add new paragraph to the J&A: 7.3.12 'Carnfunnock Country Park is adjacent to East Coast (NI) Marine proposed SPA and the former Magheramorne Quarry is adjacent to Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar site. There is potential for tourism development to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats, or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure on these sites or other marine European Designated Sites. Therefore, any tourism development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.'

This details the potential effects and sites that may be affected therefore expanding on the revised policy.

East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA is not currently shown on the District Proposals Maps. It is therefore recommended that the site should be included on the finalised maps.

District Proposals Maps: Include East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (proposed) on the District Proposals Maps in the adopted Plan Strategy.

This will ensure that the relationship of this designation relative to the plan area is clearly understood.

Vulnerable Areas, Wider Impacts of Tourism

- SGS8 Tourism Strategy
- TOU3 All Tourism Development in the Countryside
- TOU4 Tourist Amenities in the Countryside
- TOU5 Hotels, Guest Houses and Tourist Hostels in the Countryside
- TOU6 Self Catering Accommodation in the Countryside
- TOU7 New and Extended Holiday Parks in the Countryside
- TOU8 Major Tourism Development in the Countryside – Exceptional Circumstances

The Tourism Strategy SGS8 is supported by Table 5.7 which includes Ramsar sites and SPAs/SACs in the 'Vulnerable' category and states '*Tourism Development should not be approved within the majority of their extent.*' Therefore it does not exclude development in international sites. The recommendation above for SGS8 will also address potential development in 'Vulnerable' categories.

SGS8 Add new paragraph: '5.6.12 European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for tourism to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats, or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Such potential effects will be considered through subject policies TOU3 and NAT1 and will inform any key site requirements for Tourism Opportunity Zones.'

This highlights at the strategic stage that there are potential effects on international sites which must be considered and, if necessary, assessed at the project level.

There is also reference in TOU3 to Table 5.7 and to vulnerable areas, which include international sites. It does state in the policy that '*a proposal for tourism development will only be permitted where it meets the exceptions or circumstances specified in the LDP policy for the particular designation.*' It is therefore referring to NAT1 indirectly, however there remains a potential internal conflict between NAT1 and SGS8/TOU3. TOU3 as an overarching policy also applies to policies TOU4 to TOU8.

TOU3 Add to policy box b): '*...other provisions of the LDP including Policy NAT1*'.

This highlights that compliance with NAT1 is conditional for any development coming forwards under this policy and the policies to which it applies.

TOU3 add new paragraph to the J&A: '7. 3.15 European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for tourism to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Therefore, any tourism development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.'

This details the potential effects and sites that may be affected thereby expanding on the revised policy.

Minerals Development

- MIN1 Mineral Development – Extraction and Processing of Hard Rock and Aggregates
- MIN2 Valuable Minerals
- MIN3 Hydrocarbons

- MIN4 Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development

MIN1 is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of minerals development proposals. It requires that council must be satisfied that the proposal will not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon any of the following interests: a) The natural environment, including the conservation of flora and fauna, natural habitats, biodiversity and earth science features; b) the water environment, including water quality and natural flow regimes. All proposals must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. MIN1 applies directly to MIN2, MIN 4 and MIN8 and indirectly to MIN3.

MIN1 indicates a presumption against extraction and processing of hard rock and aggregates in Special Countryside Areas (SCAs) and Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (ACMDs), unless the proposal constitutes an 'exception' as specified in the policy for the particular designation. SCAs and ACMDs incorporate parts of some international sites, e.g. Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar site is all within an ACMD and the part of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site within our Borough is in the Lough Beg SCA. There however remain substantial areas of international sites that are not within these designations.

The nature and scale of development that may be brought forward under MIN1 or the other policies to which it applies is unknown. It is therefore important that there is no ambiguity in MIN1 about the protection afforded to international sites through NAT1. The J&A refers to the need for HRA where there could be a hydrological impact however it does not refer to other impacts such as habitat loss or disturbance. This might lead to other potential impacts being overlooked and an internal conflict with policy NAT1.

MIN2 implies that exploitation of valuable minerals may be permitted outside SCAs. It is subject to MIN1 however the limited reference to potential impacts on international sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1.

MIN3 implies that exploitation of hydrocarbons through conventional methods of extractions may be permitted subject to compliance with MIN2. MIN3 also states that Council will apply a presumption against unconventional extraction of hydrocarbons and gases by methods such as hydraulic fracturing ('fracking'), until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. This policy implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted. MIN3 is subject to MIN2 which is subject to MIN1 however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1.

MIN4 implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside ACMDs, and for minor exceptions within ACMDs. Current ACMDs include part of Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar site and Antrim Hills SPA. This policy is subject to MIN1, however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1.

It is recommended that MIN1 is amended as follows:

MIN1 Add to policy box b): '...other provisions of the LDP including Policy NAT1'

Amend J&A 7.4.14 by removing the word 'hydrologically' and replacing the phrase 'requires an assessment' as follows: '*Any minerals development that could impact ~~hydrologically~~ on a European Designated Site ~~requires an assessment~~ must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.*'

These amendments will strengthen MIN1 and also afford protection to international sites through MIN2 and MIN4.

It is also recommended that MIN3 is amended.

Amend MIN3 as follows: *'Proposals for exploitation of hydrocarbons through conventional or unconventional methods of extraction must comply with ~~Policy~~ Policies MIN1 and MIN2.'*

This provides greater clarity by providing a direct reference, for all hydrocarbon extraction, to MIN1, which in turn refers to NAT1.

Sport and Outdoor Recreation

- OSL5 Sport and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

This applies to all sport and outdoor recreation development and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. There are six references to meeting the General Policy and generally all proposals must also accord with other provisions of the LDP, and also meet the policies relating to noise, floodlighting and water sports.

The scale or spatial extent of development that could be brought forward though this policy is unknown therefore potential adverse effects on international sites cannot be excluded. Such effects could be as a result of direct habitat loss or disturbance or through indirect effects, for example by increasing recreational pressure in an international site or supporting habitat and could be cumulative through the in combination effects of several projects. It is therefore considered that the potential for and need to assess effects on international sites should be highlighted in the policy and the J&A.

Amend OSL5 Sport and Outdoor Recreation in Settlements; and Sport and Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside by adding reference to Policy NAT1 in two places as follows: *'...where they meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP, including Policy NAT1 and the policy text below relating to noise, floodlighting and water sports.*

Amend OSL5 Intensive Sports Facilities; Noise Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities; Development of Facilities ancillary to Water Sports by adding reference to Policy NAT1 in three places as follows: *'...accord with other provisions of the LDP, including Policy NAT1, and where ...'*

Amend OSL5 The Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities by adding reference to Policy NAT1 in one place as follows: *'...where the General Policy ~~is~~ and Policy NAT1 are met.*

These amendments highlights that NAT1 will be an important consideration for all development under this policy.

The J&A acknowledges, e.g. at 8.2.26 and 8.2.34, that development brought forward under OSL5 needs to be balanced with environmental considerations and that cumulative effects of intensification need to be considered.

OSL5 add a paragraph to the beginning of the J&A as follows: *'European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for sport and outdoor recreation to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Therefore, any sport and outdoor recreation development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.'*

This details the potential effects and sites that may be affected thereby expanding on the revised policy.

Transport Infrastructure

- TR7 Provision of Car Parks

TR7 is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It allows for provision of Park & Ride or Park & Share facilities which can include large and busy car parks developed on the edge of settlements. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically impact upon

international sites, for example through greenfield development adjacent to an international site. It does not refer to the General Policy or other provisions. There will be a limited number of such projects so in practice it is unlikely that the extent of development under this policy will lead to a likely significant effect however the possibility cannot be ruled out.

Amend TR7 as follows: ‘A development proposal for a new, or an extension of an existing public or private car park, including Park & Ride or Park & Share, will be permitted where it meets the General Policy and accords with other provisions in the LDP and where the applicant has demonstrated that all the following criteria are met...’

This ensures that other provisions, including NAT1, will apply to this policy.

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
Tourism Opportunity Zones SGS8, TOU2	<p>SGS8 Add new paragraph: ‘5.6.12 <i>European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for tourism to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats, or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Such potential effects will be considered through subject policies TOU3 and NAT1 and will inform any key site requirements for Tourism Opportunity Zones.</i>’</p> <p>TOU2: Add to policy box: ‘...subject to meeting Policy NAT1 and any key site requirements...’</p> <p>TOU2 Add new paragraph to the J&A: 7.3.12 ‘<i>Carnfunnock Country Park is adjacent to East Coast (NI) Marine proposed SPA and the former Magheramorne Quarry is adjacent to Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar site. There is potential for tourism development to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats, or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure on these sites or other marine European Designated Sites. Therefore, any tourism development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.</i>’</p> <p>District Proposals Map: Include East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (proposed) on the District Proposals Maps in the adopted Plan Strategy.</p>	<p>With the amended wording the Strategic Growth Strategy and Strategic Subject Policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international site. The specific reference to ‘European Designated Sites’ in SGS8 and the J&A for TOU2, the reference to Policy NAT1 in TOU2 and the illustration of East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (proposed) on the District Proposals Maps will avoid internal conflict within the plan and Policy NAT1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.</p>

Policy	Recommended mitigation measures	Integrity test conclusion
<p>Vulnerable Areas, Wider Recreational Impacts of Tourism</p> <p>SGS8, TOU3, TOU4, TOU5, TOU6, TOU7, TOU8</p>	<p>SGS8 Add new paragraph: ‘5.6.12 <i>European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for tourism to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats, or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Such potential effects will be considered through subject policies TOU3 and NAT1 and will inform any key site requirements for Tourism Opportunity Zones.</i></p> <p>TOU3 Add to policy box b): ‘...other provisions of the <u>LDP including Policy NAT1</u>’.</p> <p>TOU3 add new paragraph to the J&A: ‘7. 3.15 <i>European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for tourism to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Therefore, any tourism development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.</i></p>	<p>With the amended wording the Strategic Growth Strategy and Strategic Subject Policies cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international site. TOU3 applies to TOU4, TOU5, TOU6, TOU7 and TOU8, therefore by strengthening TOU3 the following policies are also strengthened and do not need further amendment. The specific reference to ‘European Designated Sites’ in SGS8 and the J&A for TOU3 and the reference to Policy NAT1 in TOU3 will avoid internal conflict within the plan and Policy NAT1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.</p>
<p>Minerals Development</p> <p>MIN1, MIN2, MIN3, MIN4</p>	<p>MIN1 Add to policy box b): ‘...other provisions of the <u>LDP including Policy NAT1</u>’</p> <p>Amend J&A 7.4.14 by removing the word ‘hydrologically’ and replacing the phrase ‘requires an assessment’ as follows: ‘Any minerals development that could impact hydrologically on a European Designated Site requires an assessment must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.’</p> <p>Amend MIN3 as follows: ‘Proposals for exploitation of hydrocarbons through conventional <u>or unconventional</u> methods of extraction must comply with Policy <u>Policies MIN1 and MIN2.</u>’</p>	<p>The specific reference to Policy NAT1 in MIN1 means that the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international site. The amendment to the J&A ensures that all potential impacts will be considered. The amendment to MIN3 will ensure that development under that policy must also take account of MIN1. Together these amendments will avoid internal conflict within the plan and Policy NAT1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.</p>

Policy	Recommended mitigation measures	Integrity test conclusion
Sport and Outdoor Recreation OSL5	<p>Amend OSL5 Sport and Outdoor Recreation in Settlements; and Sport and Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside by adding reference to Policy NAT1 in two places as follows: <i>'...where they meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP, including <u>Policy NAT1</u> and the policy text below relating to noise, floodlighting and water sports.</i></p> <p>Amend OSL5 Intensive Sports Facilities; Noise Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities; Development of Facilities ancillary to Water Sports by adding reference to Policy NAT1 in three places as follows: <i>'...accord with other provisions of the LDP, including <u>Policy NAT1</u>, and where ...'</i></p> <p>Amend OSL5 The Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities by adding reference to Policy NAT1 in one place as follows: <i>'...where the General Policy is and <u>Policy NAT1</u> are met.'</i></p> <p>OSL5 add a paragraph to the beginning of the J&A as follows: <i>'European Designated Sites extend along much of our coastline, through the Antrim Hills and Garron Plateau, Main Valley and around Lough Beg. There is potential for sport and outdoor recreation to have a direct adverse effect on these sites and supporting habitats or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure. Therefore, any sport and outdoor recreation development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.'</i></p>	<p>With the amended wording the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international site. The specific reference to 'European Designated Sites' in the J&A will avoid internal conflict within the plan and Policy NAT1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.</p>
Transport Infrastructure TR7	<p>Amend TR7 as follows: <i>'A development proposal for a new, or an extension of an existing public or private car park, including Park & Ride or Park & Share, will be permitted <u>where it meets the General Policy and accords with other provisions in the LDP and where the applicant has demonstrated that all the following criteria are met...</u></i></p>	<p>With the amended wording the policy cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international site. The specific reference in the policy to 'other provisions in the LDP' will avoid internal conflict within the plan and Policy NAT1 can then be relied upon to ensure that the policy will have no adverse effect on the integrity of any international site.</p>

Consideration of in combination effects

The proposed development at Magheramorne quarry is significant and it is reasonable at this stage to undertake a preliminary search for any other strategic plans or policies which are known to be relevant across the plan period and which might reasonably act in combination. No plans that have an influence on recreation were located. There are plans relating to water quality. A Pollution Reduction Programme for Larne Lough, May 2015; a North Eastern River Basin Management Plan 2015 – 2021, December 2015; Larne Lough Local Management Area Action Plan, March 2013 were all published by the Department for the Environment. These all detail local measures identified to improve the water environment. The conservation objectives for Larne Lough SPA identify that alteration of habitat quality through diminution of water quality is an issue and has the potential to alter inter-tidal habitat. Therefore the above plans all will support the conservation objectives and will not have an adverse effect on site integrity. No further assessment in combination is necessary.

