



Habitats Regulations Assessment of the East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2042 (Second Regulation 19 Publication Draft Plan – Autumn 2025)

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Summary

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) require local authorities to assess the impact of their local plan on the internationally important sites for biodiversity in and around their administrative areas. Together, these Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites are known as European sites. The task is achieved by means of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

An HRA asks very specific questions of a plan. Firstly, it 'screens' the plan to identify if there is a risk that certain policies or allocations may have a 'likely significant effect' on a European site, alone or (if necessary) in-combination with other plans and projects. If the risk of likely significant effects can be ruled out, then the plan may be adopted but if they cannot, the plan must be subjected to the greater scrutiny of an 'appropriate assessment' to find out if the plan will have an 'adverse effect on the integrity' of the European sites.

Following an appropriate assessment, a Plan is typically only adopted if an adverse effect on the integrity of the site can be ruled out. If necessary, a plan should be amended to avoid or mitigate any likely conflicts. This usually means that some policies or allocations will need to be modified or, more unusually, may have to be removed altogether.

This document is the HRA report for the East Devon Local Plan and has been undertaken to accompany the second Regulation 19 consultation version of the Plan (November 2025).

The screening of the Plan identified the potential for likely significant effects with respect to a number of different impact pathways:

- Urban effects (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar);
- Loss of supporting habitat/functionally-linked land (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC, East Devon Heaths SPA);
- Recreation (Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, River Axe SAC, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC);
- Water supply (Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar);
- Water quality (River Axe SAC);
- Air quality (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).

At the appropriate assessment stage there is not yet sufficient certainty to rule out adverse effects on integrity in relation to water quality (River Axe SAC) and air quality (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA). Further evidence and details of mitigation are necessary before the Plan can be adopted in its current form.

Contents

Summary	3
Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
1. Introduction.....	1
Overview.....	1
The East Devon Plan.....	1
Habitats Regulations Assessment process.....	1
European sites.....	2
Role of the competent authority.....	3
Process	3
Definitions, references to case law and guidance.....	6
Planning reform	8
2. European sites in and around East Devon.....	9
Overview of potentially relevant European sites	9
Overlapping site boundaries	10
Initial review of sites and potential impact pathways.....	10
3. Screening for Likely Significant Effects	17
What constitutes a likely significant effect?.....	17
The screening.....	17
Screening conclusions	51
4. Appropriate assessment: Urban effects	56
Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects	56
Introduction.....	56
The East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.....	58
Integrity test.....	59
Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	60
Integrity test.....	61
5. Appropriate assessment: Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land	
63	
Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects	63
Introduction.....	63
Beer Quarry & Caves SAC	63
Relevant allocations and concerns.....	63
Mitigation	68
Integrity test.....	72
East Devon Heaths SPA	72
Integrity test.....	75

6.	Appropriate assessment: Recreation	77
	Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects	77
	Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA & Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	77
	Strategic mitigation.....	79
	Marlcombe.....	79
	St John's.....	81
	Implications for the HRA.....	81
	Integrity test.....	82
	River Axe SAC	82
	Integrity test.....	84
	Sidmouth to West Bay SAC.....	84
	Integrity test.....	86
7.	Appropriate assessment: Water supply	87
	Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects	87
	Introduction.....	87
	Role of the Environment Agency	87
	Water Resource Management Plan.....	88
	Integrity test.....	89
8.	Appropriate assessment: Water quality.....	90
	Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects	90
	Introduction.....	90
	Advice from DTA Ecology	91
	Integrity test.....	92
9.	Appropriate assessment: Air quality.....	93
	Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects	93
	Introduction.....	93
	DTA Ecology advice.....	93
	Mitigation strategy.....	94
	Policy wording (PB04).....	95
	Integrity test.....	95
10.	Integrity Test.....	97
11.	Next steps	98
	References	100
	Appendix 1: Conservation Objectives.....	106
	Appendix 2: Summary of European Sites.....	108
	Appendix 3: Site pressures and threats for relevant European sites.....	115

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1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 This report is a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) report to accompany the East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2042 ('the Plan') at the Second Regulation 19 Publication Draft (second phase of the consultation, November 2025). This report has been prepared by Footprint Ecology on behalf of East Devon Council. An HRA assesses the implications of a plan for legally protected European sites.
- 1.2 This report will be updated each stage of the Plan and the HRA will be finalised at the point at which the Plan is ready for adoption.

The East Devon Plan

- 1.3 East Devon District spans the area from the Dorset border west as far as Exeter. The East Devon Local Plan will be the main planning policy document for the district and will set out where development should take place and provide the policies which will be used in making decisions on planning application.
- 1.4 The Second Regulation 19 Publication Draft (November 2025) is the second Regulation 19 consultation and follows on from earlier Regulation 19 consultation in the spring 2025. It is envisaged that the Plan will be submitted for examination in 2026. This is an updated version of the HRA report, building upon previous work undertaken for the first Regulation 19 consultation in January 2025 and the HRA in July 2022 that accompanied the Regulation 18 (Preferred Options) consultation.

Habitats Regulations Assessment process

- 1.5 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Importantly, the most recent amendments (the Conservation of Habitats and

Species (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019¹) take account of the UK's departure from the EU.

- 1.6 Regulation 105 *et seq* addresses the assessment of local plans and determines the scope of this HRA alongside recent Government Guidance on the interpretation and application of the Regulations².

European sites

- 1.7 'European sites' are the cornerstone of UK nature conservation policy. Each forms part of a 'national network' of sites that are afforded the highest degree of protection in domestic policy and law. They comprise Special Protection Areas (SPA) classified under the 1979 Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the 1992 Habitats Directive. As a matter of policy, potential SPAs (pSPAs), possible SACs (pSACs) and those providing formal compensation for losses to European sites, are also given the same protection³.
- 1.8 The network safeguards the most valuable and threatened habitats and species across the country and Europe. Prior to Brexit, this formed part of the EU-wide Natura 2000 network of SPAs and SACs to form the largest, coordinated network of protected areas in the world.
- 1.9 The designations made under the European Directives still apply and the term, 'European site' remains in use. According to long-established

¹ The amending regulations generally seek to retain the requirements of the 2017 Regulations but with adjustments for the UK's exit from the European Union. See Regulation 4, which also confirms that the interpretation of these Regulations as they had effect, or any guidance as it applied, before exit day, shall continue to do so.

² Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site. Defra and Natural England. 24 February 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site> (accessed 17th August 2022).

³ For the avoidance of doubt, the list of statutory European sites also comprises: A site submitted by the UK to the European Commission (EC) before Exit Day (a candidate SAC or cSAC) as eligible for selection as a Site of Community Importance (SCI) but not yet entered on the EC's list of SCI, until such time as the Appropriate Authority has designated the site or it has notified the statutory nature conservation body that it does not intend to designate the site. After Exit Day, no further cSACs will be submitted to the EU. Statutory European sites also include SCI included on a list of such sites by the European Commission from cSACs submitted by the UK before the UK left the EU, until such time as the UK designates the site when it will become a fully designated SAC.

Government policy⁴, European sites also comprise 'Wetlands of International Importance' (or Ramsar sites) although these do not form part of the national network.

- 1.10 The overarching objectives of the national network are to maintain, or where appropriate, restore habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive to a Favourable Conservation Status, and contribute to ensuring, in their area of distribution, the survival and reproduction of wild birds and securing compliance with the overarching aims of the Wild Birds Directive.
- 1.11 The appropriate authorities must have regard to the importance of protected sites, coherence of the national site network and threats of degradation or destruction (including deterioration and disturbance of protected features) on SPAs and SACs.

Role of the competent authority

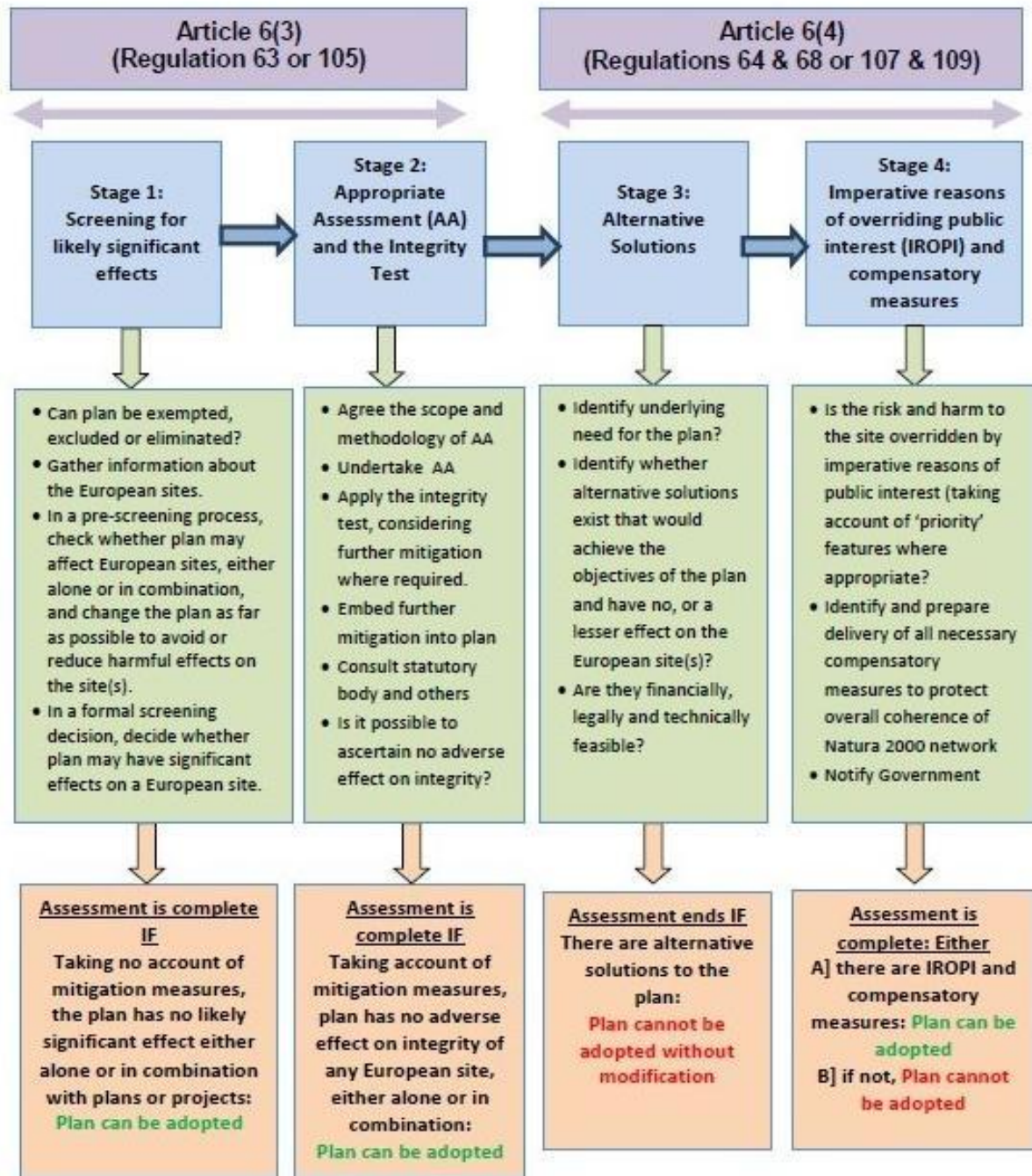
- 1.12 Although this HRA has been prepared to help the Council discharge its duties under the Habitats Regulations, the Council is the competent authority, and it must decide whether to accept this report or otherwise. Further, it should be noted that this HRA has been prepared for the purposes of preparing and examining the Plan. Individual allocations will need to be reviewed when they become the subject of an individual planning application, to ensure that if further assessment under the Habitats Regulations is necessary, it is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of appropriate assessment.

Process

- 1.13 The step-by-step process of HRA is summarised in Figure 1. Though dated prior to the latest amendments to the Regulations, the same tests still apply and it remains valid.

⁴ ODPM Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System (16 August 2005), to be read in conjunction with the current NPPF, other Government guidance and the current version of the Habitats Regulations.

Outline of the four-stage approach to the assessment of plans under the Habitats Regulations



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Figure 1: Outline of the assessment of plans under the Habitat Regulations

1.14 Throughout all stages, there is a continual consideration of the options available to avoid and mitigate any identified potential impacts. A competent authority may consider that there is a need to undertake further levels of

evidence gathering and evaluation at the appropriate assessment stage in order to provide the necessary certainty. At this point the competent authority may identify the need to add to or modify the plan in order to adequately protect the European site, and these mitigation measures may be added through the imposition of particular restrictions and conditions.