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 NAT1 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 any future planning applications. Policy NAT1 is explicit that development proposals will be subject to appropriate assessment where they are 'likely to have a significant effect (either alone or in combination)'. Policy NAT1 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 no risk of a residual effect at this 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 the HRA Handbook Principle 6, reliance on Policy NAT1 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.

6 Conclusions

Outcome of HRA

Step 8: Preparing a draft of the HRA Record

The Local Development Plan 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 from the document, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Following the initial screening exercise, 14 policies were identified as having a likely significant effect. Mitigation measures, in the form of suggested case-specific policy restrictions or 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 the HRA will be finalised and adopted by the Council and published alongside the adopted LPP.

Abbreviations

APIS	Air Pollution Information System
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CMS	Construction Method Statement
DAERA	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
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
LPP	Local Policies Plan
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NA	Not Applicable
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
POP	Preferred Options Paper
pSPA	Proposed Special Protection Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SES	Shared Environmental Service
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems

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)	Area classified under Article 4 of the EU Birds Directive 1979 and 2009.
The Directives	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:

Air Pollution Information System (APIS), Centre for Ecology and Hydrology <http://www.apis.ac.uk/> (Accessed September 2019)

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 September 2019)

Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, (2013) *Belfast Metropolitan Plan 2015 Habitats 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 June 2019)

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)

Spatial NI (2017) Data Layers for Local Government boundaries (Online) Available at <https://www.spatialni.gov.uk/> (Accessed September 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 Handbook⁷ (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 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 and any amendments. 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.

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

⁷ Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) *The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook*, February 2019 edition UK: DTA Publications Ltd.

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 LDP 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 ruled⁸ 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 UK⁹ detailed in F.10.1.5.

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

Feeney¹⁰ (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.'

⁸ Refer para 55 in EC v UK Case C-6/04 (2005)

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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

Boggis¹¹ 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
- 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
- However reliance should not simply be placed on a general international site protection policy.
- Reliance on a general international site safeguard policy 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)¹² 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 the 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 (Step 7) is therefore to seek to incorporate mitigation measures which might be relied upon to avoid any adverse effects to the integrity of the

¹¹ 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

¹² 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 Council¹³ 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)¹⁴ 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 DEFRA published guidance¹⁵

¹³ 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

¹⁴ Abbotskerswell Parish Council v Teignbridge District Council [2014] EWHC 4166 (Admin)

¹⁵ [Defra guidance on competent authority co-ordination](#), July 2012

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 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.

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.

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.

Analysis of the information collated in steps 1 to 3 enables steps 4, discretionary discussion with the statutory nature conservation body, and 5, screening for likely significant effects on the selection features of international sites, to be carried out.

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.

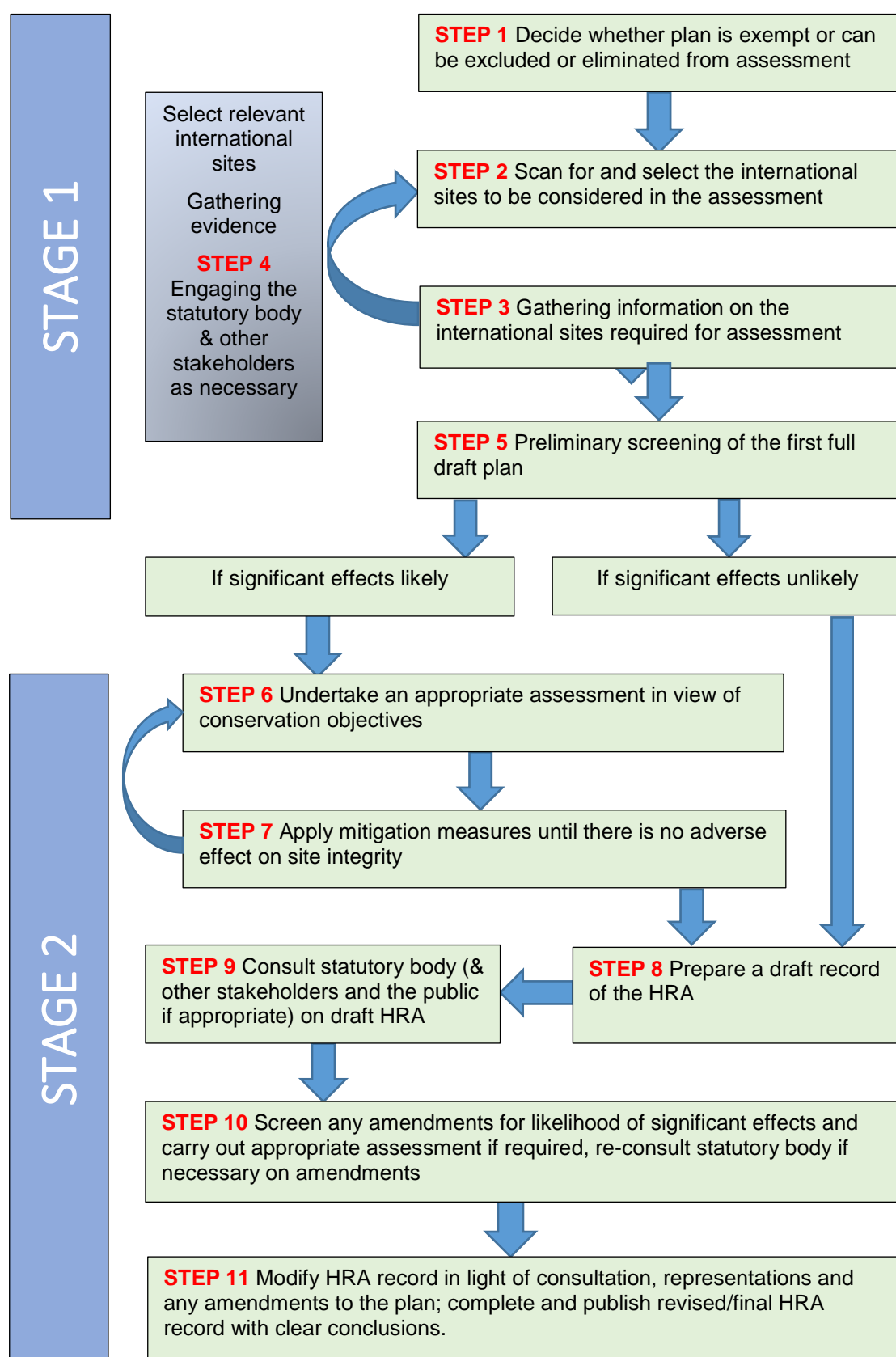
- Is the whole of the plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of an international site for nature conservation purposes?
- Is the plan a strategic development plan, local development plan, supplementary guidance?
- Is the plan a general statement of policy showing only the general 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.

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 theoretically 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 2 is compiled to include the designation status, qualifying features, conservation objectives, conservation status and condition of features. Available information on factors currently affecting international sites and vulnerabilities to potential effects of the plan may be included. 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 consideration.

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

This step is detailed in the HRA Handbook F6 Part A, and F7 advises how the outcome should be recorded. The screening of the whole plan is presented in Appendix 5 and the outcome summarised in Section 3 of the HRA. The HRA Handbook also presents principles, with reference to case law and government guidance, which inform screening and the meaning 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 therefore 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’. This 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.

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 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 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 on the LPP. The site information is grouped as follows.

Antrim Hills SPA	Antrim Hills SPA
Belfast Lough & Associated SPAs and Ramsar Sites	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
	Belfast Lough Ramsar Site
	Belfast Lough SPA
	Copeland Islands SPA
	East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA
	Outer Ards Ramsar Site
	Outer Ards SPA
Garron Plateau SAC & Ramsar Site	Garron Plateau Ramsar Site
	Garron Plateau SAC
Larne Lough SPA & Ramsar Site	Larne Lough Ramsar Site
	Larne Lough SPA
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA & Ramsar Site	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site
	Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
Main Valley Bogs SAC	Main Valley Bogs SAC
Dead Island Bog SAC	Dead Island Bog SAC
Wolf Island Bog SAC	Wolf Island Bog SAC
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC	Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
Red Bay SAC	Red Bay SAC
The Maidens SAC	The Maidens SAC
North Channel SAC & Skerries and Causeway SAC for (Harbour Porpoise)	North Channel SAC
	Skerries and Causeway 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 Viewer¹⁶ or downloaded from its digital datasets web page¹⁷. Maps are also provided in Appendix 4 to illustrate the relationship with the plan area. 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 Sites¹⁸. 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 page¹⁹. On each site page the link to guidance and literature allows the Reasons for designation, Conservation Objectives and site map to be accessed.

¹⁶ DAERA (2018) 'Natural Environment Map Viewer' Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/natural-environment-map-viewer>

¹⁷ DAERA (2018) 'Download Digital Datasets' Available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/download-digital-datasets> (accessed 23/01/2019).

¹⁸ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1458>

¹⁹ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/protected-areas>

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 hen harrier.

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

Taking account of in the information gathered in this Appendix 3 and the 'long-list' of sites identified in Section 2, 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 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	Antrim Hills SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Garron Plateau Ramsar Site Garron Plateau SAC Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Main Valley Bogs SAC
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 Belfast Lough SPA Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
	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	Antrim Hills SPA Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Garron Plateau Ramsar Site Garron Plateau SAC Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Main Valley Bogs SAC The Maidens SAC
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 Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA The Maidens SAC
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	Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA The Maidens SAC
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	Antrim Hills SPA Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA The Maidens 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	Antrim Hills SPA Belfast Lough Open Water SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Garron Plateau Ramsar Site Garron Plateau SAC Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Main Valley Bogs SAC The Maidens SAC

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
6. cont. Plans that could increase recreational pressure on international sites potentially vulnerable or sensitive to such pressure	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	Antrim Hills SPA Garron Plateau Ramsar Site Garron Plateau SAC Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
	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 Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
	Sites that could be affected by the provision of new or extended transport or other infrastructure	None
	Sites that could be affected by increased deposition of air pollutants arising from the proposals, including emissions from significant increases in traffic	Antrim Hills SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA Garron Plateau Ramsar Site Garron Plateau SAC Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Main Valley Bogs SAC

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
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	Antrim Hills SPA Belfast Lough Ramsar Belfast Lough SPA Garron Plateau Ramsar Site Garron Plateau SAC Larne Lough Ramsar Larne Lough SPA Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA Main Valley Bogs SAC Dead Island Bog SAC Wolf Island Bog 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
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

Types of plan	Sites to scan for and check	Names of sites selected
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
North Channel SAC	The site selection feature for which there is a theoretical pathway is harbour porpoise. The species could be impacted by disturbance however it is not conceivable that the plan would generate additional development to an extent that it could undermine the conservation objectives for this site.
Skerries and Causeway	
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.
Copeland Islands SPA	
Outer Ards Ramsar Site	
Outer Ards SPA	
Red Bay SAC	

Antrim Hills SPA

Site Name:	Antrim Hills SPA	Site Code:	UK0016606
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	27,092.69 ha
Year:	2006		
ASSIs:	Breen Wood ASSI/SAC, Cleggan Valley ASSI, Garron Plateau ASSI/SAC, Glenariff ASSI and Tievebullagh ASSI Antrim Hills SPA Conservation Objectives V3.0, 01/04/2015		
References & Evidence:	Antrim Hills SPA Conservation Objectives V3.0, 01/04/2015 Updated information on Hen Harrier breeding locations can be sought from the NI Raptor Study Group.		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 2		

Summary Site Description

The Antrim Hills site comprises two land units: the northern, larger section extends between Carnanmore and Soarne's Hill, including Ballypatrick Forest, Slieveanorra Forest, Breen Wood and Glenariff/Cleggan Forest, mainly including land above the 220m contour the southern section comprises the area bounded by Capanagh, Ballyboley and Douglas Top. Both sections are delimited principally by physical boundaries closest to merged radii extending 2.5km from nest sites used by hen harriers between 1997 and 2004.