- 1.15 For plans, the stages of HRA are often quite fluid, with the plan normally being prepared by the competent authority itself. This gives the competent authority the opportunity to repeatedly explore options to prevent impacts, refine the plan and rescreen it to demonstrate that all potential risks to European sites have been successfully dealt with.
- 1.16 When preparing a plan, a competent authority may therefore go through a continued assessment as the plan develops, enabling the assessment to inform the development of the plan. For example, a competent authority may choose to pursue an amended or different option where impacts can be avoided, rather than continue to assess an option that has the potential to significantly affect European site interest features.
- 1.17 After completing an assessment, a competent authority should only adopt a plan where it can be ascertained that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site(s) in question. In order to reach this conclusion, the competent authority may have made changes to the plan, or modified the project with restrictions or conditions, in light of their Appropriate Assessment findings.
- 1.18 Where adverse effects cannot be ruled out, further exceptional tests are set out in Regulation 107. In exceptional cases, this allows a plan to be taken forward where there are no 'alternative solutions', where 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' apply and where compensation can be delivered. It should be noted that meeting these tests is a rare last resort and ordinarily, competent authorities seek to ensure that a plan or project is fully mitigated for, or it does not proceed.
- 1.19 In such circumstances where a competent authority considers that a plan should proceed under Regulations 107, they must notify the relevant Secretary of State. Normally, planning decisions and competent authority duties are then transferred, becoming the responsibility of the Secretary of State, unless on considering the information, the planning authority is directed by the Secretary of State to make their own decision on the plan or project at the local level. The decision maker, whether the Secretary of State or the planning authority, should give full consideration to any proposed

‘overriding reasons’ for which a plan or project should proceed despite being unable to rule out adverse effects on European site interest features, and ensure that those reasons are in the public interest and are such that they override the potential harm. The decision maker will also need to secure any necessary compensatory measures, to ensure the continued overall coherence of the European site network if such a plan or project is allowed to proceed. However, it is understood that the Council would not wish to pursue these derogations.

Definitions, references to case law and guidance

- 1.20 This HRA follows principles of case law, both UK and EU. It also refers as appropriate to the Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (Tyldesley & Chapman, 2013), to which Footprint Ecology subscribes. We also follow relevant government guidance.
- 1.21 Drawing on the Handbook, other relevant guidance and case law, we clarify the following terms used in the flow chart (Figure 1):
- 1.22 In Stage 1, A **‘likely significant effect’** following Waddenzee⁵, is a *‘possible significant effect; one whose occurrence cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information’*. It is a low threshold and simply means that there is a risk or doubt regarding such an effect. The screening stage is a preliminary examination, sometimes described as a coarse filter, or following Sweetman⁶, as *‘a trigger for the obligation to carry out an appropriate assessment’*. There should however be credible evidence to show that there is a real rather than a hypothetical risk of effects that could undermine a site’s conservation objectives. This was amplified in the Bagmoor Wind⁷ case where *‘if the absence of risk... can only be demonstrated after a detailed investigation, or expert opinion, [then] the authority must move from preliminary examination to appropriate assessment’*.
- 1.23 Following the People Over Wind judgement⁸, when making screening decisions for the purposes of deciding whether an appropriate assessment is

⁵ Waddenzee: European Courts C-127/02 Waddenzee 7th September 2004, reference for a preliminary ruling from the Raad van State.

⁶ Sweetman: European Court C – 258/11 Sweetman 11th April 2013, reference for a preliminary ruling from the Supreme Court of Ireland.

⁷ Bagmoor Wind: UK courts Bagmoor Wind v The Scottish Ministers, Court of Session [2012] CSIH 93.

⁸ *People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta* (323-17) [2018] PTSR 1668

required, competent authorities cannot take into account any mitigation measures.

- 1.24 Stage 2 involves the **appropriate assessment and integrity test**. Here a plan can only be adopted if the competent authority can demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site. This is a precautionary approach and means it is necessary to show the absence of harm.
- 1.25 Following Champion⁹ **'appropriate'** is not a technical term but simply indicates that the assessment needs to be appropriate to the task in hand.
- 1.26 The **integrity** of a European site has been described as the 'coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified¹⁰. An alternative definition, after Sweetman¹¹, is 'the lasting preservation of the constitutive characteristics of the site'.
- 1.27 In terms of the burden of proof, the HRA of development plans was first made a requirement in the UK following a ruling by the European Court of Justice in EC v UK¹². However, the judgement¹³ recognised that any assessment had to reflect the actual stage in the strategic planning process and the level of evidence that might or might not be available. This was given expression in the High Court (Feeney)¹⁴ which stated: "*Each ... assessment ... cannot do more than the level of detail of the strategy at that stage permits*".
- 1.28 The need to consider possible **in-combination** effects arises at stage 1 – the screening and also at stage 2 – the appropriate assessment and integrity test. The effects of the plan in-combination with other plans or projects are the cumulative effects which will or might arise from the addition of the effects of other relevant plans or projects alongside the plan under consideration. If during the stage 1 screening it is found the subject plan would have no likely effect alone, but might have such an effect in-combination then the appropriate assessment at stage 2 will proceed to

⁹ *R (on the application of Champion v North Norfolk District Council* [2015] 1 WLR 3170 at para 41

¹⁰ Para 20 of the ODPM Circ. 06/2005

¹¹ *Sweetman v An Bord Pleanála* (C-258-11) [2014] PTSR 1092 at paragraph 39

¹² *Commission v UK* (C-6/04) [2005] ECR I-9017

¹³ *Commission of the European Communities v UK* Opinion of Advocate General Kokott

¹⁴ *Feeney v Oxford City Council* [2011] EWHC 2699 Admin at paragraph 92

consider cumulative effects. Where a plan is screened as having a likely significant effect alone, the appropriate assessment should initially concentrate on its effects alone.

Planning reform

- 1.29 The draft Planning and Infrastructure Bill¹⁵ is proposed to speed up and streamline the delivery of new homes, with a focus on strategic mitigation to enable development. The Bill proposes that a delivery body (like Natural England) is responsible for the production of Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs), determining standardised levels of environmental mitigation needed for certain types and scales of development in a specific area. Where an EDP exists, developers will have the option to pay into a new 'Nature Restoration Fund', which the delivery body will use to fund appropriate mitigations, including by pooling contributions from multiple developers. It is proposed that contributions to the Nature Restoration Fund will mean that HRAs will not need to assess the implications of a particular development in respect to the particular impact pathway the EDP is addressing. It is likely that EDPs will cover strategic issues such as nutrient neutrality or air quality.
- 1.30 Until such time as the Bill becomes law and further clarity is available on how EDPs might work and when the Nature Restoration Fund might be operational, it will be necessary to assume that East Devon Council, as the competent authority, must assess all impact pathways. The Plan will need to be assessed in light of the legislation and legal requirements in place at the time, and as such it is necessary to ensure all impacts are identified in the early stages of the Plan and necessary mitigation identified and secured.

¹⁵ The bill is yet to receive Royal Assent, see <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3946> for background and details of progress.

2. European sites in and around East Devon

Overview of potentially relevant European sites

- 2.1 We have used 20km from the District boundary as an initial area of search (20km providing an area of search within which policies could reasonably be considered to generate measurable effects). Air quality impacts at plan level are typically considered to relate to a 10km distance (Chapman & Kite, 2021) while generic analysis of Footprint Ecology visitor data to countryside sites in the UK (Weitowitz et al., 2019) indicates that the majority of visitors originate within a 12.6km radius. The choice of 20km is therefore precautionary.
- 2.2 Sites that fall within this initial area of search are listed in Table 1. SAC sites are shown in Map 1, Map 2 shows SPA and Ramsar sites. All sites are described in Appendix 2. Map 2 includes the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) which has been secured as compensation for coastal defences to the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. Government policy is that any compensatory land must itself be protected as if it were a fully classified SPA or fully designated SAC.

Table 1: European Sites within a 20km radius.

SACs	SPA	Ramsar
Beer Quarry & Caves	East Devon Heaths	Exe Estuary
Bracket's Coppice	Exe Estuary	Somerset Levels & Moors
Chesil & The Fleet	Somerset Levels & Moors	
Culm Grasslands		
Dawlish Warren		
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths		
Hestercombe House		
Holme Moor & Clean Moor		
Lyme Bay and Torbay		
Quants		
River Axe		
Sidmouth to West Bay		
South Dartmoor Woods		
South Hams		
West Dorset Alder Woods		

- 2.3 It is essential to fully understand the ecology and sensitivity of the sites, in order to identify how they may be affected and which may be relevant for further consideration within the HRA. Appendix 1 summarises the generic conservation objectives and Appendix 2 provides detail of the relevant sites,

listing their qualifying features, describing the sites and providing links to the relevant detailed conservation advice from Natural England.

Overlapping site boundaries

2.4 It should be noted that the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC and the East Devon Heaths SPA have identical boundaries and in the rest of this report we will refer to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA where we mean both sites together. Where we use the specific site name then the text is specific to the relevant site (i.e. the SAC or SPA). Similarly, we use the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar when referring to both the Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar site together (again the boundaries overlap) and Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar to refer to the SPA and Ramsar together there.

Initial review of sites and potential impact pathways

2.5 Potential impact pathways, which are described as ways in which elements of the Plan might impact the relevant European sites, are summarised in Table 2. Potential impact pathways are then summarised by European site in Table 3. Many of the European sites listed are well outside the East Devon boundary and as such many can be easily excluded from any further assessment at this stage – they will not be relevant to the screening as there is no conceivable way they could be impacted. Table 3 therefore works to identify a shortlist of sites that are relevant to the screening and need to be checked against the relevant policies as part of screening for likely significant effects.

Table 2: Impact Pathways

Pathway	Explanation
General urban effects	Effects on a European site from nearby development, including light, noise, domestic cats, spread of invasive species, etc. Relates to development in close proximity.
Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land	Effects on European sites relating to the loss or deterioration of land outside the site boundary which supports the relevant qualifying features and directly relates to the individuals or populations on the European site. For example, bats foraging in the wider landscape away from a roost.
Recreation impacts	Effects on a European site caused by human use of site for recreational activities and their consequences, including walking, riding, sports, organised activities etc. Effects may include direct disturbance of species by people, dogs or vehicles, trampling, erosion, fire, vandalism and fly tipping.

Water supply	Effects on a European site from interruption, reduction or other interference of local hydrology, including groundwater, surface standing water or watercourses.
Water quality	Effects on a European site from altered local water quality, including outflows from wastewater treatment and surface water run-off. Water quality issues are considered further in Appendix 4, which comprises a separate report by DTA Ecology.
Air Quality	Effects on a European site from changes in local air quality, primarily likely from increased vehicle traffic associated with growth in the Plan. Impacts from traffic typically occur where roads are within 200m of the European site. Air quality issues are considered further in Appendix 5, which comprises a separate report by DTA Ecology.

Table 3: Potential impact pathways with a tick indicating where the pathway is relevant to the site. Distances are the approximate distances from the nearest part of the European site to the nearest part of the city boundary. No distances are given for those sites that are within the District boundary. Grey shading indicates sites that can be eliminated at this stage from any further assessment.

Site	Distance (km)	General urban effects	Loss of supporting habitat	Recreation impacts	Water supply	Water Quality	Air Quality	Notes
Beer Quarry & Caves SAC		✓	✓					Urban effects could include direct disturbance, vandalism etc at the roost site. Zones and guidance established for bats and the risk of loss of supporting habitat (Jennings & Youngman, 2022) and clear risks away from the roost in terms of supporting habitat and disruption of flight lines, loss of foraging habitat etc. No credible risk with respect to air quality (see Appendix 5).
Bracket's Coppice SAC	14.2							Site qualifies for Bechstein's Bat and Purple Moor Grass/Rush Pasture. Site is distant and in a very rural area, access is limited and the site is relatively hard to find.
Chesil & The Fleet SAC	12.6							Recreation impacts can be ruled out based on distance. Visitor survey data (Liley et al., 2022) indicates a potential zone of influence of around 7.3km and there were just 3 visitors from E. Devon.
Culm Grasslands SAC	17.8							Air quality and recreation impacts can be ruled out on the distance.
Dawlish Warren	0.4			✓				Potential for recreation impacts due to ease of access by boat from Exmouth and ferry.
East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA		✓	✓	✓			✓	Existing mitigation strategy in place for recreation impacts and 10km zone of influence established which extends to cover a large part of the District. Areas outside heaths could be used by SPA birds (Nightjar) and therefore potentially functionally-linked. Hydrological impacts ruled out as while the SAC qualifies for Southern Damselfly, these occur on rain-fed valley mires and site is on a plateau above any development locations.

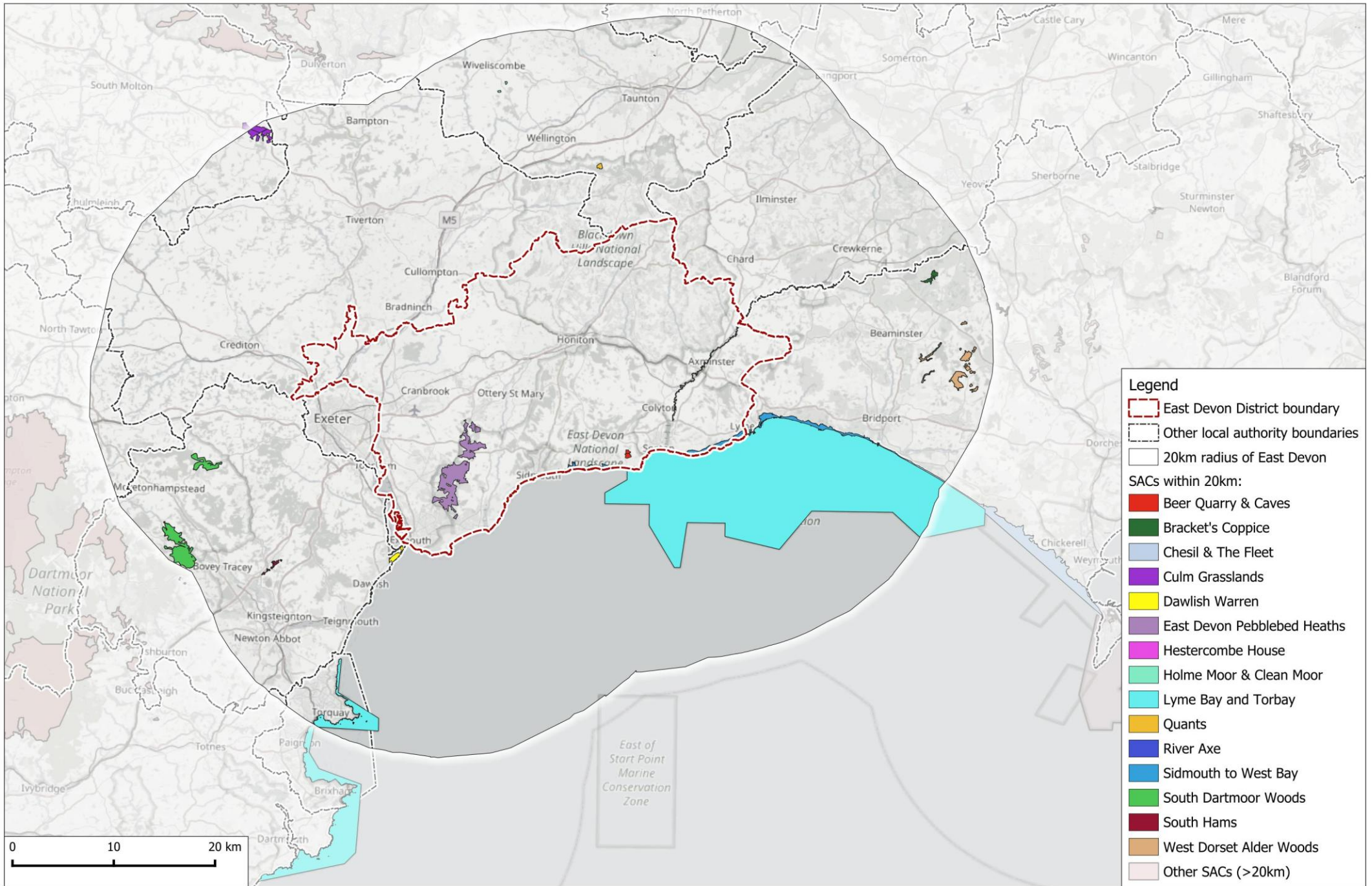
East Devon Local Plan HRA

Site	Distance (km)	General urban effects	Loss of supporting habitat	Recreation impacts	Water supply	Water Quality	Air Quality	Notes
Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar		✓	✓	✓	✓			Existing mitigation strategy in place for recreation impacts and 10km zone of influence established which extends to cover a large part of the District. Site within District and close to main settlements. No credible risks with respect to water quality (See Appendix 4) or air quality (see Appendix 5). Water supply a potential pathway as Wimbleball Reservoir (at head of River Exe) is main source of drinking water for East Devon. However, pathway probably of low risk given it is an estuary and classified/listed on the basis of birds, which feed on exposed mud.
Hestercombe House SAC	16.1							Site qualifies for Lesser Horseshoe Bats, which roost in the roof of the house. Given distance no impact pathways relevant.
Holme Moor & Clean Moor SAC	14.5							Small fen and Purple Moor Grass/Rush Pasture site well to the north of the district.
Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC								The sea caves are potentially vulnerable to recreation impacts but these only occur around Torbay. Water quality from wastewater unlikely to have an impact – eutrophication is identified as a low risk by Natural England in the supplementary conservation advice.
Quants SAC	5.9							Neutral grassland site that qualifies for Marsh Fritillary. Site is well to the north of the District, towards Wellington and Taunton. Impacts can be ruled out on distance and rural nature of site.
River Axe SAC				✓		✓		Recreation possibly a risk as there is canoeing on the river and there is access to the river from a range of Public Rights of Way and roads. Fish spawning areas may be impacted by trampling and disturbance. Paddling and entering the water could increase turbidity. Water quality a current concern and SAC a focus for nutrient neutrality (see Appendix 4). No credible risk with respect to air quality (see Appendix 5).

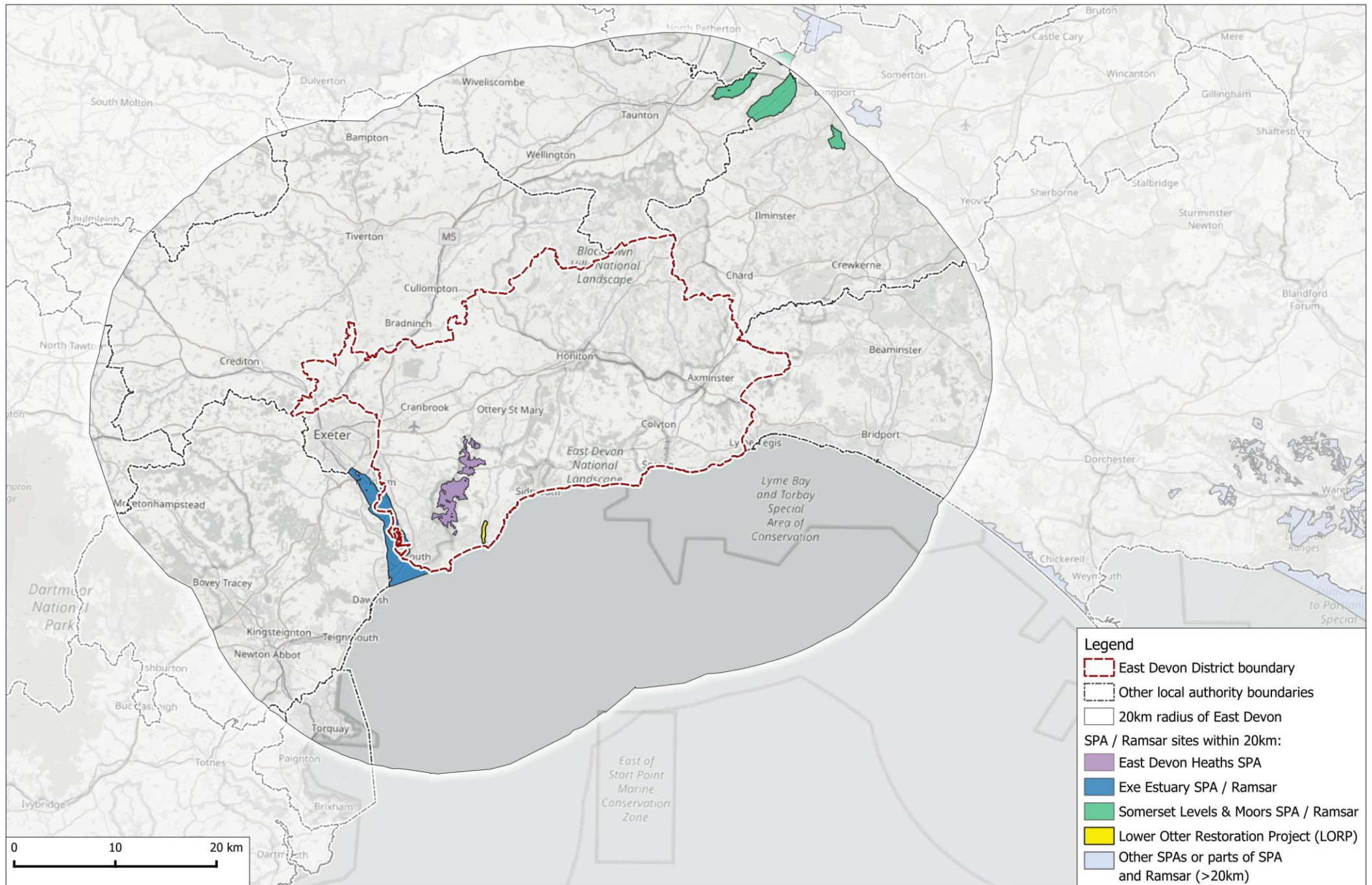
East Devon Local Plan HRA

Site	Distance (km)	General urban effects	Loss of supporting habitat	Recreation impacts	Water supply	Water Quality	Air Quality	Notes
Sidmouth to West Bay SAC		✓		✓	✓			Recreation impacts unlikely on steep slopes but annual vegetation of drift lines could be vulnerable to trampling impacts on beaches. Water quality could be relevant for any development in close proximity. No credible risk with respect to air quality (see Appendix 5).
South Dartmoor Woods SAC	9.3							Site is the other side of Exeter from East Devon and recreation impact pathway not relevant given the challenge of getting round Exeter and the distance. No credible risk with respect to air quality (see Appendix 5).
South Hams SAC	11.4							Exe Estuary creates a physical barrier and given distance involved, no impact pathways relevant.
West Dorset Alder Woods SAC	12.6							Well to the east and within the relatively isolated and rural valleys towards Dorchester. No impact pathways can be relevant.
Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar	13.8							Distance means all impact pathways can be ruled out. No hydrological links to district.

Map 1: SACs within 20km



Map 2: SPAs / Ramsar sites within 20km



3. Screening for Likely Significant Effects

- 3.1 The screening is the first step in the four-stage process of HRA. The screening for likely significant effects of a plan involves checking all aspects of the plan and identifying any areas of potential concern, which are then examined in more detail in the appropriate assessment (stage 2) of the HRA. The check for likely significant effects provides an initial test of the plan. It is undertaken to enable the plan maker as competent authority to do two things. Firstly, it narrows down and highlights those elements of the plan that may pose a risk to European sites. Secondly, where an option poses a risk but is a desired element of the plan, the screening exercise identifies where further assessment is necessary in order to determine the nature and magnitude of potential impacts on European sites and what could be done to avoid, cancel, reduce or eliminate those risks. Further assessment and evidence gathering after early screening may include, for example, the commissioning of additional survey work, modelling, researching scientific literature or setting out justifications in accordance with expert opinion.

What constitutes a likely significant effect?

- 3.2 A likely significant effect could be concluded on the basis of clear evidence of risk to European site interest, or there could be a scientific and plausible justification for concluding that a risk is present, even in the absence of direct evidence. The latter is an example of the precautionary approach, which is embedded through the HRA process. The precautionary principle should be applied at all stages in the HRA process and follows the principles established in domestic and EU case law.

The screening

- 3.3 Allocations are shown in Map 3.
- 3.4 The screening for likely significant effects within Table 4 below provides the screening at this stage in the plan-making. The screening covers the whole plan and is based on a draft version of the Plan dated 7th October 2025 (with some further amendments to selected policies shared separately by email subsequently).
- 3.5 Policies are screened to check the various European sites and pathways identified in the previous section. Where risks are highlighted and there is a

possibility of significant effects on European sites, further and more detailed appropriate assessment will be required. Inevitably there will be precaution in screening elements of the plan, as the purpose of screening for likely significant effects is to identify where there is either no possibility of an effect, or where there are uncertainties.

- 3.6 The screening does not take into account any avoidance / reduction / mitigation measures in line with People Over Wind¹⁶; mitigation can only be considered at Appropriate Assessment stage. People Over Wind clarified the need to carefully explain actions taken at each HRA stage, particularly at the screening for likely significant effects stage. The judgment highlights the need for clear distinction between the stages of HRA, and good practice in recognising the function of each. The screening for likely significant effects stage should function as a screening or checking stage (regardless of avoidance/reduction/mitigation measures), to determine whether further assessment is required. Assessing the nature and extent of potential impacts on European site interest features, and the robustness of mitigation options, should be done at the appropriate assessment stage.

¹⁶ People Over Wind: European Court Case C-323/17 People Over Wind & Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta 12 April 2018.