The site encompasses all lands within these boundaries, excluding wholly-improved pasture, arable land, buildings and associated lands. It includes coniferous plantations, blanket bog, wet and dry heath, grass moor, scrub, inland cliff and limited semi-improved agricultural grassland. The principal interests are the breeding populations of hen harrier and merlin.

All Hen Harrier nesting areas in the Antrim Hills used since 1997 are incorporated within the SPA. In order to provide adequate foraging areas, the boundary is based on a foraging radius of 2.5km around all confirmed and probable nest sites recorded in 1997, 1998 and 2004. The Hen Harrier-based boundary of the Antrim Hills SPA is also considered to provide adequate nesting and foraging habitat for Merlin. The SPA area does not include all lands used by foraging Hen Harrier (or possibly Merlin) during the breeding season. Foraging ranges of individual birds are known to exceed 10km. The boundary rationale and management considerations are detailed further in the Conservation Objectives. This SPA partially overlaps with Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar site.

Selection Features

Note habitat is not a selection feature however, it is considered as the selection features are dependent on it.

Feature Type (i.e. habitat or species)	Feature	Population at time of designation (SPA)	SPA Review population
Species	Hen Harrier breeding population	25 pairs	No data
Species	Merlin breeding population	8 pairs	No data
Habitat	Habitat extent		
Habitat	Habitat quality		

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:

- Hen Harrier breeding population and Merlin breeding population
 1. Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Development in the SPA or supporting habitat beyond it could lead to deterioration or loss of breeding or foraging habitat for hen harrier and merlin. Development on or beyond the site that promotes recreation could result in disturbance. Potential nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture could cause degradation or loss of habitat. Wind energy development outside of the SPA, for example between the two sections of the SPA, would have potential to cause damage to supporting habitat or to increase the risk of mortality through collision.

Evidence suggests Hen Harrier and Merlin favour managed forest within the site for nesting therefore the importance of forested areas for nesting birds cannot be underestimated. Selection of routes for public access must take the needs of breeding birds into account.

Condition assessment

Species	1998	2004	2010	CSM	5 yr mean	% CSM	Status
Hen Harrier	17	25	17	17	17	100	Favourable

Species	1998-1991	2000-2005	2008	2010	CSM	5 yr mean	% CSM	Status
Merlin	6-7	8	8	7	6	7.5	125	Favourable

Connectivity with the plan area

The SPA is partially within the Council area. The southern section is entirely within the Council area. The northern section extends into Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

Part of the northern section of the SPA is within Knockdhu, Sallagh Braes, Scawt Hill to Glenarm Headland Area of Constraint on High Structures (CS3) and within an Area of Constraint on mineral Development (MIN4). Part of the southern section of the SPA is within Slemish Area of Constraint on High Structures (CS3), Slemish Mountain Special Countryside Area (CS2) and two Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (MIN4). A section of the proposed regional greenway (SGS9) from Ballymena to Cushendall passes through the SPA along the route of a disused railway line, a distance of approximately 1.5km.

Belfast Lough and Associated SPAs and Ramsar Sites

Seven 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 (Larne Lough is considered separately).

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:	Copeland Islands SPA	Site Code:	UK9020291
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	201.20 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 .		

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

Copeland Islands SPA

The Copeland Islands site comprises three islands (Copeland Island, Light House Island and Mew Island), together with associated islets, off the north-east County Down coast and close to the entrance to Belfast Lough.

During the breeding season the area regularly supports:

- Arctic tern (Arctic - breeding/Southern Oceans - wintering) 22.6% of the population in Ireland 5-year mean
- Manx shearwater 1.7% of the World population Total survey 2000-2002

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	Copeland Islands SPA
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		Y
Sandwich tern	B				Y			
Manx Shearwater	B				Y			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	Copeland Islands SPA
Conservation Objectives Version	V3	V2	V1 (Draft)	V4	V2
Date (month-year)	04-15	04-15	04-15	04-15	04-15
To maintain each feature in favourable condition.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population				Y	Y
To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained;	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Population of the species as a viable component of the site	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Distribution of the species within site	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
No significant decrease in population against national trends (Manx Shearwater and Arctic Tern)					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	Y
Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes	Y	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
Site	Species	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	CSM	5yr mean	%CSM	Status
Copeland Islands SPA	Arctic Tern (B)	1050	None	None	none	1025	556	1037.5	186.60	Favourable
	Manx Shearwater (B)	None	5994	5506	6209	None	4800	5903	122.98	Favourable

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

All data from 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)²⁰.’*

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 Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site could lead to direct or indirect damage to habitat through impacts on habitat within the sites or in supporting habitat or on coastal processes. Development which significantly increases recreational activity on or adjacent to Belfast Lough, or supporting habitat for SPA/Ramsar site features could lead to disturbance.

Connectivity with the plan area

Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar Site

Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site share the same boundary and the Council area is either adjacent to or slightly overlaps these international sites. They include the intertidal area and there may also be roost sites occurring outside the designated site. The Borough’s coast extends along Belfast Lough between Greenisland and Whitehead. This area is designated in the dPS as CS6 Developed Coast (Belfast Lough Shore).

²⁰ 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>.

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

East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA is adjacent to almost the whole of the plan area coastline from Ringfad near Carnlough in the north to the marine area of Larne Lough, the marine area of Belfast Lough and waters around the Copeland Islands. It is intended to subsume Belfast Lough Open Water SPA. It also adjoins all of the other SPAs and Ramsar sites above. A number of marine areas have been identified as important for a range of foraging tern species originating from adjoining tern colonies designated as part of the following existing Special Protection Areas: Larne Lough SPA, Outer Ards SPA, Copeland Islands SPA. All of the above marine areas overlap to a greater or lesser extent and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA boundary subsumes all of these.

Outer Ards SPA/Ramsar site

Ringed plover, golden plover and turnstone are waders recorded as wintering in Outer Ards SPA. Their wintering area is east of Bangor and well away from sources of disturbance from the plan area. Any increase in disturbance from the draft Plan Strategy will have a de minimis effect on these species.

A number of designations on the coast are identified in the draft Plan Strategy as follows: Larne Coast Special Countryside Area, Gobbins Coast Special Countryside Area (CS2), Islandmagee East, Whitehead and Carrick Escarpment Areas of Constraint on High Structures (CS3), Rural Landscape Wedges (CS4) between Greenisland and Carrickfergus and between Greenisland and Jordanstown and Developed Coast (Belfast Lough Shore) (CS6). An Area of Salt Reserve has been designated east of Carrickfergus and to the North of Kilroot (MIN5). The settlements of Greenisland, Carrickfergus, Whitehead and Larne all adjoin the Marine area. Two Tourism Opportunity Zones have been identified at Carnfunnock Country Park and Magheramourne Quarry.

Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar

Site Name:	Garron Plateau SAC	Site Code:	UK0016606
Status:	Classified Special Area of Conservation	Area:	4652.18 ha
Year:	2005		
Site Name:	Garron Plateau Ramsar	Site Code:	UK12010
Status:	Designated Ramsar Site	Area:	4650.0 ha
Year:	1998		
ASSIs:	Garron Plateau ASSI		
References & Evidence	Garron Plateau SAC Conservation Objectives V2.1 12/10/2017 Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands JNCC: Version 3.0, 13/06/2008		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3&4		

Summary Site Description

The Garron Plateau is a basaltic headland area undulating to a maximum height of 440 m but generally lying between 330 and 380 m with scarps to Glenariff Glen and the Antrim coast and a gentler descent inland. The Upper Basalts predominate with limited exposure of the Lower Basalts. Notable features include flow-banded porphyritic lava's at Trosk. The blanket bog, which covers much of the plateau, is the largest intact bog in Northern Ireland. Peat depth is variable and consequently the peatland structure is highly diverse with hummock, lawn and pool complexes on the deepest peats grading into large expanses of blanketing peats on low gradients to heathland communities on the steepest and more exposed slopes. Several lakes, on site have characteristically nutrient poor waters with some conforming to EU 'Habitats Directive' Annex I types. Elsewhere locally mineral enriched flushing provides the alkaline fens priority habitat, and in hollows on the wetter more level parts of the blanket bog, the influence of mineral rich water provides the transition mires and quaking bog systems that are also listed in Annex I. The bog is well known for rare plant species from various represented habitats, including the Annex II Marsh saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* from a linear flush.

The Ramsar site boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Garron Plateau Special Area of Conservation. The site qualifies under criterion 1a of the Ramsar Convention by being a particularly good representative example of a wetland complex including blanket bog base-rich flushes and upland lakes. The site also qualifies under criterion 2a of the Ramsar Convention by supporting an appreciable assemblage of rare, vulnerable or endangered species. The Garron Plateau SAC boundary partially overlaps with the Antrim Hills SPA boundary.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Active Blanket Bog	B	3274 ha
Habitat	Alkaline Fen (upland)	B	estimated 5 ha
Species	Marsh saxifrage <i>Saxifraga hirculus</i> L	B	1 small colony
Habitat	Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing water with vegetation belonging to <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>IsoetNanojuncetea</i>	C	at least 2 lakes*
Habitat	Northern Atlantic wet heath	C	372 ha
Habitat	Natural dystrophic lakes and pools	C	1>1ha lake, 4< 1 ha, numerous pools total est. 15.3 ha
Habitat	Transition mires and quaking bogs	C	Estimated 23 ha

*40.7 ha reported on the Natura 2000 form is probably an overestimate

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

- To maintain (or restore where appropriate) each feature to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature objective requirements are:

Active Blanket Bog

- 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 associated with the blanket bog, 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.

Alkaline fen (upland)

- Identify the main areas of upland alkaline fen, describe and delineate them with more precision.
- Maintain the extent of existing alkaline fen.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of different alkaline fen habitat.
- Maintain and enhance fen species diversity including the presence of notable or rare species, within each type.
- Maintain the diversity and quality of associated habitats.
- Absence of erosion features associated with human impacts, and no exacerbation of natural erosion features.

Marsh saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* L

- Expand the existing population of Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus*.
- Seek nature conservation management over suitable areas within the SAC where there is possibility of restoring Marsh Saxifrage. (There is crossover here with the BAP for this species).

Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing water with vegetation belonging to *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*

- Open water area and water level regime to remain stable.
- The lake water to remain poor in plant nutrients and not to fluctuate outside normal limits.
- Characteristic aquatic vegetation to remain present.
- Minimal negative impacts from artificial structures.
- Minimal negative impacts from recreation.

Northern Atlantic wet heath

- 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 the 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.

Natural dystrophic lakes and pools

- Maintain the open water area of ponds and lakes.
- Maintain the extent of pool complexes and the numbers of pools within.
- The lake water to remain poor in plant nutrients and not to fluctuate outside normal limits.
- Characteristic aquatic vegetation to remain present.
- Minimal negative impacts from artificial structures. Minimal negative impacts from recreation.
- Identify the main areas of transition mires and quaking bog and describe and delineate them with more precision.

Transition mires and quaking bogs to favourable condition.

- Identify the main areas of transition mires and quaking bog and describe and delineate them with more precision.
- Maintain the area of open transition mire vegetation.
- Maintain the integrity of the various plant communities that are typical in different situations where this feature occurs.
- Maintain the water table at or very close to the surface. Ground should be soft, bouncy & squelchy.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect SAC/Ramsar features. Development on or adjacent to the site could lead to direct damage to SAC/Ramsar habitat features e.g. from increased grazing pressure, land use changes and increased recreational pressure. Construction works, for example from Wind Farm development, within or adjacent to the site could lead to loss of habitat and changes to bog hydrology and introduced species establishing within the site and altering the natural vegetation. Potential nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture could cause degradation or loss of habitat. Changes in land-use in the catchment may cause diffuse pollution and/or siltation and point sources of pollution. Aerially applied agro-chemicals from forestry and agriculture and, as above, aerial emissions of nitrogen can alter the trophic status of the wetland features.

Condition Assessment

Component Feature	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
Active Blanket Bog	Unfavourable: Recovering	29/10/2016
Alkaline Fen (upland)	Favourable: Un-classified	29/10/2016
Marsh saxifrage <i>Saxifraga hirculus</i> L	Unfavourable: Recovering	04/08/2016
Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing water with vegetation belonging to <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>IsoetoNanojuncetea</i>	Favourable: Un-classified	13/06/2016
Northern Atlantic wet heath	Unfavourable: Un-classified	29/10/2016
Natural dystrophic lakes and pools	Favourable: Un-classified	13/06/2006
Transition mires and quaking bogs	Favourable: Un-classified	29/10/2016

Connectivity with the plan area

The SAC is partially within the Council area and partially within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area. Part of the northern section of the SAC is within Eastern Garron Plateau and Scarp Slopes Area of Constraint on High Structures (CS3) and within an Area of Constraint on mineral Development (MIN4).

Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar

Site Name:	Larne Lough SPA	Site Code:	UK9020042
Status:	Classified Special Protection Area	Area:	398 ha
Year:	1997		
Site Name:	Larne Lough Ramsar	Site Code:	UK12013
Status:	Designated Ramsar Site	Area:	395.94 ha
Year:	1997		
ASSIs:	Larne Lough ASSI		
References & Evidence:	Larne Lough SPA Conservation Objectives V4 01/04/2015 Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands JNCC: Version 3.0, 13/06/2008		
Map	Appendix 4, Map 2&4		

Summary Site Description

The sea lough extends from Larne town, southwards to Ballycarry bridge and beyond. The lough includes the extensive inter-tidal mudflats, together with more limited sand, gravel and boulder beaches. The tidal lagoon at Glynn is also included. Adjoining habitat within the site includes saltmarsh and transitional habitats together with limited wet grassland. Swan Island (natural) and Blue Circle Island (artificial) are important tern and gull nesting sites.

The Larne Lough Ramsar Area boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Larne 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.

Selection Features

Note habitat is not a selection feature however it is considered as the selection features are dependent on it.

Feature Type (i.e. habitat or species)	Feature	Population at time of designation (SPA)	SPA Review population
Species	Sandwich Tern breeding population	New feature	165
Species	Roseate Tern breeding population	6	6
Species	Common Tern breeding population	199	180
Species	Light-bellied Brent Goose wintering population	227	227
Habitat	Habitat extent		
Habitat	Roost site locations		

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:

Sandwich Tern, Roseate Tern and Common Tern breeding population

- Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population

Habitat extent

- To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or potentially usable by Feature bird species (325 ha intertidal area), (breeding areas 1 ha) subject to natural processes
- Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes

Roost sites

- Maintain or enhance sites utilised as roosts

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Development on or adjacent to Larne Lough SPA and Ramsar site could lead to direct or indirect damage to habitat through impacts on habitat within the site or in supporting habitat or on coastal processes. Development which significantly increases recreational activity on or adjacent to Larne Lough, or supporting habitat for SPA/Ramsar site features could lead to disturbance. Development within the catchment of Larne Lough could lead to deterioration in water quality. Potential nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture or traffic could cause degradation or loss of habitat.

Condition Assessment

Species	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	CSM	5 yr mean	% CSM	Status
Light-bellied Brent Goose	369	655	219	376	282	177	380.20	214.80	Favourable
Common Tern (B)	530	314	287	380	317	177	385.60	217.85	Favourable
Roseate Tern (B)	4	3	1	1	1	0	2.00	N/A	Favourable
Sandwich Tern (B)	695	545	373	449	324	64	477.20	745.63	Favourable

Connectivity with the plan area

The SPA is entirely within the Council area and extends from Larne town, southwards to Ballycarry bridge and beyond. The settlements of Larne and Glynn are adjacent to Larne Lough. A Tourism Opportunity Zone has been identified at Magheramourne Quarry (TOU2). The settlements of Magheramourne, Ballycarry and Ballystrudder are all close to Larne Lough.

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
	Goldeneye wintering population	12479	10776	3961
Assemblage species	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 populationa (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 cygnus*, Iceland/UK/Ireland
- Common pochard, *Aythya ferina*, NE & NW Europe
- Tufted duck, *Aythya fuligula*, NW Europe
- Greater scaup, *Aythya marila marila*, W Europe
- Common goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula 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 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 Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Development on or adjacent to the site 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 increase wave action from boats. This is restricted to Lough Beg within the Plan area. 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 south western boundary of the Council area extends for approximately 5.5km within Lough Beg and includes much of the eastern portion of Lough Beg. This area of Lough Beg has a relatively small catchment area within the Council area in relation to hydrological connectivity. Most of the Council area is hydrologically connected to Lough Neagh via the River Main, a small area drains to Lough Neagh via the Six-Mile catchment and the remainder drains to the East coast and Belfast Lough.

The area of Lough Beg within the Council area has been designated as a Special Countryside Area under CS2 Special Countryside Areas. An Area of Constraint on High Structures has been designated under CS3 from the east bank of Lough Beg along the River Bann corridor to Portglenone, known as the Lough Beg and the Lower Bann River Corridor.

Main Valley Bogs SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030199
Year:	2005	Area:	186.35
ASSIs	Caldanagh Bog ASSI Dunloy Bog ASSI Frosses Bog ASSI		
References & Evidence	Main Valley Bogs SAC Conservation Objectives V2 01/04/2015		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Main Valley Bogs SAC is comprised of three lowland raised bogs which lie in the upper valleys of the River Main. The raised bog sites are located between the villages of Dunloy, Cloughmills and Glarryford and are individually designated as ASSIs. These three active raised bogs support hummock, hollow and pool complexes, and notable peatland flora including Cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*, Great Sundew *Drosera longifolia* and the bog mosses *Sphagnum fuscum*, *S. imbricatum* and *S. pulchrum*. The most important feature of Dunloy and Caldanagh Bogs is the unbroken transition through a lagg, dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, to swamp and fen along the River Main. This is the most extensive and least disturbed bog-to-lagg transition in Northern Ireland.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Active raised bog	B	158.8 ha

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

- To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the active raised bog to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the active raised bog are:

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

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Development within the site will lead to a loss of habitat. Development within or adjacent to the site could affect drainage and lead to drying out of the bog. Peat cutting or changes to agricultural practices could impact the site through loss of habitats, over-grazing or burning. Nitrogen deposition from intensive agriculture could cause degradation or loss of habitat.

Condition Assessment

Component ASSI	Most recent Condition Assessment	Date
Caldanagh Bog ASSI	Favourable: recovered	05/10/2016
Dunloy Bog ASSI	Unfavourable: recovering	06/10/2011
Frosses Bog ASSI	Favourable: maintained	15/10/2009

Connectivity with the plan area

Frosses Bog, the southern most of the three component bogs, is entirely within the plan area, just south of the Council boundary with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, northwest of the village of Clogh. Dunloy Bog lies 3km north and Caldanagh Bog lies 5km north. There are no plan designations within or adjacent to the SAC.

Dead Island Bog SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030323
Year:	2005	Area:	55 ha
ASSIs:	Dead Island Bog ASSI		
References & Evidence:	Dead Island Bog SAC Conservation Objectives V2 01/04/2015		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Dead Island Bog is a lowland raised bog lying in a shallow interdrumlin hollow within the Lower Bann valley. Special features include a large, intact core of deep peat, which exhibits a wide range of characteristic vegetation and structural features. These include shallow pools and a well-developed hummock and lawn complex. Typically, the vegetation is characterised by ericoid dwarf shrubs and other associated species. The bog surface is permanently wet and supports a dense and diverse cover of *Sphagnum* bog-mosses.

Notable species include *Sphagnum imbricatum*, forming several small, hummocks scattered over the surface, and Great Sundew *Drosera longifolia* in several of the pools.

A triangular-shaped internal soak on the eastern flank of the bog provides an additional feature of interest. The soak is marked by a distinct change in the vegetation structure and composition. Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* is notable here, scattered over the surface of the *Sphagnum* mat.

Disturbance to the bog has been confined to machine cutting and occasional burning on both the intact core and cutover margins. The boundary includes all intact lowland raised bog and associated semi-natural habitats, including cutover bog and Birch scrub. The land surrounding the site is intensively managed agricultural land in silage and grazing.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Active raised bog	B	36.9 ha

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the active raised bog to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the active raised bog are:

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

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
Active raised bog	Favourable: Maintained	13/05/2015

Connectivity with the plan area

The SAC is situated within Mid Ulster District Council area 3km from the boundary with Mid and East Antrim, north west of the town of Portglenone.

Wolf Island Bog SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030303
Year:	2005	Area:	118 ha
ASSIs:	Wolf Island Bog SAC ASSI		
References & Evidence:	Wolf Island Bog SAC Conservation Objectives V2.0, 01/04/2015		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Wolf Island Bog lies to the west of the River Bann directly south of Kilrea and with an intact surface of 71.8 ha, it represents one of the largest remaining areas of uncut lowland raised bog in County Londonderry. The bog lies within the river valley at an elevation between 30m and 40m O.D. and displays the classic characteristics of a lowland raised bog. The boundary around the entire site is clearly defined as the edge of the peatland hydrological unit, being completely surrounded by improved agricultural land.

The active raised bog supports hummocks and hollows, pool complexes and notable peatland flora including Great Sundew *Drosera anglica*, Oblong-leaved Sundew *D. intermedia*, and the bog mosses *Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*. Wolf Island (Fallahogy) was the bog where 'Landnan' (early land clearance event) was first discovered in Ireland, and first radiocarbon dated. It has since become an important site for tephra studies and for investigations of Medieval and recent landscape change. The bog is divided into two parts, but despite this, it is a reasonably compact site within a landscape, which has largely been improved for agricultural use.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Active raised bog	B	103.1 ha

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the active raised bog to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the active raised bog are:

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

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
Active raised bog	Favourable: Maintained	06/10/2011

Location and connectivity with the plan area

The SAC is situated within Mid Ulster District Council area 3km from the boundary with Mid and East Antrim, north west of the town of Portglenone.

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. Development within the site could lead to woodland clearance, dead wood removal or changes in water level. Development adjacent to the site could lead to drainage of swamp woodland; fly-tipping and introduction of non-native species. Changes to surrounding land use could lead to increased nitrogen deposition.

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.

Condition Assessment

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

Connectivity with the plan area

The plan area is connected to the SAC via hydrological connectivity through the Main and Sixmilewater rivers. The plan boundary is approximately 8km from the SAC, therefore beyond the screening distance for impact of aerial emissions.

Red Bay SAC

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030365
Year:	2017	Area:	966.279 ha
ASSIs:	N/A		
Reference and Evidence:	Red Bay SAC Conservation Objectives V2 20/03/2017		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3		

Summary Site Description

Red Bay SAC is sited within the northern part of Red Bay. Red Bay is the largest embayment of the east Antrim coastline outside Larne Lough, and measures approximately 9.5km across the mouth of the bay (as measured from Garron Point in the south to Tornamoney Point north of Cushendun village). The bay is open to the east and sheltered from westerly winds by the Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The bay is predominantly a marine site although there are significant influxes of freshwater which enter the sea via a number of rivers that flow directly into Red Bay as well as to the waters north and south of the bay itself.

The Red Bay site is located off the County Antrim village of Cushendun, Northern Ireland. It contains Annex I Sandbanks slightly covered by seawater at all times which are composed of maerl, sub-fossil maerl, coarse sands, gravels and cobbles. The sand bank is comprised of relic drowned drumlins from the last ice age ca 15000 yr BP. The Red Bay sandbanks are dominated by both living maerl and sub-fossil maerl and have been thoroughly mapped and characterised as part of the SAC selection assessment. Unique to this site is the presence of large 2- 3m high megaripples of sub-fossil maerl, much of which is dominated by living maerl, *Phymatolithon calcarium* with some *Lithothamnion glaciale* (the third UK species of maerl, *Lithothamnion corallioides*, being a more southern species not currently found in Red Bay), and three extremely rare algal species endemic to maerl: *Cruoria cruoriaeformis*, *Halymenia latifolia* and *Gelidiella calcicola*. These mega-ripples are comprised of maerl, gravel and sands on the crests, and cobbles and globular sub-fossil maerl in the troughs, with occasional sand patches on the slopes. Annex I 'Reefs' is an additional feature of this site, as a non-qualifying Category D feature.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Sandbanks slightly covered by seawater all the time	A	965.54 ha

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time to favourable condition.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time are:

- Maintain the extent and volume of sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, subject to natural processes.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure and extent of sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the viability, distribution and diversity of typical species within this habitat.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect SAC features. Impacts from the plan area could include spread of invasive species from any increase in marine traffic as a result of development in the plan area. APIS confirms that the selection feature is not sensitive to nitrogen deposition.

Condition Assessment

None available

Location and connectivity with the plan area

The SAC is situated 4.3km north west of the plan area. The plan area is connected via marine waters and via some small watercourses on Garron Plateau.

The Maidens SAC (Grey Seal)

Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Site Code:	UK0030384
Year:	2017	Area:	7461.3ha
ASSIs:	The Maidens ASSI		
References & Evidence:	The Maidens SAC Conservation Objectives V2 20/03/2017		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3&5		

(Grey seal are referred to in the Ramsar Information Sheet for Strangford Lough however DAERA has advised that this site has been primarily designated for its wetland features and birds and the only mammal listed as nationally important is the otter. Therefore the only Northern Irish marine site which should be screened in for grey seals is the Maidens.)