Map 3: Allocations

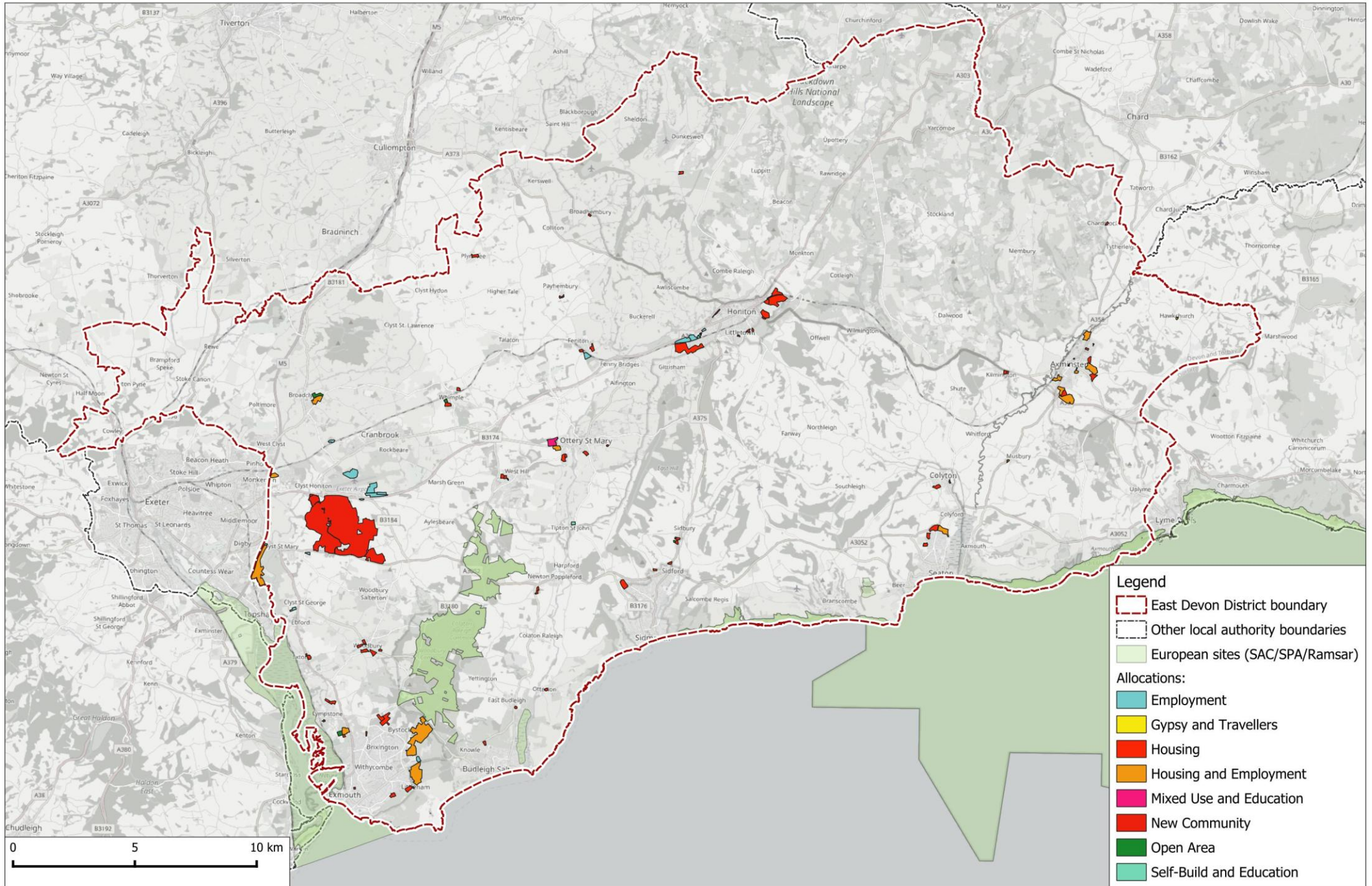


Table 4: Screening of the Plan for likely significant effects. Orange shaded rows with bold text indicates policies that are screened in, alone or in-combination. Grey shading indicates chapter headings for ease of reference.

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
Chapter 1. Introduction				
Chapter 2. The vision				
Chapter 3. The spatial strategy				
SP01: Spatial Strategy	Sets general strategic context and directs development towards the most sustainable locations.	General policy. No LSE.		Policy very strategic and while setting broad locations for development, sets no specific quantum of growth or detail. Policy is implemented through later policies in the Plan which are more specific and more appropriate to assess for their effects.
SP02: Levels of future housing development	Sets overall level of housing provision (20,909 dwellings, 2020 – 2042)	LSE. Screened in.	General urban effects alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Loss of supporting habitat alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Recreation impacts alone (Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, River Axe SAC, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Water supply alone (Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Water quality alone (River Axe SAC); Air quality impacts alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Policy very strategic and does not set specific locations, but overall quantum of growth enough to trigger likely significant effects for virtually all European sites and pathways. Water supply issues triggered for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar due to water supply for the area coming from the Wimbleball Reservoir, upstream of the Exe. Risks relate to the overall quantum of growth within the relevant water resource zone.
SP03: Housing requirement by Designated Neighbourhood Area	Policy gives housing requirement figures for Neighbourhood Areas for the purposes of neighbourhood planning	LSE. Screened in.	General urban effects alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Loss of supporting habitat alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Recreation impacts alone (Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, River Axe	Minimum housing requirements total several thousand new dwellings spread across a range of neighbourhoods.

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
			<p>SAC, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Water quality alone (River Axe SAC); Air quality impacts alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).</p>	
<p>SP04: Employment provision and distribution strategy</p>	<p>Outlines the level of employment provision and the distribution of employment sites</p>	<p>LSE. Screened in</p>	<p>General urban effects alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Loss of supporting habitat alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Water supply alone (Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Water quality alone (River Axe SAC); Air quality impacts alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).</p>	<p>176ha of provision. Includes allocations within 400m of the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, and therefore potential for urban effects. Seaton allocation at Harepath Road is adjacent to a pinch point for bats commuting from Beer Quarry and close to Lesser Horseshoe Bat roost site. Land at St. John’s is directly adjacent to the East Devon Heaths and potential for loss of foraging habitat for Nightjar. None of the allocations in locations where bird interest from Exe Estuary might occur. Employment allocations unlikely to add to water quality risks for the River Axe but screened in on a precautionary basis. Risks for air quality from increased traffic.</p>
<p>SP05: Development inside Settlement Boundaries</p>	<p>Cross references to Policies Map and supports development in principle within the boundaries</p>	<p>Policy listing general criteria No LSE.</p>		<p>Development within settlement boundaries may have impacts that need to be assessed – this is best achieved through the relevant policies setting numbers and distribution of growth</p>
<p>SP06: Development beyond Settlement Boundaries</p>	<p>Strategic text on development outside of settlement boundary.</p>	<p>Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.</p>		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
SP07: Delivery of infrastructure	Strategic policy requiring new development proposals to be supported by appropriate infrastructure	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		Policy states that infrastructure provision will only be approved where no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites. Wording in the policy is general and does not need to be treated as mitigation (in accordance with People vs Wind)
SP08: Phased delivery of Infrastructure and Services	Strategic policy ensuring developments that are brought forward in phases or in parcels by multiple developers are designed to ensure infrastructure and services are provided to the relevant boundaries	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
Chapter 4: Development at the West End				
WS01: Development of Marcombe community east of Exeter	Strategic policy establishing Marcombe community of 10,000 new homes (3,300 of which are allocated in this plan). Allocation includes housing, employment, gypsy and traveller, town centre, social, community and education facilities and infrastructure.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air Quality alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Large volume of new housing in a vulnerable location in close proximity to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar with risks relating to recreation and air quality. Loss of supporting habitat not a risk for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar or East Devon Heaths SPA as site comprises arable fields that are too far from the estuary to provide roost/feeding areas for waterbirds and unlikely to provide foraging habitat for Nightjar. SANG provision (150ha) is also included, a protective element of the

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
				policy relating to mitigation of European sites.
WS02: Development within the Enterprise Zone	Strategic policy giving support for inward investment and development for business and allied uses.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
WS03: Exeter Science Park	Strategic policy outlining uses for the Science park and other general criteria	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		Policy is site specific but strategic in that it does not set any particular levels of development and simply information on which uses are acceptable.
WS04: Land north of the Science Park (Brcl_23)	Strategic policy, allocation of 4.3ha for housing, small business use and supporting infrastructure.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Allocation near Monkerton for housing and employment. Approximately 5km from Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and 8.5km from East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.
WS05: Exeter Airport and its future operation and development	Strategic policy supporting expansion and growth of airport and related businesses within the current operational boundaries.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		Any increase in traffic or flights could have implications for nearby sites, e.g. air quality and the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. However, policy simply outlines support for growth and expansion of the airport and airport related businesses and is too strategic for any impacts to be identified or assessed.
WS06: Employment land east of airport	Strategic policy, allocation of 24.34ha land east of existing airport buildings.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Site within relatively close proximity and with road connections across the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
WS07: Employment land north of airport, adjoining Treasbeare	Strategic policy, allocation of 15.3ha of employment land.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Site within relatively close proximity and with road connections across the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.
WS08: Employment land opposite airport buildings, south of A30	Strategic policy, allocation of 1ha for small business use.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Site within relatively close proximity and with road connections across the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.
WS09: Clyst Valley Regional Park	Strategic policy, allocation for regional park delivering green and blue infrastructure.	Screened in as a policy intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on a European site.	Recreation impacts (Dawlish Warren, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar);	Environmentally positive policy. Policy screened in (in accordance with <i>People Over Wind</i>) as SANG role a component of the policy which will deliver bespoke mitigation. Mitigation role needs to be considered as part of appropriate assessment for recreation.
WS10: Development next to the M5 and north of Topsham	Strategic policy, allocation of land near Topsham, for 596 homes as well as employment, education and supporting infrastructure.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air Quality in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Very close proximity (1.5km) to Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and to East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA (7.5km).
WS12: Employment land at Sandygate, between M5 and Clyst Road	Strategic policy, allocation of 0.7ha for small business use.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
WS13: Employment land at Lodge Trading Estate, Broadclyst	Strategic policy, allocation for 1.89ha for employment use.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
WS14: Employment land south of Langdon's Business Park, Clyst St. Mary	Strategic policy, allocation of 1ha for employment use.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
WS15: Employment land at Darts Farm	Strategic policy, allocation of 2.13ha for small business units.	LSE. Screened in.	Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
Chapter 5: Development in the Towns and Village				
SD01: Exmouth and its development locations	Strategic policy, allocation of 11 sites for development in or around Exmouth.	LSE. Screened in.	General urban effects alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Loss of supporting habitat alone (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Recreation impacts in-combination (Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Policy includes a number of allocations. Given the location of the town, all allocations are close to the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. Land at St. John's abuts the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.
SD02: Axminster and development locations	Strategic policy, allocation of 12 sites for development in or around Axminster.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts alone (River Axe SAC), in-combination (Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Loss of supporting habitat alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC); water quality alone (River Axe SAC).	Policy allocates a number of locations all in close proximity to the River Axe. Land at Chard Road and the Axminster Carpet site are both very close (well within 100m) of the SAC boundary, bringing particular risks. Some allocations just within landscape connectivity zone for Lesser Horseshoe Bat (a feature of the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC), see

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
				(Jennings & Youngman, 2022) and therefore screened in on a precautionary basis for bats and supporting habitat.
SD03: Honiton and its development allocations	Strategic policy, allocation of 10 sites for development in Honiton.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Air Quality in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Land west of Hayne Lane is within 10km of East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. Honiton is largely outside the landscape connectivity zone for the Beer Quarry and Caves SAC set out in the guidance (Jennings & Youngman, 2022) and while some allocations are very close to the boundary for Lesser Horseshoe Bat all are around existing housing, lighting etc. and would not pose a risk in terms of loss of supporting habitat. Honiton is too far from the Sidmouth to West Bay SAC for recreation impacts to be a concern.
SD04: Ottery St Mary and its development allocations	Strategic policy, allocation of 6 sites for development in Ottery St Mary.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	288 new homes allocated for Ottery St Mary and 1.25 hectares for employment. Approximately 5km from East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. Ottery St. Mary is outside the landscape connectivity zone for the Beer Quarry and Caves SAC set out in the guidance (Jennings & Youngman, 2022).
SD05 Seaton and its development allocations	Strategic policy, allocation of 4 sites for development in Seaton.	LSE. Screened in.	Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC); Recreation effects in-combination (Sidmouth to West Bay SAC).	Allocations for housing and employment. Policy identifies the need for avoidance/mitigation/compensation measures to be

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
				identified to ensure no adverse effects to Beer Quarry & Caves SAC (3km away). Seaton is beyond the zone of influence for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA
SD06: Sidmouth and its development allocations	Strategic policy, allocation of sites for development in Sidmouth.	LSE. Screened in.	Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC); Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA)	Less than 5km to both East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and Sidmouth to West Bay SAC.
SD07: Development allocations at Broadclyst	Strategic policy, allocation of sites for development in Broadclyst.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD08: Development allocations at Budleigh Salterton	Strategic policy, allocation of site for development in Budleigh Salterton.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD09: Development allocations at Colyton	Strategic policy, allocation of 2 sites for development in Colyton.	LSE. Screened in.	Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC); Recreation effects in-combination (Sidmouth to West Bay SAC);	
SD10: Development allocations at Lypstone	Strategic policy, allocation of 3 sites for development in Lypstone.	LSE. Screened in.	General urban effects alone (Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Recreation impacts in-combination (Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	3 allocations, closest of which (Little Paddocks) is around 250m from the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. Checks on aerial imagery indicate none of the sites are on potential supporting habitat for the SPA/Ramsar.
SD11: Development	Strategic policy, allocation of sites for	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe	5 allocations. Closest is around 1,300m from the East Devon Heaths

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
allocations at Woodbury	development in Woodbury.		Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	SAC/SPA so beyond the distance urban effects (such as cats) would be a risk.
SD12: Development allocation at Broadhembury	Strategic policy, allocation of site for development in Broadhembury.	Policy the effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives either alone or in combination with other plans or projects		Single allocation of 10 homes. Broadhembury is outside the zones of influence for recreation impacts for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. The site is outside the catchment for the Axe Estuary and beyond the distance that traffic impacts for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA or recreation impacts to the coast could occur.
SD13: Development allocation at Chardstock	Strategic policy, allocation of site for development in Chardstock.	LSE. Screened in.	Water quality in-combination (River Axe SAC).	Allocation of around 30 dwellings is within the catchment for the Axe.
SD15: Development allocation at Dunkeswell	Strategic policy, allocation for 43 homes.	Policy the effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives either alone or in combination with other plans or projects		Dunkeswell is outside the zones of influence for recreation impacts for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. The allocation is outside the catchment for the Axe Estuary and beyond the distance that traffic impacts for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA or recreation impacts to the coast could occur.
SD16: Development	Strategic policy, allocation for 15 homes.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air	

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
allocation at East Budleigh			quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD17: Development allocations at Exton	Strategic policy, allocation of 2 sites at Exton.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	Allocations are both around 430m from the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and therefore too far for urban effects. Checks on aerial imagery indicate neither are potential supporting habitat for the SPA/Ramsar.
SD18: Development allocations at Feniton	Strategic policy, allocation of 3 sites at Feniton.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD19: Development allocation at Hawkchurch	Strategic policy, single allocation of 12 dwellings at Hawkchurch.	LSE. Screened in.	Water quality in-combination (River Axe SAC).	Allocation is within the catchment for the Axe.
SD20: Development allocations at Kilmington	Strategic policy, two allocations at Kilmington.	LSE. Screened in.	Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC); Recreation impacts alone (River Axe SAC), in-combination (Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Water quality in-combination (River Axe SAC).	Kilmington is within the sustenance zone for Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Bechstein's Bat in the guidance for Beer Quarry & Caves SAC. Recreation impacts for Axe triggered as there is a byway open to all traffic close to the allocations that provides access directly to the SAC.
SD21: Development allocation at Musbury	Strategic policy for a single allocation (22 homes plus employment use) at Musbury.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (Sidmouth to West Bay SAC).	Policy wording added to ensure that there are no adverse effects on integrity to Beer Quarry and Caves SAC, draft Development Brief has been produced to address suitable avoidance or mitigation measures.

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
SD22: Development allocations at Newton Poppleford	Strategic policy, allocation of sites for development in Newton Poppleford.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD23: Development allocation at Otterton	Strategic policy, single allocation of 10 dwellings at Otterton.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD24: Development allocation at Payhembury	Strategic policy, single allocation of 15 dwellings at Payhembury.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA); Air quality impacts in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD25: Development allocation at Plymtree	Strategic policy, single allocation of 30 dwellings at Plymtree.	Policy the effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives either alone or in combination with other plans or projects		Allocation is outside the zones of influence for recreation impacts for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. The site is outside the catchment for the Axe Estuary and beyond the distance that traffic impacts for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA or recreation impacts to the coast could occur.
SD26: Development allocation at Sidbury	Strategic policy, single allocation of 43 dwellings at Sidbury.	LSE. Screened in.	Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land alone (Beer Quarry & Caves SAC); Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA)	Policy flags the Beer Quarry and Caves SAC and need for suitable avoidance or mitigation measures.

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
SD27: Development allocation at Tipton St John	Strategic policy, single allocation of 5 self-build homes and a new primary school.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD28: Development allocations at West Hill	Strategic policy, 2 allocations totalling 64 dwellings.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
SD29: Development allocations at Whimple	Strategic policy, 2 allocations totalling 83 dwellings.	LSE. Screened in.	Recreation effects in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC); Air Quality in-combination (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA).	
Chapter 6. Mitigating Climate Change				
CC01: Climate Emergency	Strategic policy with target for East Devon to be carbon-neutral by 2040.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
CC02: Net-Zero carbon development	Strategic policy with requirement for developments to be net-zero and 'future proofed' for the effects of climate change.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
CC03: Promoting low carbon and renewable energy	Strategic text to support proposals for low carbon and renewable energy generation as long as certain criteria are met.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		Policy discusses the possibility of fossil-fuel based energy production installations, however only when renewable sources would be unsuitable. Policy does not name locations or provide particular quantum of growth and is therefore risks are removed. Risks and potential need for

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
				<p>mitigation would be addressed at project-level.</p> <p>Proposals for wind-based power generation may have a risk for bat and bird features of qualifying sites, however policy is general, does not cite a particular quantum or locations and risks are removed with the policy setting a requirement that any significant adverse risks must be mitigated and proposals only being allowed within the defined areas shown on the Policies map.</p>
CC04: Energy storage	Strategic policy, setting out support for energy storage facilities as long as particular criteria are met.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		
CC05: Heat Networks	Strategic policy ensuring heat networks will be installed for larger developments or expanded where one exists already.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		
CC06: Embodied carbon	Strategic policy requiring proposals to demonstrate actions taken to minimise embodied carbon.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		

Chapter 7: Adapting to Climate Change

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
AR01: Flooding	Strategic policy requiring development to minimise the impact of climate change and reduce the likelihood flooding.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		
AR02: Water quality and efficiency	Strategic policy requiring new dwellings to achieve the standard of 110 litres per day for water efficiency.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		Positive policy that will potentially reduce water use and ensure impacts of new development are minimal (although not bespoke mitigation in relation to European sites).
AR03: Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs)	Policy ensuring that new residential development or conversion of existing buildings will not be permitted within CCMAs.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
AR04: Relocation of uses affected by coastal change	Policy supporting relocation/replacement of buildings where certain criteria are met.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
AR05: Development affecting coastal erosion	Policy to support the promotion of coastal management proposals provided they do not have unacceptable adverse economic, social or environmental impact.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		Policy seeks to balance the need for protective measures to reduce rates of coastal change with the integrity of the World Heritage Site.
Chapter 8. Meeting Housing Needs				
HN01: Housing to address needs	Strategic policy outlining the range of housing needs, such as by age (retirement homes and	General policy that will not lead to		

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	first homes for younger generations), affordable housing, private accommodation, using up an to date Local Housing Needs Assessment of the district.	development. No LSE.		
HN02: Affordable housing	Strategic policy giving the minimum requirements of affordable housing, rented housing, first homes and any other conditions to consider per development site.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN03: Housing to meet the needs of older people	Policy aiming to widen housing choices for older people in East Devon by securing a diverse supply of market and affordable housing, including specialist accommodation.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN04: Accessible and Adaptable Housing	Policy ensures new homes in East Devon are accessible and adaptable, meeting current and future needs by adhering to specific building regulations.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN05: Self-Build and custom build housing	Policy supports custom and self-build housing to meet diverse housing needs, encourage high-	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	quality design, and provide opportunities for individuals to build their own homes.			
HN06: Sub-dividing or replacing existing buildings and dwellings	Policy supports the sub-division and replacement of existing dwellings to meet housing needs, reduce carbon footprints, and reuse existing resources within established communities.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN07: Householder annexes, extensions, alterations or outbuildings outside settlement boundaries	Policy supports householder annexes, extensions, alterations, and outbuildings to meet changing needs while maintaining the character and sustainability of existing dwellings.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN08: Hostels and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	Policy outlining the criteria for converting a residential dwelling to multi-occupancy.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN09: Gypsy and traveller sites	Policy ensures the provision and safeguarding of sites for Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, addressing their accommodation needs while integrating sites into	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	the community and landscape.			
HN10: Rural housing exception sites	Strategic policy supporting rural exception site housing proposals to provide affordable housing for local communities, ensuring developments are well-related to settlements and meet proven needs.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
HN11: Housing for rural workers	Policy supports housing for rural workers outside settlement boundaries, ensuring it meets the needs of rural businesses while minimizing environmental impacts.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
Chapter 9. Supporting the Economy and Town Centres				
SE01: Employment development within settlement boundaries	Policy addressing the need for employment land within settlement boundaries, supporting self-containment and reflecting the settlement hierarchy.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
SE02: Employment development in the countryside	Policy supporting the intensification and extension of existing employment businesses in the countryside, focusing	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	on reusing or adapting existing buildings to minimise new development.			
SE03: Farm diversification	Policy supporting employment growth on existing rural sites while protecting the countryside's character. Outlines the criteria for farm diversification and expansion.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
SE04: Resisting the loss of employment sites	Policy aims to resist the loss of employment sites to other uses, ensuring that land designated for employment remains available to support economic growth and local job opportunities.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
SE05: Employment and Skills Statements	Policy requiring major developments to complete an Employment and Skills plan and provide an Employment and Skills Statement.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
SE06: Town centre hierarchy	Strategic policy setting the relevance of the hierarchy of town centres in East Devon, prioritising tier one and two centres for main town centre uses.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
SE07: Town centre development, sequential approach and impact assessment	Policy supporting the development of town centres in East Devon, enhancing their role as sustainable shopping and leisure destinations.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
SE08: Local shops and services	Policy supporting the development of new shops and services within tier 1-4 settlements, villages, and neighbourhood centres, ensuring they enhance the local retail or service role and are accessible by walking and cycling.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
SE09: Rural shops outside of towns and villages	Policy supports retail development in rural areas outside towns and villages, provided it directly relates to an existing rural business and meets specific criteria to protect town centres and local shops.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
SE10: Sustainable Tourism	Policy aims to secure a high-quality, sustainable tourism experience in East Devon, benefiting local communities and businesses while conserving the district's	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		There could be risks associated with tourism growth e.g. with respect to water quality or recreation. Policy however sets no quantum of growth or specific locations.

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage.			
SE11: Holiday accommodation parks in designated landscapes	Policy restricts new holiday accommodation parks in East Devon’s most sensitive landscapes, allowing only extensions or ancillary facilities on existing sites under specific conditions to protect the environment and local communities.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
Chapter 10: High Quality Design				
DS01: Design and local distinctiveness	Strategic policy ensuring new development and refurbishment of existing buildings are of high-quality design and locally distinctive, aligning with local and national design guidance.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
DS02: Housing density and efficient use of land	Policy ensuring residential development optimises site density while conserving or enhancing the area’s character and making efficient use of land.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		Minimum density standards yet to be determined.
DS03: Display of advertisements	Policy ensuring that advertisements are appropriately positioned,	Policy that could not have any		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	safe, sympathetic to the area's character, and designed with compatible colours and materials.	conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
DS04: Green and blue infrastructure	Policy ensuring that development in East Devon delivers high-quality, multi-functional Green and Blue Infrastructure in line with Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		Positive policy that may play incidental role in mitigating recreation impacts to European sites.
Chapter 11: Sustainable Transport and Communications				
TR01: Prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport	Strategic policy prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport for short local journeys and as part of longer journeys.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
TR02: Protecting transport sites and routes	Strategic policy, supporting the delivery and protection of sites and routes critical for developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and facilitate large-scale development.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
TR03: Travel plans, transport statements,	Policy requiring requires developments likely to generate significant vehicle movements to be	Policy that could not have any conceivable		

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
transport assessments	supported by a transport statement or assessment and a travel plan to ensure sustainable travel arrangements.	effect on a site No LSE.		
TR04: Parking standards and electric vehicle parking provision	Policy sets minimum parking standards for new residential and employment developments, considering car and cycle parking requirements to promote sustainable transport and reduce emissions	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		Policy likely to have positive effects in terms of air quality, in-time reducing emissions to the Pebblebed Heaths with provision of supporting infrastructure for electric vehicles. Policy not however intended as specific mitigation.
TR05: Aerodrome safeguarded areas and Public Safety Zones	Policy ensuring that developments within aerodrome safeguarded areas and Public Safety Zones do not compromise the safe operation of protected aerodromes or public safety.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
TR06: Digital Connectivity	Policy ensuring that major developments have access to superfast broadband and high-quality communications infrastructure, supporting economic growth and social well-being.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
TR07: Wireless connectivity and	Policy ensuring proposals accord with principles of	Policy that could not have		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
telecoms infrastructure	good practice for wireless network development and outlining the criteria for permission.	any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
Chapter 12: Our Outstanding Landscape				
OL01: Landscape features	Strategic policy protecting East Devon’s landscape, countryside, and rural areas from harmful development. Development is permitted only if a proportionate Landscape Appraisal demonstrates it will protect and enhance valued landscape attributes and special features.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Environmentally positive policy that will protect rural areas from development.
OL02: National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	Strategic policy ensuring the highest level of protection for the landscape and scenic beauty of National Landscapes (NLs) in East Devon, including the Heritage Coast.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
OL03: Coastal Preservation Areas	Strategic policy designating land around the coast and estuaries of East Devon as a Coastal Preservation Area, protecting its	General environmental policy. No LSE.		