Summary Site Description

The Maidens SAC is a group of rocky reefs detached from the coast, northeast of Larne, Northern Ireland. The primary reason for the designation of The Maidens as an SAC is for the Annex I habitat Reef. A small area to the south of East Maiden island has been shown by diving surveys to be shallow stable sandy gravels (partially sheltered by East and West Maiden islands) that includes maerl and other long lived species and this small area has therefore been classed as Annex I Sandbanks slightly covered by sea water all of the time. Grey Seals (Annex II) are not the primary feature of The Maidens SAC. However, these relatively remote rocks, islands and the waters surrounding them in the North Channel are well located for accessing good feeding grounds and important for providing haul-out sites, resting sites and foraging areas for Grey Seals, with a maxima count of 70 adults recorded in a July 2000 survey. The boundary rationale and management considerations are detailed in the Conservation Objectives.

Selection Features

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Habitat	Reef	A	2550 ha
Habitat	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	B	200 ha
Species	Grey Seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	C	50 individuals

Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for this site is:

- To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the
 - Reefs
 - Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time
 - Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the reefs are:

- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate the extent of the reefs
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and distribution of the habitats associated with the reefs, to operate appropriately.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the viability, distribution and diversity of typical species within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time are:

- Maintain the extent and volume of sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, subject to natural processes.
- Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure and extent of sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, to operate appropriately.

- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the viability, distribution and diversity of typical species within this habitat.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for the Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus* are:

- Maintain (and if feasible enhance) population numbers and distribution of Grey Seal.
- Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, physical features used by Grey Seals within the site.

Condition Assessment

None available for grey seal.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

Both on-site and off-site activities can potentially affect the site. Coastal development may lead to habitat loss impacting Grey Seal haul out sites used for breeding, pupping and resting. Direct and indirect disturbance is linked to coastal development through increase in marine traffic or development of marine renewables or increase in wildlife watching trips. Deterioration in water quality could lead to a reduction on prey species of Grey Seal and species associated with Reefs and Sandbanks.

Connectivity with the plan area

The Maidens SAC is approximately 1.5km from the plan area via marine waters. The draft Plan Strategy will not have any impact on the reef or sandbank habitats due to the distance to the SAC. However, Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus* is a mobile species able to use haul out sites for resting or breeding within wider coastal area. DAERA advises that plans or projects within 135km of a site designated for Grey Seal should be assessed for impacts on the species. The NI Marine Map Viewer identifies seal haul out locations within Larne Lough and Belfast Lough. This creates an ecological link between the SAC and the plan area. Therefore Grey Seal is as an SAC feature that requires further assessment.

There are no plan designations on or around The Maidens SAC however a number of designations have been identified on the coast as follows: Larne Coast Special Countryside Area, Gobbins Coast Special Countryside Area (CS2), Islandmagee East, Whitehead and Carrick Escarpment Areas of Constraint on High Structures (CS3), Rural Landscape Wedges (CS4) between Greenisland and Carrickfergus and between Greenisland and Jordanstown and Developed Coast (Belfast Lough Shore (CS6). The settlements of Greenisland, Carrickfergus, Whitehead and Larne all adjoin the Marine area. Two Tourism Opportunity Zones have been identified at Carnfunnock Country Park and Magheramourne Quarry.

Skerries and Causeway SAC & North Channel SAC (Harbour Porpoise)

Site Name:	Skerries and Causeway SAC	Site Code:	UK0030383
Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Area:	10875.96 ha
Year:	2017		
ASSIs:	Portrush West Strand ASSI White Rocks ASSI Runkerry ASSI Giant's Causeway and Dunseverick ASSI.		
Reference and Evidence:	Skerries and Causeway SAC Conservation Objectives V2 20/03/2017		
Site Name:	North Channel SAC	Site Code:	UK0030399
Status:	Designated Special Area of Conservation	Area:	160,367ha/1604km ²
Year:	2019		
ASSIs:	N/A		
Reference and Evidence	Harbour Porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>) Special Area of Conservation: North Channel Conservation Objectives and Advice on Operations March 2019		
Map:	Appendix 4, Map 3&5		

Summary Site Description

Skerries and Causeway SAC

The Skerries and Causeway site is located adjacent to the coastline of Portstewart, Portrush, Bushmills and the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site. The site contains the qualifying Features: Annex I *Reef*; Annex I *Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater at all times*; Annex I *Submerged or partially submerged sea caves*; and Annex II *Harbour Porpoise*.

Much of the reef in this area is sand scoured reef, an unusual type of reef in a Northern Ireland context. This produces a close relationship between the reef and the adjacent sediments: as well as the sand scoured areas of reef and stony reef, there are also large areas of bedrock reef that have a thick veneer of sediment, but still support bedrock epifauna (attached to the bedrock but growing up through the sediment); and conversely, there are also areas of coarse and mixed sediments that support epifauna communities more reminiscent of the reef habitat.

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) have been consistently recorded during more than 140 dedicated effort watches at six sites within the proposed boundary. These records span every month of the year, including months outside of the breeding and calving seasons and confirm the continuous presence of harbour porpoise within this area. Continuous or regular presence is graded A (excellent conservation).

North Channel SAC

Located along the eastern coast of Northern Ireland, the North Channel SAC has been identified as an important winter area for harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*, supporting an estimated 1.2% of the UK Celtic and Irish Seas Management Unit population. This site includes locations where some of the largest groups of harbour porpoise have been observed around Northern Ireland. Groups of up to 100 harbour porpoise have been sighted.

Habitats within the site consist mainly of coarse or sandy sediments, with patches of rock and mud. Water depths reach a maximum of 150m along the eastern boundary, but much of the site lies between 10m and 40m. 85% of the site lies in Northern Irish inshore waters (0 – 12 nm from shore). The site covers important winter habitat for harbour porpoise and extends from the coast into offshore waters, overlapping with the Pisces Reef Complex SAC.

Most of the areas with frequent sightings are in coastal waters. These are often areas where there is a high degree of water mixing, sometimes associated with strong tidal streams. Such areas have high biological productivity, and are often associated with important concentrations of small prey fish. The

boundary rationale and management considerations are detailed in the Conservation Objectives for each site.

Selection Features

In light of the distance to Skerries and Causeway SAC the marine habitat features cannot be affected by the draft Plan Strategy therefore only Harbour Porpoise is considered.

Feature type	Feature	Global Status	Size/extent/population
Species	Harbour Porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	C (Skerries and Causeway SAC) B (North Channel SAC)	No fixed number of harbour porpoise above or below which the population would be viable or not as the number naturally varies.

Conservation Objectives

Skerries and Causeway SAC

The Conservation Objectives for this site are:

- To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the
 - Reefs
 - Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, and
 - Submerged and partially submerged sea caves
 - Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)
- The SAC selection feature component objectives for Harbour Porpoise are:
 - Ensure the species is a viable component of the site.
 - Ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species.
 - Ensure the supporting habitats and processes relevant to harbour porpoises and their prey are maintained.

North Channel SAC

The Conservation Objectives for this site are:

- To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the harbour porpoise or significant disturbance to the harbour porpoise, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for the UK harbour porpoise.

The SAC selection feature component objectives for Harbour Porpoise are:

- To ensure for harbour porpoise that, subject to natural change, the following attributes are maintained or restored in the long term:
 1. The species is a viable component of the site.
 2. There is no significant disturbance of the species.
 3. The supporting habitats and processes relevant to harbour porpoises and their prey are maintained.

Main Threats, Pressures and Activities with Impacts on the Site

The Conservation Objectives and Advice on Activities for North Channel SAC lists activities which are specific to Harbour Porpoise and gives an indication of potential threats to this site selection feature. Key activities that impact harbour porpoise throughout UK waters include commercial fisheries with bycatch of harbour porpoise and through reduction in prey species, discharge/run-off from land-fill, terrestrial and offshore industries, shipping, drilling, dredging and disposal, aggregate extraction, pile driving, acoustic surveys, underwater explosion, military activity, acoustic deterrent devices, shipping, recreational boating, tidal energy installations.

Main threats from the plan area include deterioration in water quality, direct disturbance from construction and indirect activity from recreation through development promoting boating activity.

Condition Assessment

None available

Connectivity with the plan area

Both sites are connected to the plan area via marine waters. The North Channel SAC is immediately adjacent to the plan area via the coastline. Skerries and Causeway SAC is almost 50km away via marine waters. Harbour Porpoise are however found all around the coast of Ireland including Belfast Lough.

The coastline of Islandmagee has been designated as Gobbins Coast Special Countryside Area under CS2. Two areas of Constraint on High Structures have been designated at Islandmagee East and Whitehead. The settlements of Greenisland, Carrickfergus, Whitehead and Larne all adjoin the Marine area.

Appendix 4: Maps

Map 1: The Mid and East Antrim Local Development Plan Area

Map 2: SPAs in relation to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

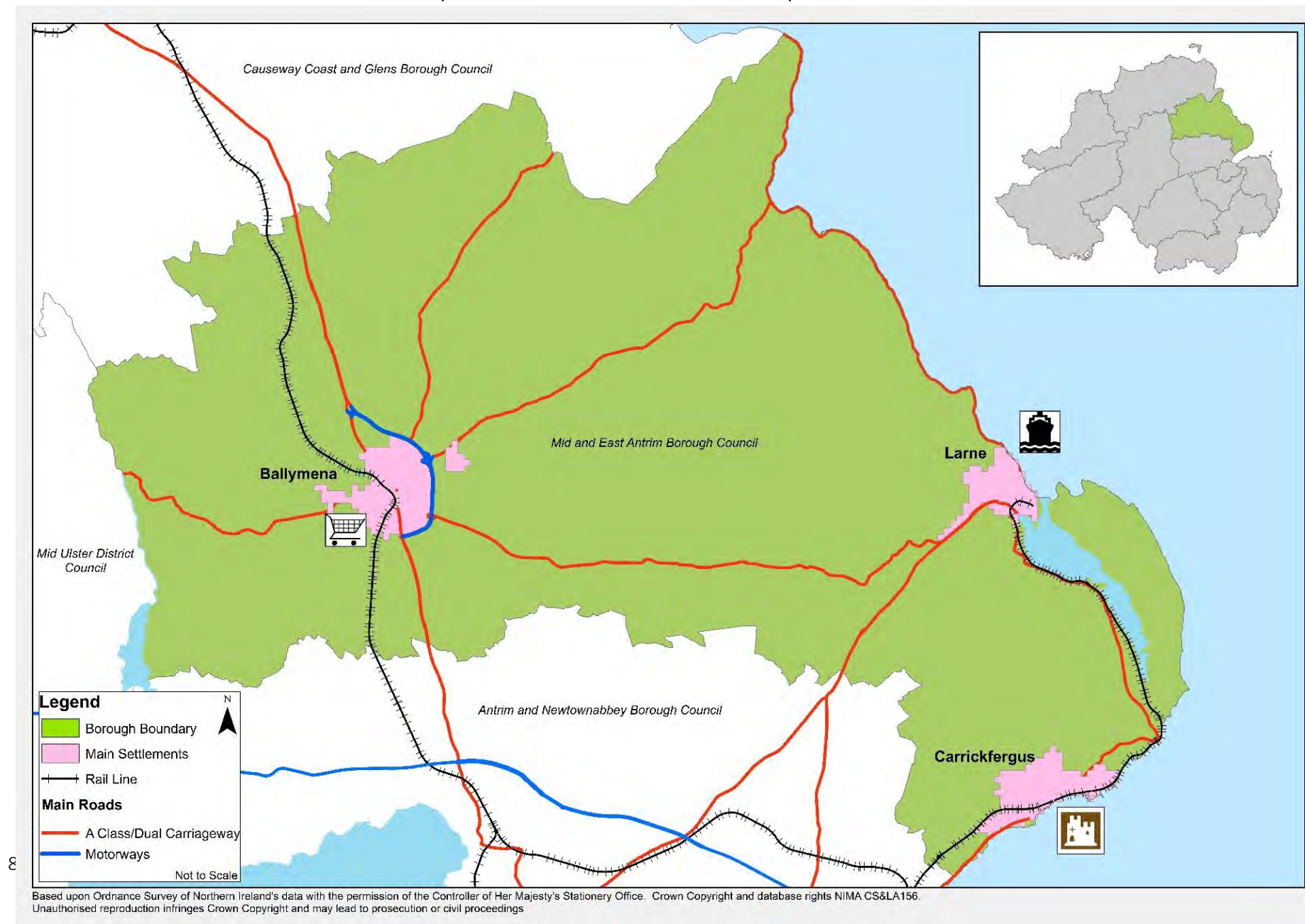
Map 3: SACs in relation to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Map 4: Ramsar Sites in relation to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Map 5: Marine SACs in relation to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Map 6: Major Catchments within the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area