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	undeveloped and open status while supporting appropriate proposals that increase public access to the coast.			
OL04: Areas of strategic visual importance	Policy ensuring that development proposals preserve the visual integrity, identity, and scenic quality of East Devon by conserving and enhancing key views and landmarks.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
OL05: Green wedges	Policy restricting development within green wedges to prevent settlement coalescence and maintain the individual character and identity of settlements.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
OL06: Land of Local Amenity Importance or Local Green Space	Policy gives added protection against development to specific locally valued green areas or open spaces, including those which are identified during the period of the Local Plan.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
OL07: Contaminated land	Policy requires a contaminated land assessment for development sites where	General environmental policy. No LSE.		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	contamination is anticipated, ensuring safe remediation and mitigation.			
OL08: Potentially hazardous developments and notifiable installations	Policy ensures that development within notified consultation zones around hazardous installations poses no health and safety risks.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
OL09: Control of Pollution	Policy prevents development that would result in unmitigated pollution, protecting the environment and public health.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Policy does make specific mention of wildlife sites, noting European designated sites and species. However, this is too general to be taken into account as mitigation and is therefore screened in (following <i>People Over Wind</i>).
OL10: Development on high quality agricultural land	Policy restricts development on the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2, and 3a) unless there is an overriding need and no suitable lower-grade land is available.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site. No LSE.		
Chapter 13: Our Outstanding Biodiversity and Geodiversity				
PB01: Protection of Internationally and nationally important wildlife sites	Strategic policy which clarifies existing legislation and government guidance, detailing when impacts may be permitted.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Policy related to European sites, however, it is too general to be taken into account as mitigation and is therefore screened out (following <i>People Over Wind</i>).

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
PB02: Protection of regionally and locally important wildlife sites	Policy provides additional criteria where developments that may impact regional and local wildlife networks may be permitted, but generally enhances protections.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Environmentally positive policy ensuring protection to wider countryside sites outside National Network.
PB03: Protection of irreplaceable habitats and important features	Proposals that will adversely affect important habitats will be refused, unless in exceptional circumstances. Important habitats include hedgerows and ancient woodland, for example.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Environmentally positive policy ensuring protection to wider countryside sites outside National Network.
PB04: Policy – Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and mitigation strategies	Strategic policy setting out need for HRA and mitigation requirements for particular European sites.	Policy intended to avoid or reduce harmful effect to European sites. Screened in.	Mitigation and site-specific wording relates to urban effects (East Devon Heaths SPA), loss of supporting habitat (Beer Quarry and Caves SAC), recreation impacts (Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and Dawlish Warren SAC), water quality (River Axe SAC) and air quality impacts (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA/Ramsar).	Safeguarding / protective policy that is intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects to a European site.
PB05: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Strategic policy setting out requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Environmentally positive policy expected to have general positive benefits for biodiversity.
PB06: Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Nature Recovery Network (NRN)	Strategic policy that supports proposals that enhance existing Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) and features within them,	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Likely to be beneficial to European sites through ensuring connectivity.

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	expands NRN areas, and improvements in landscape-scale connectivity of ecological features.			
PB07: Ecological enhancement and biodiversity in the built environment	Policy promotes wildlife enhancement in new developments by requiring features that support biodiversity, such as bird and bat boxes, hedgehog-friendly fencing, and suitable nesting sites.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		Positive policy likely to benefit species associated with urban environments.
PB08: Tree, hedges and woodland on development sites	Policy setting out requirements around tree protection and tree planting.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
PB09: Monitoring requirements for new planting schemes	Policy setting requirements for monitoring and inspection of new planting.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
PB10: Protection and enhancement of the Dorset and East Devon /Jurassic Coast World Heritage site	Policy setting out assessment requirements in relation to the Jurassic World Heritage Site.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
PB11: Protection of designated geological sites	Policy ensures protection for nationally designated geological sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), from adverse impacts of development.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
PB12: Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)	Policy providing protection for Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) from adverse impacts of development, ensuring their scientific and educational value is maintained.	General environmental policy. No LSE.		
Chapter 14: Open Space and Sports and Recreation				
OS01: Access to open space and recreation facilities	Policy aims to align open space and recreation provision with new development and address current deficits.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		
OS02: Sport, recreation and open space provision in association with development	Policy sets quantified open space standards based on Fields in Trust guidelines.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		Policy discusses the contribution of greenspace to SANG requirements, but is too general to be considered as part of mitigation.
OS03: Location of facilities for sport	Policy supports the provision of new and enhanced open spaces,	Policy that could not have any		Policy could have incidental benefit for European sites through deflecting recreational use. However, policy is

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
and recreation and open spaces	sports facilities, and allotments within or near urban areas, ensuring they are accessible and compatible with neighbouring uses.	conceivable effect on a site No LSE.		general and not specific mitigation requirements and therefore does not need to be considered at appropriate assessment (after <i>People Over Wind</i>).
OS04: New allotments and avoiding the loss of existing ones	Policy supports the creation of new allotments and protects existing ones, ensuring they are well-located and avoid adverse impacts.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
OS05: Leisure and recreation developments in the countryside	Policy supports the provision of outdoor recreation facilities in the countryside and on the coast, ensuring they are appropriately scaled and located.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		Policy could have incidental benefit for European sites through deflecting recreational use. However, policy is general and not specific mitigation requirements and therefore does not need to be considered at appropriate assessment (after <i>People Over Wind</i>).
Chapter 15: Our Outstanding Historic Environment				
HE01: Historic Environment	Strategic policy ensuring new developments consider the significance of heritage assets, promoting their conservation and viable use while enhancing local character and distinctiveness.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		
HE02: Listed buildings	Policy ensures that any development affecting	Policy listing general		

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
	listed buildings conserves and enhances their heritage significance, respecting their architectural and historic features.	criteria. No LSE.		
HE03: Conservation Areas	Policy ensures that development within or affecting Conservation Areas conserves or enhances their special interest, character, setting, and appearance.	General policy that will not lead to development. No LSE.		
HE04: Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments	Policy protects Scheduled Monuments and archaeological remains, ensuring development proposals consider their significance and setting.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site. No LSE.		
HE05: Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens	Sites of special historic interest should be conserved or enhanced. Policy ensures that development proposals conserve or enhance the special historic interest, character, or setting of parks and gardens on the Historic England Register.	Policy that could not have any conceivable effect on a site. No LSE.		

Chapter 16: Community Facilities

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Plan section/policy	Description	Initial LSE screening	Potential risks	Comments
CF01: New or extended community facilities	Policy encouraging provision of new social and community facilities and the extension of existing facilities.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
CF02: Loss of Community facilities	Policy aims to prevent the loss of community facilities unless they are no longer needed or viable, or an equivalent replacement is provided.	Policy listing general criteria. No LSE.		
Chapter 17. Implementation and Monitoring	Infrastructure will be developed alongside housing and economic development. Monitoring of the local plan will ensure that policies are carried out successfully and not just a 'wish list', via the Annual Monitoring Report.	No LSE.		Not a policy, but details from the monitoring of the River Axe (water quality) and the east Devon Heaths (air quality) will inform mitigation requirements in terms of future developments.

Screening conclusions

- 3.7 The screening of the Plan has checked all relevant sites for a number of risks in terms of general urban effects, loss of supporting habitats, recreation, hydrological impacts and air quality.
- 3.8 All allocations were checked, with the following criteria underpinning how allocations were screened in as having a likely significant effect:
- Urban effects:
 - Allocations within close proximity - typically within 400m of European sites (screening identified allocations that had likely significant effects for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and for the Exe Estuary SPA).
 - Loss of supporting habitat:
 - Beer Quarry & Caves SAC: using the guidance by Jennings & Youngman (2022) and checking allocations within connectivity zones or sustenance zones as to whether they hold potential habitat (trees, pasture, scrub, hedgerows etc.) and checking in relation to pinch points (numerous allocations screened in, with particular risks for allocations north of Seaton due to proximity to pinch points).
 - East Devon Heaths SPA: sites that may be suitable foraging habitat for Nightjar in terms of supporting wetland, scrub or woodland habitat, trees, hedgerows etc., and checking that the allocation would not be a barrier to movement from the heaths towards suitable habitat (screening identified sites around Exmouth in particular).
 - Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar: any allocations on low lying, open, flat ground within a few hundred metres of the SPA/Ramsar or deemed likely to hold regular roost or feeding areas for wintering waterbirds (no allocations identified).
 - Recreation:
 - Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and/or East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA: any allocations or increase in residential accommodation within the relevant zones of influence (10km) from the strategic mitigation scheme (lots of allocations and policies screened in).
 - Dawlish Warren SAC: allocations or tourism growth in or around Exmouth where direct access by ferry or boat is possible to Warren Point (a small number of policies screened in).
 - River Axe SAC: allocations in close proximity to the SAC where there is public access to the River (allocations at Axminster and Kilmington screened in).
 - Sidmouth to West Bay SAC: allocations where the SAC coastline is the nearest coast and where access via road network or rights of way is relatively easy (lots of allocations and policies screened in).

- Water supply:
 - Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar: any policies setting the overall quantum of growth on water supply (as Water Resource Zone is fed by reservoir upstream of the River Exe).
- Water quality:
 - River Axe SAC: any allocations or development within the catchment (numerous allocations screened in).
 - Sidmouth to West Bay SAC: any allocations or development identified that will influence water run-off or have septic tanks that might overflow directly into the SAC (no allocations identified).
 - Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar: any allocations or development identified that will majorly influence water run-off or have septic tanks that might overflow directly into the SPA/Ramsar (no allocations identified, see (DTA Ecology, 2024b) for more information re potential for likely significant effects).
- Air quality:
 - East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA: all policies which might result in increased traffic on relevant roads within 200m of the SAC/SPA (numerous policies relating to development within 10km of the SAC/SPA screened in).

3.9 Policies that have been screened in are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of policies screened in for Likely Significant Effects and relevant European sites and impact pathways. Grey shaded cells indicate effects alone (as opposed to in-combination). * Indicates policies intended to reduce or avoid harmful effects to European sites and as such are screened in for further consideration at appropriate assessment.

Policy	Urban effects		Loss of supporting habitat		Recreation		Water Supply		Water Quality		Air quality	
	East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	Beer Quarry & Caves SAC	East Devon Heaths SPA	River Axe SAC	East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	River Axe SAC	Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	River Axe SAC	East Devon Heaths SCA/SPA
SP02: Levels of future housing development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SP03: Housing requirement by Designated Neighbourhood Area	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
SP04: Employment provision and distribution strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓
WS01: Development of Marlcombe community east of Exeter						✓	✓					✓
WS04: Land north of the Science Park						✓	✓					✓
WS06: Employment land east of airport												✓
WS07: Employment land north of airport, adjoining Treasbeare												✓
WS08: Employment land at Wares Farm, opposite airport buildings, south of A30												✓
*WS09: Clyst Valley Regional Park					✓	✓	✓					
WS10: Development next to the M5 and north of Topsham						✓	✓					✓
WS12: Employment land at Sandygate, between M5 and Clyst Road												✓
WS13: Employment land at Lodge Trading Estate, Broadclyst												✓

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Policy	Urban effects		Loss of supporting habitat		Recreation		Water Supply		Water Quality		Air quality	
	East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	Beer Quarry & Caves SAC	East Devon Heaths SPA	River Axe SAC	East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	River Axe SAC	Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	River Axe SAC	East Devon Heaths SCA/SPA
WS14: Employment land south of Langdon’s Business Park, Clyst St. Mary												✓
WS15: Employment land at Darts Farm												✓
SD01: Exmouth and its development locations	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
SD02: Axminster and development locations			✓					✓	✓		✓	
SD03: Honiton and its development allocations						✓						✓
SD04: Ottery St Mary and its development allocations						✓			✓			✓
SD05 Seaton and its development allocations			✓						✓			
SD06: Sidmouth and its development allocations			✓			✓			✓			✓
SD07: Development allocations at Broadclyst						✓	✓					✓
SD08: Development allocations at Budleigh Salterton						✓	✓					✓
SD09: Development allocations at Colyton			✓						✓			
SD10: Development allocations at Lypstone		✓			✓	✓	✓					✓
SD11: Development allocations at Woodbury					✓	✓	✓					✓
SD13: Development allocation at Chardstock											✓	
SD16: Development allocation at East Budleigh						✓	✓					✓
SD17: Development allocations at Exton						✓	✓					✓
SD18: Development allocations at Feniton						✓						✓
SD19: Development allocation at Hawkchurch											✓	

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Policy	Urban effects		Loss of supporting habitat		Recreation		Water Supply		Water Quality		Air quality	
	East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	Beer Quarry & Caves SAC	East Devon Heaths SPA	River Axe SAC	East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	River Axe SAC	Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	River Axe SAC	East Devon Heaths SCA/SPA
SD20: Development allocations at Kilmington			✓					✓	✓		✓	
SD21: Development allocation at Musbury									✓			
SD22: Development allocations at Newton Poppleford						✓	✓		✓			✓
SD23: Development allocation at Otterton						✓	✓					✓
SD24: Development allocation at Payhembury						✓						✓
SD26: Development allocation at Sidbury			✓			✓			✓			✓
SD27: Development allocation at Tipton St John						✓			✓			✓
SD28: Development allocations at West Hill						✓			✓			✓
SD29: Development allocations at Whimble						✓			✓			✓
*PB04: Policy – Habitats Regulations Assessment	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓

4. Appropriate assessment: Urban effects

Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects

- 4.1 Likely significant effects were identified in the screening for a range of policies (see Table 5), all of which support development in close proximity to European site boundaries. Relevant European sites were:
- East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA
 - Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar
- 4.2 In addition, Policy PB04 includes specific mitigation text around the East Devon Heaths SPA and urban effects, establishing a zone within 400m of the SPA boundary where new dwellings will not be allowed. In accordance with People Over Wind this policy has not been taken account in the screening and will need to be considered as part of the appropriate assessment.

Introduction

- 4.3 Urban effects relate to issues where development is close to the European site boundary and is an umbrella term relating to impacts such as light, noise, cat predation, fly tipping, spread of invasive species (e.g. from gardens and garden waste) and vandalism. Development in close proximity can mean European sites are fragmented and isolated with development creating barriers to species movement.
- 4.4 Studies of fire incidence have shown that sites with high levels of housing within 500m of the site boundary have a higher fire incidence (Kirby & Tantram, 1999). Fires can start in a range of ways, including deliberate arson, children playing, campfires, barbecues, sparks from vehicles, discarded cigarettes etc. While linked to urban effects we treat fire risk under recreation, as the issues are not limited to housing in close proximity. Similarly, invasive species can be spread through garden waste and can also be spread through recreation, and we consider spread of invasives by people in the appropriate assessment section for recreation.
- 4.5 Where housing is in close proximity, adjacent green space is often the focus for uses such as bike jumps or den building or camps. Fly-tipping and dumping of garden waste can also be more common when housing is in close proximity. Noise pollution and light pollution can spill from urban areas

and where housing is in close proximity. As such, managing and looking after such sites can be more challenging.

4.6 A development exclusion zone has been established around many European sites to reflect the particular risks with development directly adjacent to the boundary. Local plans and strategic mitigation schemes include a presumption against development within these areas and such zones have become an established policy approach.

4.7 Examples of areas where a zone is established in planning policy include:

- Across the Thames Basin Heaths (11 local planning authorities)
- Around the Dorset Heaths (five local planning authorities)
- In the Brecks (e.g. Breckland District)
- Around the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths (East Devon District Council)
- Around Cannock Chase SAC (e.g. Cannock Chase Council Local Plan)
- At Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC (e.g. Wealden District's Core Strategy Local Plan)
- Burnham Beeches (e.g. Chilterns and South Bucks).

4.8 Most of the above examples are heathland sites and a 400m zone is used, however Burnham Beeches is a woodland site and the zone is 500m.

4.9 The exclusion approach is widely accepted and reduces the risks from increasing urbanisation. It provides greater certainty that mitigation measures (such as access management) for cumulative levels of urban growth will be successful as such measures can be targeted to those travelling some distance.

4.10 The choice of 400m is based on the literature (summarised in Underhill-Day, 2005) and to some extent is a pragmatic choice. For example, 400m reflects distances at which sites will be 'local' and easily accessible from nearby housing and fits with the fire research outlined above. Studies of cat roaming behaviour indicate that 400m is likely to work as an appropriate buffer width to limit cats (Pirie et al., 2022) particularly in very urban environments (Thomas, Baker, & Fellowes, 2014). How far cats roam does however relate to housing density (Hall et al., 2016) and in more rural areas cats can roam considerably further and some studies have suggested ranges over 2km for more rural situations (Hall et al., 2016; Metsers, Seddon, & van Heezik, 2010).

The East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA

- 4.11 The East Devon Heaths are currently relatively rural in feel, with little housing adjacent to the SAC/SPA boundary. Urban effects would have the potential to undermine the conservation objectives for the European site through:
- Cat predation (potentially impacting the population of each of the qualifying features of the SPA);
 - Fly tipping (potentially leading to spread of invasive species and undermining the structure and function (including typical species) of the qualifying natural habitats of the SAC);
 - Presence of people from nearby homes undertaking activities such as den building, building bike jumps, flying drones, collecting firewood etc., with the potential to undermine a range of conservation objectives.
- 4.12 Policies SP02, SP03 and SP04 set the overall quantum of housing and employment land and the broad distribution, which includes sites adjacent to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. Policy SD01 (Exmouth and its development locations) includes a large allocation (700 dwellings) at St. John's that directly abuts the southern parts of the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA (Withycombe Raleigh Common). In addition, the allocation at Marley's Drive (50 dwellings) is just over 400m from the SAC/SPA boundary.
- 4.13 St John's is therefore the key allocation of concern, and will include employment uses as well as housing. Policy SD01 is clear that the whole allocation will require a complete masterplan, with housing focussed on the southern part of the allocation and no housing being within 400m of the heaths. Furthermore, a SANG will provide alternative space for recreation use.
- 4.14 Policy PB04 provides further strategic protection, stating that new dwellings and tourist accommodation will not be permitted on or within 400m of the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. In addition, PB04 sets out a requirement for strategic mitigation for recreation, in accordance with the mitigation strategy. This provides a ranger presence among other measures which – while not specifically targeting urban effects – will help address some of the issues.
- 4.15 At a strategic level these requirements are sufficient to ensure adequate protection to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. Further assessment will be necessary at project level and once masterplans are available. Key

components to the masterplans and design elements at project level that will ensure adequate protection to the heaths will need to include:

- SANG design that makes SANG the default location for new residents when looking for informal countryside space for exercise and other activities adjacent to where they live. This will require extensive SANG provision of high quality that can deflect people away from the heaths (SANG provision at St. John's is covered further in the recreation section, see para 6.14).
- Housing and employment sites are set well back from the SAC/SPA boundary, certainly at least 400m, with the area within 400m providing a strong barrier to people movement towards the heath.
- Robust barriers to cat movement between urban areas and the heaths, for example through water bodies, fencing etc., which while unlikely to completely limit cat movement, will help.
- Lighting design to ensure no increased light on the heaths or around the periphery of the SAC/SPA.
- Site design to deflect visitor flow away from the heaths and limiting the number of entry points onto the heath close to new housing.
- Careful siting of employment areas such that any noise, run-off or litter/pollution is contained and no potential to impact nearby areas of heath.

Integrity test

- 4.16 At a plan level, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out for the Plan alone for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and urban effects. This conclusion is reached as a result of the scale of growth proposed, the specific locations and mitigation requirements relating to setting development back 400m from the European site boundary, provision of SANG at the St. John's allocation in Exmouth and the strategic mitigation scheme.
- 4.17 There is no need for an in-combination assessment as the East Devon Plan addresses all relevant development that could have an urban effect. Urban effects may be exacerbated or relate also to recreation use (e.g. fire incidence), however these are addressed through the strategic mitigation for recreation, which addresses cumulative effects.
- 4.18 Project level assessment will be required for allocations in and around Exmouth. Careful site design and master planning of these development sites will be necessary and should be checked through project-level HRA prior to planning permission being granted. Such reliance on lower tier assessment is entirely appropriate and complies with the guidance in the

Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, which states that a plan-making body may rely on mitigation measures in a later stage of plan making if the following three criteria are all met:

- 1) The earlier stage or higher level plan assessment cannot reasonably predict any effect on a European site in a meaningful way; whereas
- 2) The later stage or lower level plan, which will identify more precisely the nature, timing, duration, scale or location of development, and thus its potential effects, will have the necessary flexibility over the exact nature, timing, duration, scale of the proposal to enable an adverse effect on site integrity to be avoided; and
- 3) The HRA of the plan at the later stage or lower level is required as a matter of law or Government policy.

Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar

- 4.19 Risks from urban effects for the Estuary could include light pollution, potentially affecting foraging behaviour and distribution of birds (Dwyer et al., 2013; Longcore & Rich, 2004; Santos et al., 2010). Cat predation (e.g. Cecchetti et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2016; Kays et al., 2019; Loss & Marra, 2017) is potentially a risk only where aggregations of small waders or other waterbirds are accessible to cats. Fly-tipping and dumping of garden waste resulting in contamination and spread of non-native species are also a risk, but only likely to be of concern where the upper marsh is accessible and adjacent to roads or paths. Tall buildings and structures could pose problems for birds moving around the estuary.
- 4.20 These effects could undermine the conservation objectives of the SPA in terms of the populations of the qualifying features and their distributions.
- 4.21 Policies SP02, SP03 and SP04 set the overall quantum of housing and employment land and the broad distribution. More site-specific policies include development within 400m of the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, specifically:
- SD01 Exmouth and its development locations
 - SD10 Development allocations at Lympstone
- 4.22 At Exmouth, the key location with particular risks for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar is Courtlands, where there is an allocation for sports pitches alongside two housing allocations (12 homes at Courtlands Lane and around

100 homes and employment land at Courtlands Cross). These allocations will extend the urban area of Exmouth north and are almost contiguous with Lympstone. The sports pitches are within 400m of the estuary while the housing allocations are just over 500m. The location is above the estuary and only one or two fields from the edge of the SPA/Ramsar.

4.23 The railway line does provide a barrier to direct access to the estuary and there are currently no public footpaths or direct access to the shoreline. This will reduce the risks and the distance from the housing sites to the shore and the main focus of the bird use in that area being on the open intertidal habitats will mean cat predation is perhaps unlikely. As such risks from the site are low but further checks will be necessary at project level, where assessment will need to ensure that:

- Bird surveys during the winter check for use of the site by SPA/Ramsar qualifying features in the surrounding fields and the results used to inform the design;
- No structures such as flood lights or powerlines etc around the sports pitches will pose a risk to birds (in terms of flight lines, collision or light pollution);
- Site design ensures adequate screening and barriers to movement and people from the site and towards the south and the low-lying fields or the SPA/Ramsar;
- Site design ensures visual/noise barriers to the buildings and pitches to ensure any disturbance impacts associated with the presence of people in the area around the allocation (including during construction) are eliminated;
- Construction procedures and site design ensures no risks of contamination of the estuary.

4.24 At Lympstone, the one allocation within 400m of the SPA/Ramsar is the Little Paddocks site (for 8 homes) to the south of the settlement and around 260m from the SPA/Ramsar. Here the allocation is largely surrounded by existing buildings and likely to be a low risk. The railway provides a clear barrier to movement from the allocation site and the small size further reduces risk. Project level assessment should simply check for that the design when this comes forward does not include any powerlines or similar across neighbouring fields or tall structures that could pose a risk to birds.

Integrity test

4.25 At a plan level, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out for the Plan alone for the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and urban effects. This conclusion is

reached on the basis that the potential for urban effects to undermine the conservation objectives is low. No allocations are directly adjacent to the SPA/Ramsar boundary, and all are set back and have infrastructure such as the railway creating a barrier between the development location and European site. Given the locations involved, such impacts can be ruled out alone. No in-combination assessment is required as the Plan covers all development in the broad area (eastern shore of the estuary) and as such all potential cumulative effects.

- 4.26 Further checks at project level are necessary for the allocations at Courtlands, Exmouth and the Little Paddocks site at Lympstone, these are primarily to check the detailed design and in particular risks from light pollution, construction and localised movement of people that cannot be considered at the level of detail provided in the Plan. Such reliance on further assessment is in keeping with guidance on the HRA process (see para 4.18).

5. Appropriate assessment: Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land

Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects

5.1 Likely significant effects were identified in the screening for a range of policies (see Table 5), all of which support development in areas which might be supporting habitat for key species. Relevant European sites were:

- Beer Quarry & Caves SAC
- East Devon Heaths SPA

5.2 In addition, Policy PB04 includes specific mitigation text around the East Devon Heaths SPA and urban effects, establishing a zone within 400m of the SPA boundary where new dwellings will not be allowed. PB04 also includes specific mitigation text around the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC and the need to protect the pinch points where bats rely on particular parts of the wider countryside. The Policy also cross references to the guidance on the sustenance zones and key areas for the bats (Jennings & Youngman, 2022). In accordance with People Over Wind this policy has not been taken account in the screening and will need to be considered as part of the appropriate assessment.

Introduction

5.3 Development outside European sites may impact qualifying features where individuals of the relevant species roam outside the European site boundary (see Chapman & Tyldesley, 2016 for review and discussion). Impacts can involve the direct loss of habitat or impacts such as disturbance/disruption of flight lines that might mean the supporting habitat does not function as well.