Map 1: The Mid and East Antrim Local Development Plan Area

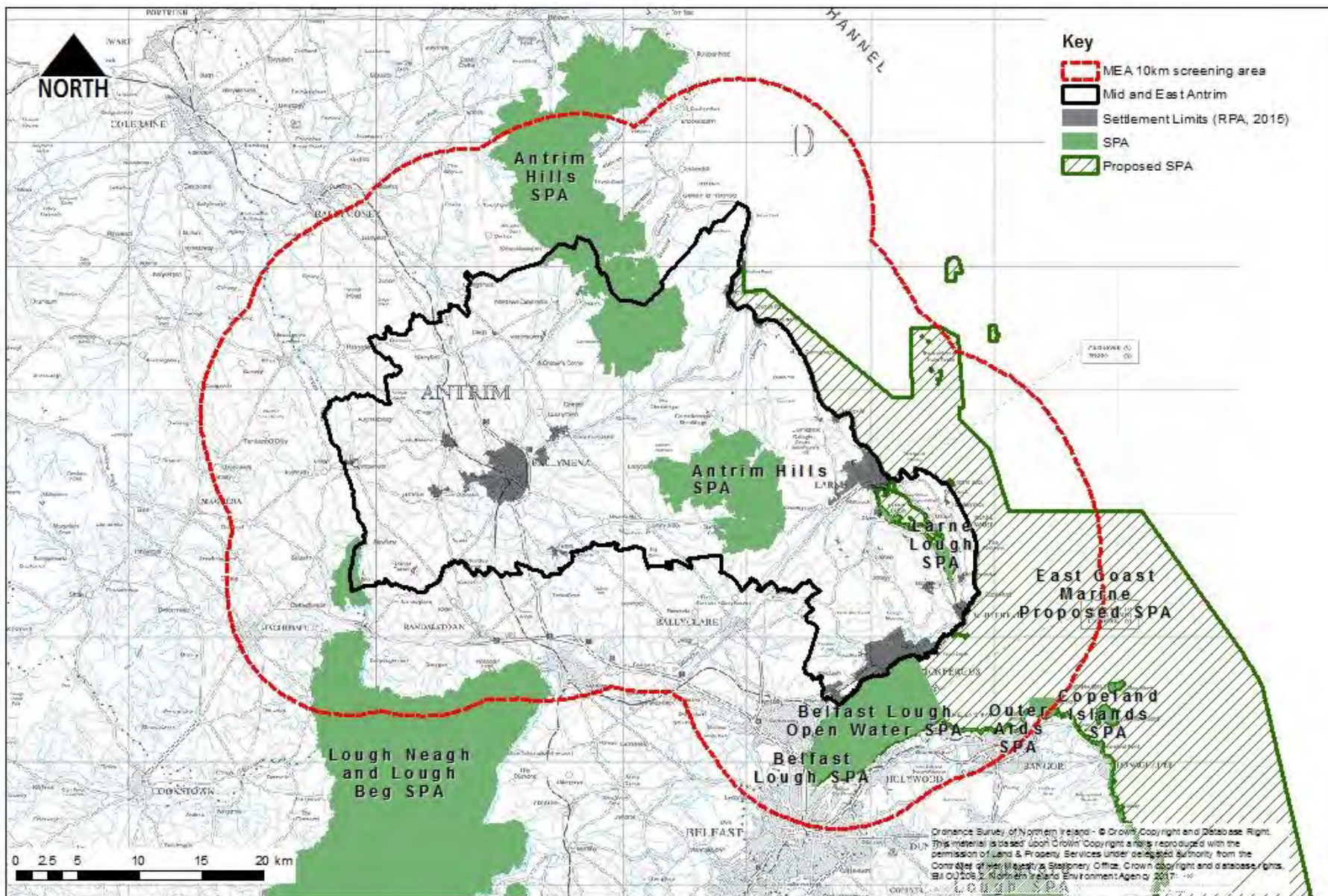


Key

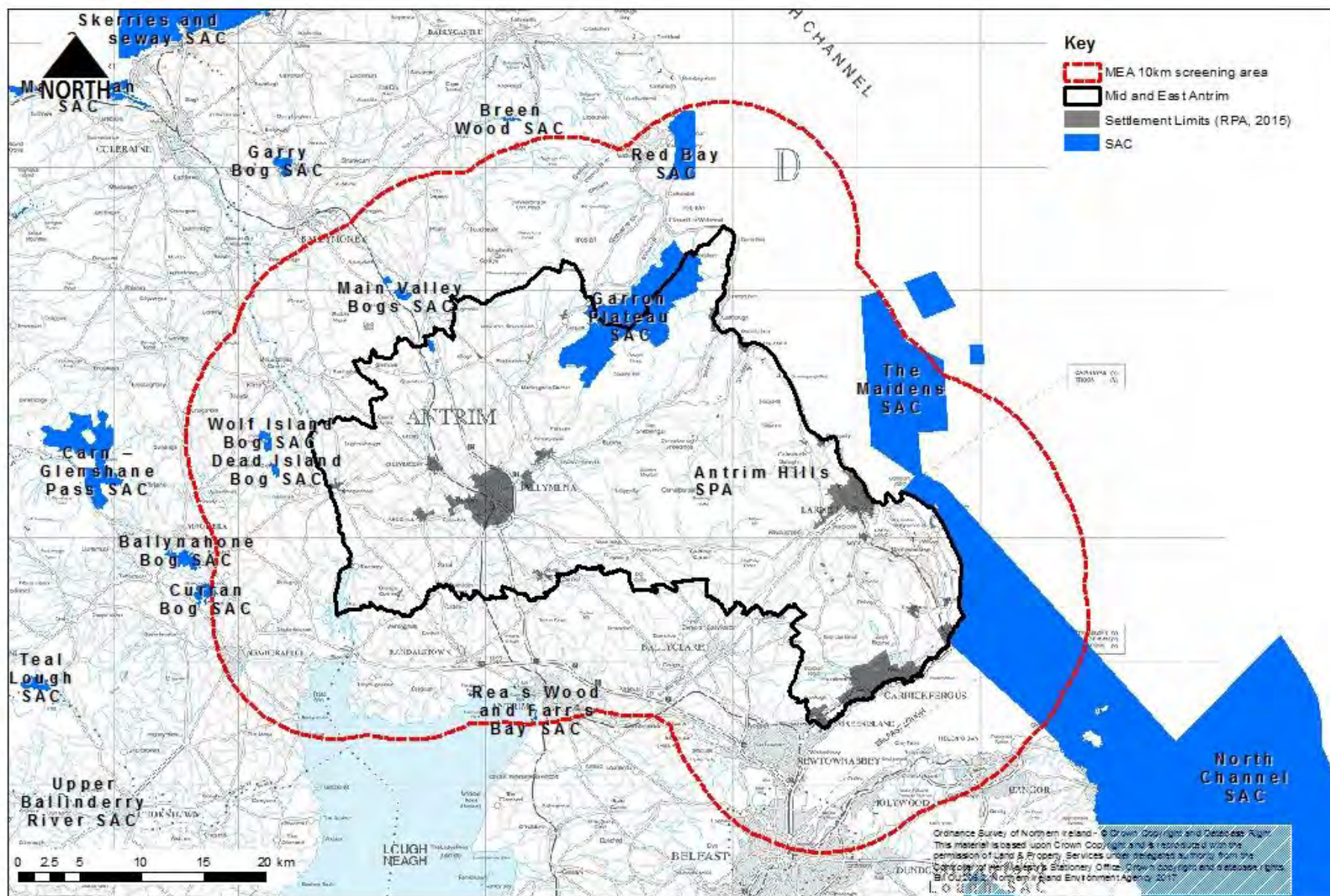
- MEA 10km screening area
- Mid and East Antrim
- Settlement Limits (RPA, 2015)
- SPA
- Proposed SPA

0 2.5 5 10 15 20 km

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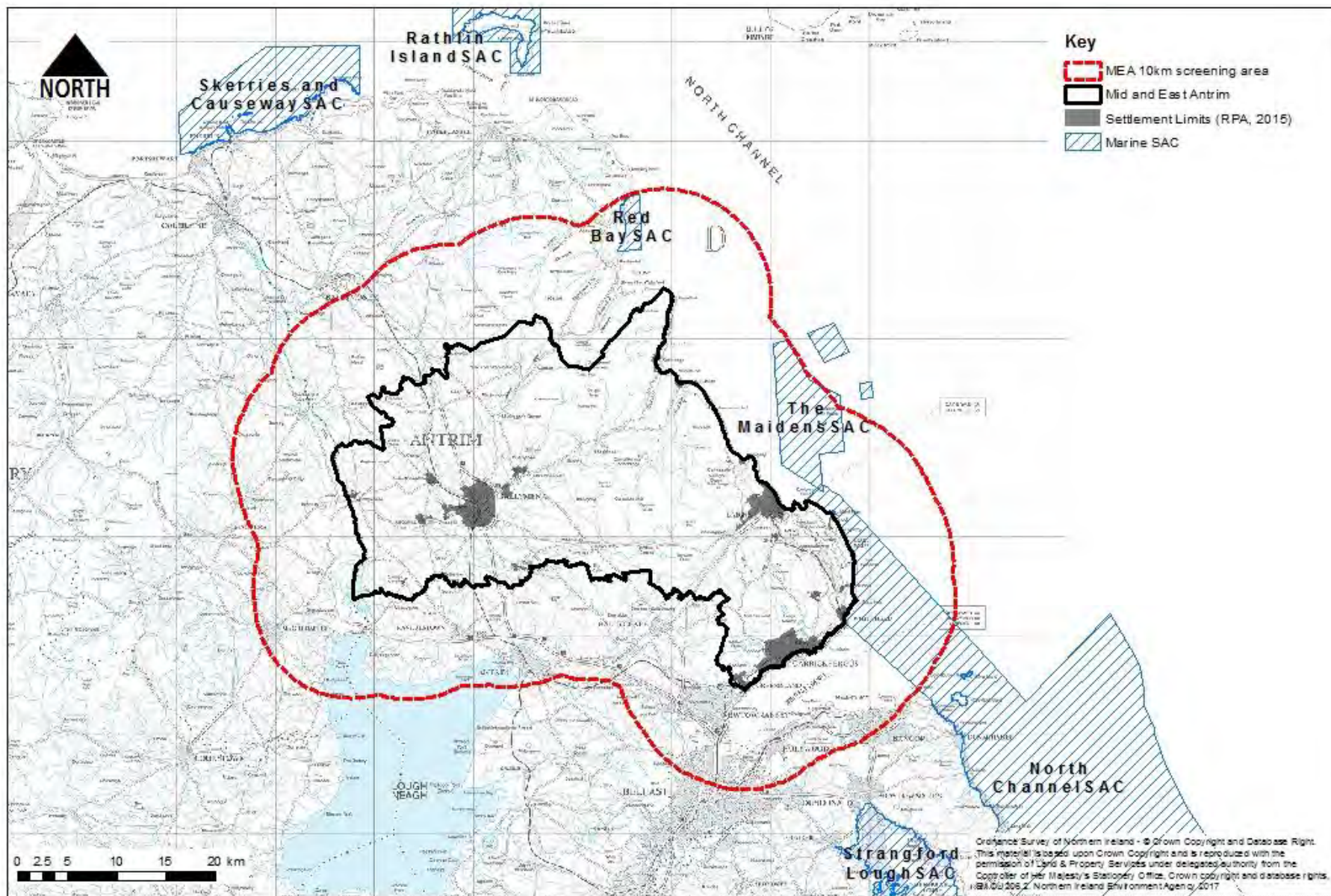
Map 3: SACs in relation to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council



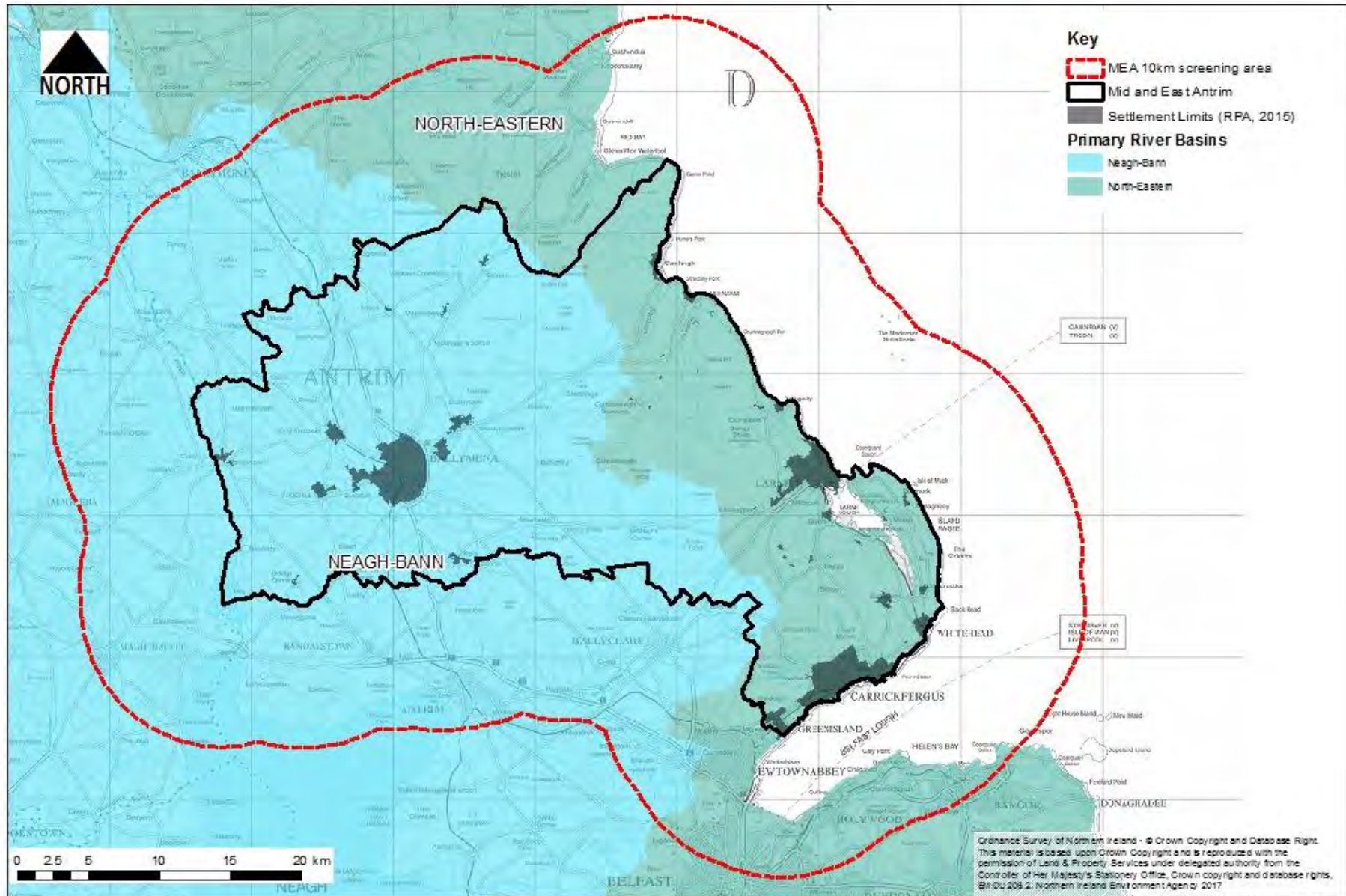
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Map 5: Marine SACs in relation to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council



Map 6: Major Catchments within the Mid and East Antrim Borough 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 a 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
1.0 INTRODUCTION	NA Out	Administrative text
2.0 SETTING THE CONTEXT	NA Out	Regional and local context
3.0 DISTRICT PROFILE	NA Out	Background
4.0 VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES		
4.1 Vision		
Plan Vision: "Mid and East Antrim will be shaped by high quality, sustainable and connected places for people to live, work, enjoy, invest and visit, so as to improve the quality of life for all"	A Out	General statement of objectives.
4.2 Strategic Objectives		
Economic Objectives		
a) To provide a sufficient supply and choice of sites for business and employment uses so as to assist in promoting sustainable economic growth in Mid and East Antrim and in meeting the locational needs of particular sectors, including new and emerging sectors;	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
b) To support and sustain vibrant town centres in Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
c) To protect strategically important transportation assets and routes (including disused transport routes) and, where possible, to facilitate enhanced connectivity within Mid and East Antrim and between the Borough and other centres;	A Out	General statement of objectives.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
d) To support tourism as a key growth sector in Mid and East Antrim by facilitating opportunities for sustainable tourism development and by safeguarding key tourism assets from inappropriate development;	A Out	General statement of policy. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
e) To facilitate sustainable economic development in the countryside, provided it is suitably located and is of an appropriate nature and scale for the rural context;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
f) To facilitate the provision or upgrading of public utilities infrastructure (including water, wastewater, energy and telecommunications) to meet economic and community needs;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
g) To support the generation of energy, particularly from renewable sources, in a balanced way that takes due account of environmental impacts and on sensitive or vulnerable landscapes.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
Social Objectives		
a) To support the role of main towns, small towns, villages, and small settlements in accordance with the LDP Spatial Growth Strategy and commensurate with their place in the settlement hierarchy;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
b) To support rural communities by providing appropriate opportunities for sustainable development in the countryside;	A Out	General statement of objectives.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
c) To provide a sufficient supply of land for new mixed tenure housing in convenient locations to meet the anticipated housing need of around 7,500 dwellings for the period 2012 to 2030, including any identified special housing needs;	A Out	General statement of objectives. Possible driver of potential effects but implications will be assessed under related policies.
d) To deliver quality residential environments (including associated public open space and linkages to green infrastructure networks);	A Out	General statement of objectives.
e) To facilitate confirmed needs for the development of new health, educational, recreational and community services at locations accessible to local communities through various modes of transportation;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
f) To support, and where possible enhance, the recreation and leisure offer within Mid and East Antrim, including safeguarding and promoting access to the coast and to heritage assets;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
g) To promote active travel and increased opportunities for walking and cycling while protecting existing active travel routes and networks;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
h) To facilitate regeneration initiatives, particularly where they will provide for quality public places and 'shared spaces' that are accessible to and valued by everyone, or where they improve the quality of life for disadvantaged local communities.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
Environmental Objectives		

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
a) To protect, conserve and where possible, enhance environmental quality, biodiversity, and the natural processes underpinning the delivery of ecosystem services in Mid and East Antrim;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
b) To protect areas of high quality landscape within the Borough, particularly those which are designated within the Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
c) To protect sites designated for their nature conservation or scientific importance and to avoid harm to protected species;	A Out	General statement of objectives and also protective of international sites.
d) To safeguard the unique character and amenity of our coastline (particularly the undeveloped coast), loughs and the main river corridors;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
e) To protect, conserve and where possible enhance our historic environment, including the full suite of heritage assets which are associated with the historical evolution of Mid and East Antrim;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
f) To avoid new development in areas known to be at significant risk from flooding, coastal change or land instability, taking account of increased vulnerability associated with climate change;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
g) To contribute towards climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, where practicable through the planning system;	A Out	General statement of objectives.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
h) To promote and facilitate the use of energy, water and drainage, and mineral resources in an efficient and sustainable manner and to support initiatives for the reduction and recycling of waste;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
i) To promote high quality design standards in all development so as to reflect local distinctiveness and further positive place-making;	A Out	General statement of objectives.
j) To focus significant new development in accessible locations particularly for public transport services and to promote integration between transportation and new development so as to reduce the need for travel and to reduce dependency upon travel by private car generally.	A Out	General statement of objectives.
5.0 SPATIAL GROWTH STRATEGY AND COUNTRYSIDE STRATEGY		
5.1 Spatial Growth Strategy		
SGS1 Spatial Growth Strategy	A Out	This is a general statement of aspirations to deliver sustainable development. The Justification and Amplification (J&A) states that development in the countryside should respect the natural environment and refers to the Natural Heritage policies.
5.2 Settlement Hierarchy		

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
SGS2 Settlement Hierarchy	A/H Out	This is a general statement of policy. It is a strategic high-level policy setting out the settlement hierarchy and providing a framework for delivering growth and operational policies assessed below. SGS2 allows for review of settlement limits at LPP which would be subject to HRA. It introduces eight new small settlements, the limits of which will be defined at LPP. The total allocation of housing to small settlements is 142 units over the life of the plan. One new settlement, Milltown, has no public sewerage networks and is located 2km east of Lough Beg. Given the low risk from the scale of development, that it will be subject to WWI1 relating to Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure, and in view of policy NAT1, policy SGS2 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
5.3 Strategic Housing Allocation Strategy		
SGS3 Strategic Allocation of Housing to Settlements	F Out	The policy is a strategic high-level policy setting out land use priorities with reference to later policies within the plan. In itself (i.e. in the absence of these later policies) the policy cannot lead to any development or change. The later policies are screened individually below. Sets out the level of growth in settlements rather than the location. Wastewater treatment capacity was a consideration in the Housing Evaluation Framework which informed the housing allocation.
SGS4 Protection of Zoned Housing Land	A Out	This is a general statement of policy that allows exceptions for use on zoned housing land but is not spatially specific and does not promote additional development. Housing zones in extant plans are being brought forward until LPP. The review of housing allocations at LPP is considered in Section 1.
SGS5 Management of Housing Supply	A Out	The policy directs zoning for housing. Housing zones in extant plans are not subject to review at dPS. The review of housing at LPP is considered in Section 1.
5.4 Economic Development Strategy		
SGS6 Strategic Allocation of Land for Economic Development	A Out	The policy promotes change but is not spatially specific. Potential effects on international sites cannot be identified as the policy is too general. All extant plans have zoned land within settlement limits for economic development which are being brought forward until LPP. A new portfolio of sites for economic development will be identified at LPP. The review of economic land at LPP is considered in Section 1.
5.5 Retail Strategy		

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
SGS7 Retail Hierarchy	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site. It is a strategic high-level policy setting out the retail hierarchy and providing a framework for delivering operational policies assessed below.
5.6 Tourism Strategy		
SGS8 Tourism Strategy	I In	The policy promotes sustainable tourism however it identifies tourism opportunity zones that are adjacent to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA. It also states that for international sites, which are identified as being in the 'Vulnerable Category', <i>'Tourism Development should not be approved within the majority of their extent.'</i> Therefore it does not exclude development in international sites. Further assessment of this policy is required.
5.7 Transport Strategy		
Draft Local Transport Study for Mid and East Antrim (LTS), prepared by DfI	C Out	The draft Local Transport Strategy being prepared by DfI will provide the transport strategy for the Borough. The detail and specific schemes will be contained within the Local Transport Plan (LTP), also to be prepared by DfI, and to be brought forward at LPP. The LTP will be subject to HRA.
5.8 Open Space Strategy		
SGS9 Open Space Strategy	A Out	The policy is a strategic high-level policy for provision of open space with reference to other policies within the plan. The later OSL policies are screened individually below.
5.9 Countryside Strategy		
CS1 Sustainable Development in the Countryside	F Out	The policy is a strategic high-level policy setting out land use priorities with reference to later policies within the plan. In itself (i.e. in the absence of these later policies) the policy cannot lead to any development or change. The later policies are screened individually below. It also states that all proposals must meet the requirements of the relevant strategic subject policy (or policies). In addition, proposals must satisfy the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
CS2 Special Countryside Areas	D/H Out	The policy largely constrains development in four Special Countryside Areas some of which (Larne Coast, The Gobbins Coast and Lough Beg) include or are adjacent to international sites. Where there are exceptions those are subject to other policies screened individually below. It also states that all development proposals will be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In view of policy NAT1, policy CS2 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
CS3 Areas of Constraint on High Structures	D/H Out	Constrains high structures in the following areas: Islandmagee East and Whitehead; Slemish Mountain; Eastern Garron Plateau and Scarp Slopes; Knockdhu, Sallagh Braes, Scawt Hill to Glenarm Headland; Carrickfergus Escarpment; Lough Beg and the Lower Bann River Corridor. These include areas important for site selection features such as hen harrier and whooper swan. It does allow for smaller structures however it is stated that all development proposals will be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP.
CS4 Rural Landscape Wedges	D/F Out	This policy is a general environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It constrains development therefore cannot lead to development in its own right.
CS5 Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	D/F Out	This policy is a general AONB-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy and cannot lead to development in its own right. The AONB contains Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar site and is adjacent to East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA.
CS6 Developed Coast (Belfast Lough Shore)	D Out	This policy is a general environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It largely constrains development adjacent to Belfast Lough and related international sites. There are exceptions for some access and recreation however the policy includes a criterion that ' <i>...development will not have an unacceptable effect, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively on the coastal setting and / or environment, including any heritage asset associated with the natural or historic environment.</i> ' The J&A clarifies that ' <i>Full account must also be taken of any legal obligations associated with natural heritage/nature conservation designations along the Developed Coast.</i> '
CS7 Local Landscape Policy Areas	D Out	This policy is a general environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It constrains development in Local Landscape Policy Areas within or adjacent to settlements.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
CS8 Protection of Main River Corridors	D Out	This policy is a general environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It constrains development along main rivers. The extent of the rivers to which it applies will be determined at LPP.
CS9 Development at Risk from Land Instability or Coastal Erosion	D Out	This policy is a general environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It constrains development and planning permission will be refused where investigative work or remedial measures would be likely to trigger land instability or coastal erosion/change or to have a significant adverse effect on biodiversity.
PART 2		
6.0 GENERAL POLICY FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT		
GP1 General Policy for all Development	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy which will apply to all development. Criteria a) iv; d) iv, vi; and e) iii, iv all provide for general plan-wide environmental protection. In addition criterion e) ii states ' <i>Essential infrastructure to facilitate the development must be available or, if lacking, there must be a firm commitment in regard to its timely provision</i> '.
7.0 SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH		
7.1 Economic Development		
ECD1 Economic Development in Settlements	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
ECD2 Retention of Economic Development Land	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It constrains alternative uses on zoned or other land. It cannot affect any international sites.
ECD3 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 these later policies) the policy cannot lead to any development or change.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
ECD4 Economic Development in the Countryside	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It implies support for economic development in the countryside under certain circumstances and specifically refers to the requirement to meet the General Policy. In relation to f) Agricultural and Forestry Development it states ' <i>A proposal for intensive farming or animal husbandry will be required to demonstrate that it will not result in any significant adverse environmental impact, including in relation to ammonia emissions.</i> ' This applies to all designated sites and to priority habitats therefore it is not included specifically for international sites. In view of these caveats and policy NAT1, policy ECD4 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
7.2 Retailing and Town Centres		
RET1 Retail in Town Centres	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
RET2 Retail Impact Assessment	F/H Out	The first part of the policy specifies a requirement for supporting information and cannot lead to any development or change. The second part relates to small scale development but, given the low levels of risk, policy NAT1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy RET2 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
RET3 Retail in Villages, Small Settlements and Local Centres	B/H Out	Relates to small scale development but, given the low levels of risk, policy NAT1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy RET3 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
RET4 Rural Shops and Roadside Service Facilities	B/H Out	Relates to small scale development of rural shops. Also 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 NAT1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy RET4 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
7.3 Tourism		
TOU1 Safeguarding of Tourism Assets	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy and one that cannot lead to development or other change.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
TOU2 Tourism Development in Settlements and Tourism Opportunity Zones	I In	There are two proposed Tourism Opportunity Zones, Carnfunnock Country Park and the former Magheramorne Quarry. These may enable development adjacent to Larne Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (NI) Marine pSPA that may cause habitat loss or disturbance to site features. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU3 All Tourism Development in the Countryside	I In	This applies to all tourism development in the countryside and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. All proposals for tourism development in the countryside must also: a) meet the General Policy; and b) accord with other provisions of the LDP. TOU3, and therefore this requirement, applies to policies TOU4 to TOU8. There is reference to Table 5.7 and to vulnerable areas, which include international sites, and where 'Tourism Development should not be approved within the majority of their extent.' Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU4 Tourist Amenities in the Countryside	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Through reference to TOU3 this policy must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites directly or through indirect effects such as disturbance from recreation. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU5 Hotels, Guest Houses and Tourist Hostels in the Countryside	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Through reference to TOU3 this policy must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites directly or through indirect effects such as disturbance from recreation. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU6 Self Catering Accommodation in the Countryside	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Through reference to TOU3 this policy must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites directly or through indirect effects such as disturbance from recreation. Further assessment of this policy is required.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
TOU7 New and Extended Holiday Parks in the Countryside	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Through reference to TOU3 this policy must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites directly or through indirect effects such as disturbance from recreation. Further assessment of this policy is required.
TOU8 Major Tourism Development in the Countryside – Exceptional Circumstances	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Through reference to TOU3 this policy must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites directly or through indirect effects such as disturbance from recreation. Further assessment of this policy is required.
7.4 Minerals Development		
MIN1 Mineral Development – Extraction and Processing of Hard Rock and Aggregates	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It requires that council must be satisfied that the proposal will not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon any of the following interests: ‘a) <i>The natural environment, including the conservation of flora and fauna, natural habitats, biodiversity and earth science features;</i> b) <i>The water environment, including water quality and natural flow regimes.</i> ’ The J&A refers to the need for HRA where there could be a hydrological impact however it does not refer to other impacts such as habitat loss or disturbance. This might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MIN2 Valuable Minerals	I In	This policy implies that exploitation of valuable minerals may be permitted outside SCAs. It is subject to MIN1 however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
MIN3 Hydrocarbons	I In	MIN3 implies that exploitation of hydrocarbons through conventional methods of extractions may be permitted subject to compliance with MIN2. Council will apply a presumption against unconventional extraction of hydrocarbons and gases by methods such as hydraulic fracturing ('fracking'), until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. This policy implies that, with such evidence, exploitation of hydrocarbons may be permitted. It is subject to MIN2 which is subject to MIN1 however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MIN4 Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development	I In	This policy implies that the extraction and processing of minerals, may be permitted outside ACMDs with minor exceptions within ACMDs. Current ACMDs include part of Garron Plateau SAC and Ramsar site and part of Antrim Hills SPA. This policy is subject to MIN1, however the limited reference to potential impacts on designated conservation sites might lead to an internal conflict with policy NAT1. Further assessment of this policy is required.
MIN5 Area of Salt Reserve, Carrickfergus	F Out	The policy constrains development in the Area of Salt Reserve. In itself the policy cannot lead to any development or change.
MIN6 Development at Risk of Subsidence due to past or present underground mineral extraction	F Out	The policy constrains development in Areas of Potential Subsidence. In itself the policy cannot lead to any development or change.
MIN7 Peat Extraction	D/H Out	There will be a presumption against commercial peat extraction. Exceptions may be allowed where the peatland is already degraded and not reasonably capable of restoration or where it can be demonstrated that peat extraction is linked to a management and restoration plan which will deliver improved peatlands over the longer term. Where the proposal meets the above exceptions it must also meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In view of these constraints and policy NAT1, policy MIN7 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
MIN8 Restoration and Management of Mineral Sites	D/H Out	This is largely a plan-wide environmental safeguarding policy however the restoration proposals 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 MIN1 and policy NAT1 will provide sufficient protection to avoid proposals coming forward which represent a risk to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy MIN8 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
8.0 BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES		
8.1 Housing		
HOU1 Quality in New Residential Development in Settlements	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
HOU2 The Conversion or Change of Use of Existing Buildings to Flats or Apartments	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU3 Residential Extensions and Alterations	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU4 Protected Town Centre Housing Areas	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
HOU5 Affordable Housing in Settlements	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
HOU6 Housing Mix (Unit Types and Sizes)	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
HOU7 Adaptable and Accessible Homes	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It cannot affect any international sites.
HOU8 Travellers Accommodation	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and have suitable provision of utilities. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU8 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
HOU9 Replacement Dwelling	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU9 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
HOU10 Dwelling on a Farm Business	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU10 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
HOU11 Dwelling for Non-Agricultural Business Enterprise	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU11 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
HOU12 New Dwelling in Existing Clusters	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU12 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
HOU13 Ribbon/Infill Development	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU13 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
HOU14 Personal and Domestic Circumstances	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU14 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
HOU15 Residential Caravans and Mobile Homes	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU15 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
HOU16 Affordable Housing in the Countryside	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. In light of the constraints on development allowed under this policy, and in view of other policies including NAT1, policy HOU16 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
8.2 Open Space, Sport and Leisure		
OSL1 Protection of Open Space	D/F Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It also constrains change of use therefore it one that in itself cannot lead to development or other change.
OSL2 Greenways	A/H Out	This is a general statement of policy. It implies support for greenways and states that all proposals will also be required to meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. The District Proposals Map shows that approximately 1.5km of a secondary greenway passes through Antrim Hills SPA. Greenways are discussed further in Section 3. Given the low risk from the scale of potential development, and in view of policy NAT1, policy OSL2 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
OSL3 New Open Space Provision	A/H Out	This is a general statement of policy allowing for provision of public open space where it meets the General Policy and accords with other provisions of the LDP. Open Space is discussed further in Section 3. While it could allow for new open space adjacent to international sites the opportunities to do so are limited and in view of policy NAT1, policy OSL3 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites. Impacts of recreation in open space will be a consideration at LPP when reviewing or allocating any zoned land.
OSL4 Public Open Space in New Residential Development	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for provision of open space in residential developments.
OSL5 Sport and Outdoor Recreation Facilities	I In	This applies to all sport and outdoor recreation development, is not spatially specific and could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites. All proposals must meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP, and also meet the policies included relating to noise, floodlighting and water sports. Further assessment of this policy is required.
OSL6 Community Growing Spaces and Allotments	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Relates to small scale development and, given the low levels of risk, policy NAT1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy OSL6 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
OSL7 Cemeteries and Burial Space	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Relates to small scale development and, given the low levels of risk, policy NAT1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy OSL7 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
8.3 Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities		
COM1 Education, Health, Community and Cultural Facilities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. Land may be zoned for such uses at LPP and would be subject to HRA. Relates to small scale development and, given the low levels of risk, policy NAT1 can be relied upon to afford sufficient protection to international sites. In view of policy NAT1, policy COM1 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
9.0 TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY		
9.1 Transportation		
TR1 Access to Public Roads	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TR2 Access to Protected Routes	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
TR3 New Transport Schemes	C Out	Supports delivery of specific schemes within the Local Transport Plan (LTP), to be prepared by DfI and brought forward at LPP. That plan will be subject to HRA.
TR4 Disused Transport Routes	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TR5 Active Travel	A Out	This is a general statement of policy promoting provision of active travel opportunities which cannot have any effect on an international site.
TR6 Parking and Servicing	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals for parking provision.
TR7 Provision of Car Parks	I In	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to schemes which might impact upon international sites for example through greenfield development adjacent to an international site. It does not refer to the General Policy or other provisions. Further assessment of this policy is required.
9.2 Flood Risk and Drainage		
FRD1 Development within Floodplains	B/D Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
FRD2 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.
FRD3 Management of Development in regard to Surface Water Flood Risk	A Out	This is a general statement of policy which cannot have any effect on an international site.
FRD4 Sustainable Drainage (SuDS)	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
FRD5 Artificial Modification of Watercourses	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
FRD6 Development in Proximity to Controlled Reservoirs	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
9.3 Renewable Energy		
RE1 Renewable Energy Development	B/H Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. All development must meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions in the LDP and must not have an unacceptable adverse impact on nature conversation and biodiversity or on air quality, water quality and quantity. There are additional requirements for wind energy including consideration of cumulative impact and risk of landslide. In view of these caveats and In view of policy NAT1, policy RE1 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
9.4 Telecommunications and Overhead Cables		
TOC1 Telecommunications Development and Overhead Cables	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. It is not spatially specific but could theoretically be relevant to proposals which might impact upon individual sites. Proposals must meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP and avoid sensitive locations or features, unless it is clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council as to why this cannot be achieved. In view of these caveats and In view of policy NAT1, policy TOC1 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
9.5 Water and Wastewater Infrastructure		
WWI1 Development Relying on Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
9.6 Waste Management		
WMT1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy which also applies to the other WMT policies. Proposals must meet the General Policy and accord with other provisions of the LDP. It also states that ' <i>d) the types of waste to be deposited or treated and the proposed method of disposal or treatment will not pose a serious environmental pollution risk to air, water or soil resources that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures;</i> '

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
WMT2 Waste Collection and Treatment Facilities	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability. In view of policy WMT1 and NAT1, policy WMT2 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
WMT3 Waste Disposal Sites	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability. In view of policy WMT1 and NAT1, policy WMT3 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
WMT4 Development in the vicinity of a Waste Management Facility	B Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability. In itself the policy WMT4 cannot lead to any development or change.
WMT5 Land Improvement	B/H Out	This is a policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability. In view of policy WMT1 and NAT1, policy WMT5 cannot undermine the conservation objectives of any international sites.
10.0 STEWARDSHIP OF OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND CREATING PLACES		
10.1 Historic Environment		
HE1 Archaeological Remains and their Settings	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE2 Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE3 Listed Buildings - Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE4 Listed Buildings - Demolition of a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE5 Development affecting the Setting of a Listed Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE6 Conservation Areas	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE7 Areas of Townscape Character	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
HE8 Non-listed Locally Important Building or Vernacular Building	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.

Plan Proposal/Policy	Screening	Screening Comment
HE9 Enabling Development for the Conservation of Heritage Assets	B Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals.
10.2 Advertisements		
AD1 The Control of Advertisements	B/G Out	This is a policy listing the general criteria for testing the acceptability of proposals. The nature of development allowed is such that there can be no conceivable effect on any international sites.
10.3 Place-Making		
SFA1 Strategic Focus Areas	G Out	This relates to place-making and good design in existing urban areas and in itself there can be no conceivable effect on any international sites.
11.0 SAFEGUARDING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT		
11.1 Natural Heritage		
NAT1 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.
NAT2 Species Protected by Law	A/D Out	This is a general statement of policy which restates legal and policy requirements and cannot have any adverse effect on an international site. In doing so it also serves as a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy. Affords additional protection to some site selection features such as hen harrier.
NAT3 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance – National	A/D 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.
NAT4 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance – Local	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy.
NAT5 Habitats, Species or Features of Natural Heritage Importance	D Out	This policy is a general plan-wide environmental/safeguarding protection policy. It may afford protection to supporting habitat for site selection features.



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