Beer Quarry & Caves SAC

Relevant allocations and concerns

5.4 Beer Quarry & Caves SAC qualifies for three bat species: Greater Horseshoe Bat, Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Bechstein's Bat. These bats can roam widely in the landscape, following particular flight-lines to reach other roost sites and foraging areas outside the SAC boundary. Screening of the Plan identified likely significant effects in relation to the overall quantum of

housing and employment growth (Policies SP02, SP03 and SP04) as well as specific allocations. Further background and guidance on how to assess impacts relating to supporting habitat and Beer Quarry and Caves SAC is set out by Jennings and Youngman (2022). Jennings and Youngman map zones and roost sites for each species that are important, these include:

- **A landscape connectivity zone:** capturing the area around the key roosts and other roosts and the broad area of landscape within which bats move. This is essentially the area that includes a complex network of commuting routes likely to be used by the SAC populations.
- **Sustenance zones:** the areas around key roosts which includes critical foraging and commuting habitat.
- **Pinch points:** known or potential commuting routes which are significantly restricted.
- **Key roosts:** specific locations where the bats gather including breeding and hibernation sites. These roosts are thought to be integral to the SAC population.

5.5 The above zones and locations are shown in Map 4, which summarises the distances and mapped zones shown in the Jennings and Youngman guidance. Map 4 allows the cumulative levels of growth, as set out within the Plan, to be seen together and considered strategically. It is clear the area is rural and that that the levels of growth proposed are insufficient to result in major loss of foraging habitat or an overall marked loss of permeability within the landscape. Given that the connectivity zones are entirely within East Devon there is no need to look more widely to consider cumulative impacts and effects from other strategic growth – such as other local plans.

5.6 Drawing on Map 4 some individual allocations are nonetheless in potentially vulnerable locations: those allocations that were screened in for likely significant effects are listed in Table 6 with details of how they relate to connectivity zones, sustenance zones, pinch points etc. These are then considered in turn below the table.

Table 6: Individual site allocations where likely significant effects triggered and reason for concern

Settlement	Site address	Policy	Type	Approximate dwellings	Concern with respect to bats
Axminster	Land east of Musbury Road, Axminster	SD02	Housing and Employment	100	Just within LHB landscape connectivity zone
Axminster	Land east of Musbury Road, Axminster	SD02	Housing	68	Just within LHB landscape connectivity zone
Axminster	Land east of Musbury Road, Axminster	SD02	Housing and Employment	270	Just within LHB landscape connectivity zone
Axminster	Land at Axminster Carpets, Woodmead Road, Axminster	SD02	Housing and Employment	50	On outer boundary of LHB landscape connectivity zone
Colyton	Land adjacent to the Peace Memorial Playing Fields, Colyton	SD09	Housing	12	Within LHB sustenance zone and close to pinch points
Colyton	Land at Hillhead, Colyton	SD09	Housing	49	Within LHB sustenance zone and close to pinch points
Kilminster	Land to the west and south-west of The Old Inn, Kilminster	SD20	Housing	5	Within sustenance zone for Bechstein's Bat
Kilminster	Land east of George Lane, Kilminster	SD20	Housing	23	Within sustenance zone for Bechstein's Bat
Musbury	Land at Baxter's Farm, The Street, Musbury	SD21	Housing and Employment	15	Within landscape connectivity zone for all three species
Seaton	Land at Barnards Hill Lane, Seaton	SD05	Housing	40	Within LHB & GHB sustenance zones and close to pinch points
Seaton	Land south of Harepath Hill, Seaton	SD05	Housing	75	Within LHB sustenance zone and close to pinch points
Seaton	Land off Harepath Road, Seaton	SD05	Housing and Employment	130	Within LHB sustenance zone and close to pinch points
Seaton	Land west of Axeview Road, Seaton	SD05	Housing	39	Within LHB & GHB sustenance zones and close to pinch points

East Devon Local Plan HRA

Settlement	Site address	Policy	Type	Approximate dwellings	Concern with respect to bats
Sidbury	Land south of Furzehill, Sidbury	SD26	Housing and open area	43	Within landscape connectivity zone for all three species
Sidmouth	Land south-west of Woolbrook Road, Sidmouth	SD06	Housing	160	Within landscape connectivity zone for all three species
Sidmouth	Land east of Burscombe Lane / west of Windsor Mead, Sidford	SD06	Housing	15	Within landscape connectivity zone for all three species
Sidmouth	Land west of Two Bridges Road, Sidford, Sidmouth	SD06	Housing	15	Within landscape connectivity zone for all three species

- 5.7 At Axminster, the Axminster Carpet site is a brownfield site and surrounded by housing and development, as such there are no real concerns. The land east of Musbury Road sites lie between the town and the A35. Aerial photographs indicate this is pasture with very limited hedgerows and a single line of trees. Jennings and Youngman state, in relation to the connectivity zones, that only proposals which could impact landscape scale permeability or severely restrict movement at a landscape scale would have a likely significant effect. Given the sites are right on the periphery of the connectivity zone and are adjacent to existing buildings and the A35, there can be reasonable certainty that movements at a landscape scale would be restricted and risks are low.
- 5.8 At Kilmington the risks relate to Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Bechstein's Bat; the settlement is outside the landscape connectivity zone for Greater Horseshoe Bats. There are some key Bechstein's Bat roosts just to the west of Kilmington that are flagged in the guidance and the whole of Kilmington is within the sustenance zone for Bechstein's Bats. The risks are potentially low as the Kilmington allocations are adjacent to the A35 and surrounded by existing housing.
- 5.9 At Seaton, there are four allocations that are in very close proximity to the pinch points and extend the settlement north and west. These four include three housing allocations: Land adjacent to Axe View, Land at Barnards Hill, Land south of Harepath Hill and an employment site on land off Harepath Road. The two Harepath Road sites are particularly sensitive as they appear to shrink the existing pinch point between Colyford and Seaton which is identified for both Lesser and Great Horseshoe Bats (see Map 5). Nonetheless, the two Harepath allocations are south of the Holyford Brook and the small valley that is likely to provide the main commuting route and do not actually block the pinch points. All four allocations have the potential to illuminate areas that might be used by the bats and any loss of hedgerows and trees in the landscape is likely to have impacts for the bats. The need for a football pitch is referenced in the Plan as part of the developments to the north of Seaton. This may pose a particular risk in terms of flood lighting and this will need to be considered as part of the project level HRA.
- 5.10 At Colyton, allocations at Hillhead and to the east of Colyton pose less risk as they have existing housing on multiple sides and do not appear to disrupt potential flight lines or areas that bats might move through so much. Nonetheless there are trees and hedgerows present and there could be risks.

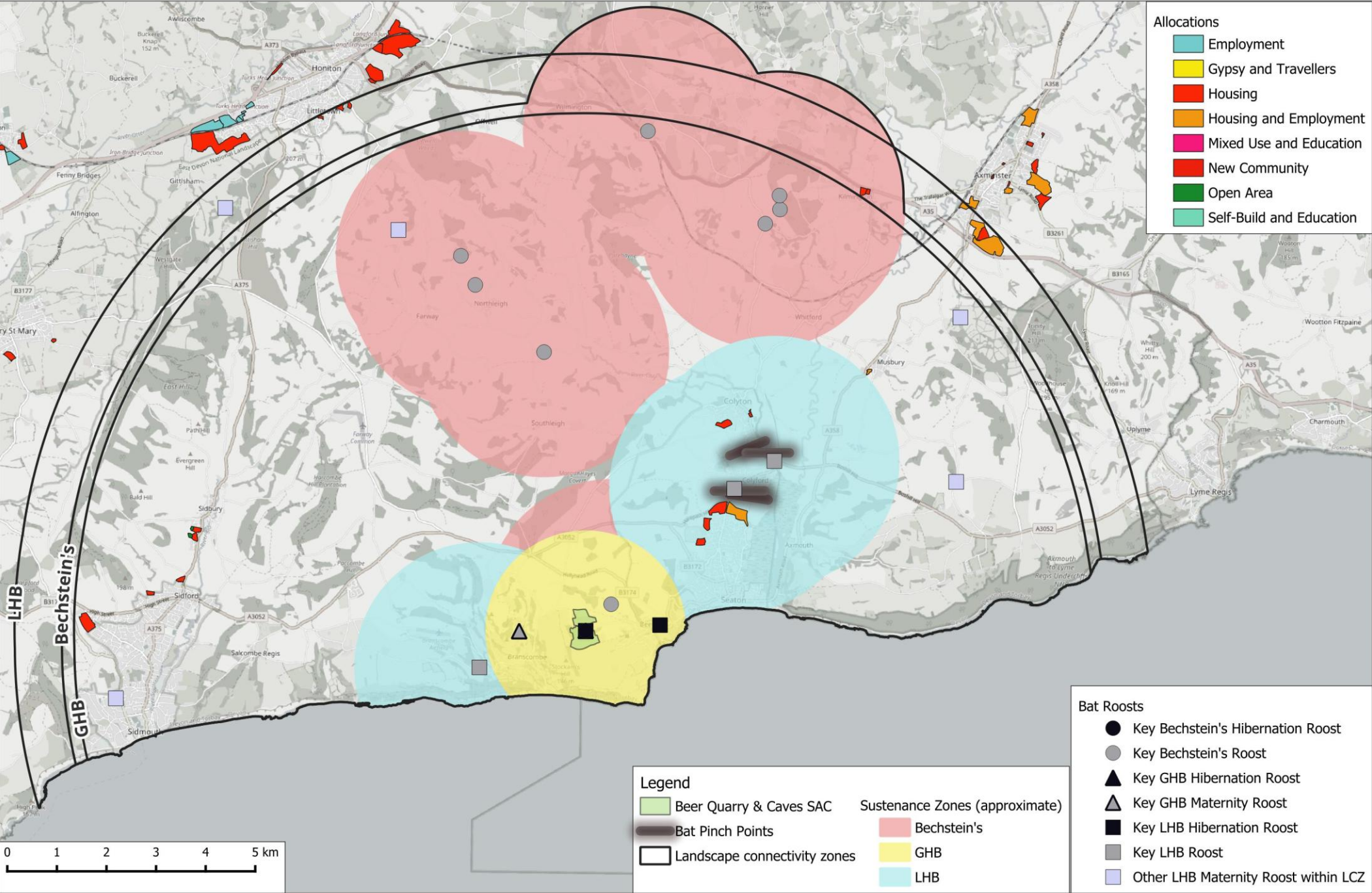
- 5.11 Jennings and Youngman state that further urban growth in the area around the pinch points could significantly impact on the movement of Lesser Horseshoe and Greater Horseshoe Bats. The highlight that dark flight lines need to be maintained through these pinch points to ensure uninhibited movement into the connectivity zone and between other key roosts.
- 5.12 At Sidmouth all allocations are within the wider consultation zone ('landscape connectivity zone'). The allocation south of Woolbrook Road is a particular risk as the Jennings and Youngman guidance highlights a Lesser Horseshoe Bat maternity roost nearby (three fields away and about 800m as the bat flies). Aerial imagery shows the allocation site to currently comprise some scrub and trees that could well be used by the bats.
- 5.13 At Sidbury, the allocation on land between Furzehill and Hillside is also within the landscape connectivity zone. Adjacent to the housing allocation are open space allocations. Any changes at these locations could involve loss of foraging habitat or illumination.

Mitigation

- 5.14 For all the above allocations, further assessment is necessary at project level. Such project level HRA will need to be informed, as relevant, by surveys for bats and checks for features that may be important for bats. These will need to be taken into account in the layout and site design. Such reliance on further assessment is in keeping with guidance on the HRA process (see para 4.18).
- 5.15 The need for further assessment is set out in Policy PB04 which provides overarching protective wording around the need for project level HRA and the guidance for Beer Quarry & Caves SAC is referenced. The guidance is strategic and provides the means to address cumulative effects and clearly sets out where more detailed assessment is necessary. In addition, wording is included in the Plan for virtually all the allocations listed in Table 6 setting out the need for avoidance or mitigation measures with respect to Beer Quarry and Caves SAC. The exceptions are Policies SD02, SD20, SD21 and SD05 (Land west of Axeview Road allocation only), and additional wording should therefore be added to the Plan for the relevant allocations to ensure consistency.
- 5.16 The pinch points to the north of Seaton are the locations of particular concern. At this strategic level of assessment, it is impossible to determine what mitigation measures may specifically be required and how those sites

might be delivered. Mitigation will need to ensure dark flight lines and this could be achieved in a range of ways, for example through lighting design, landscaping, provision of barriers (such as banks or fencing) and the overall layout of the sites. Strong protection for the pinch points is set out in Policy PB04. Masterplans and site design will need to carefully take into account the use of the area by bats and dedicated survey work is likely to be required to show how the bats move through the landscape and inform the design. Project level assessment will need to review the detailed plans and any mitigation and ensure that dark flight lines are retained.

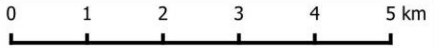
Map 4: Allocations & Supporting Habitat for Beer Quarry & Caves SAC



- Allocations**
- Employment
 - Gypsy and Travellers
 - Housing
 - Housing and Employment
 - Mixed Use and Education
 - New Community
 - Open Area
 - Self-Build and Education

- Bat Roosts**
- Key Bechstein's Hibernation Roost
 - Key Bechstein's Roost
 - ▲ Key GHB Hibernation Roost
 - ▲ Key GHB Maternity Roost
 - Key LHB Hibernation Roost
 - Key LHB Roost
 - Other LHB Maternity Roost within LCZ

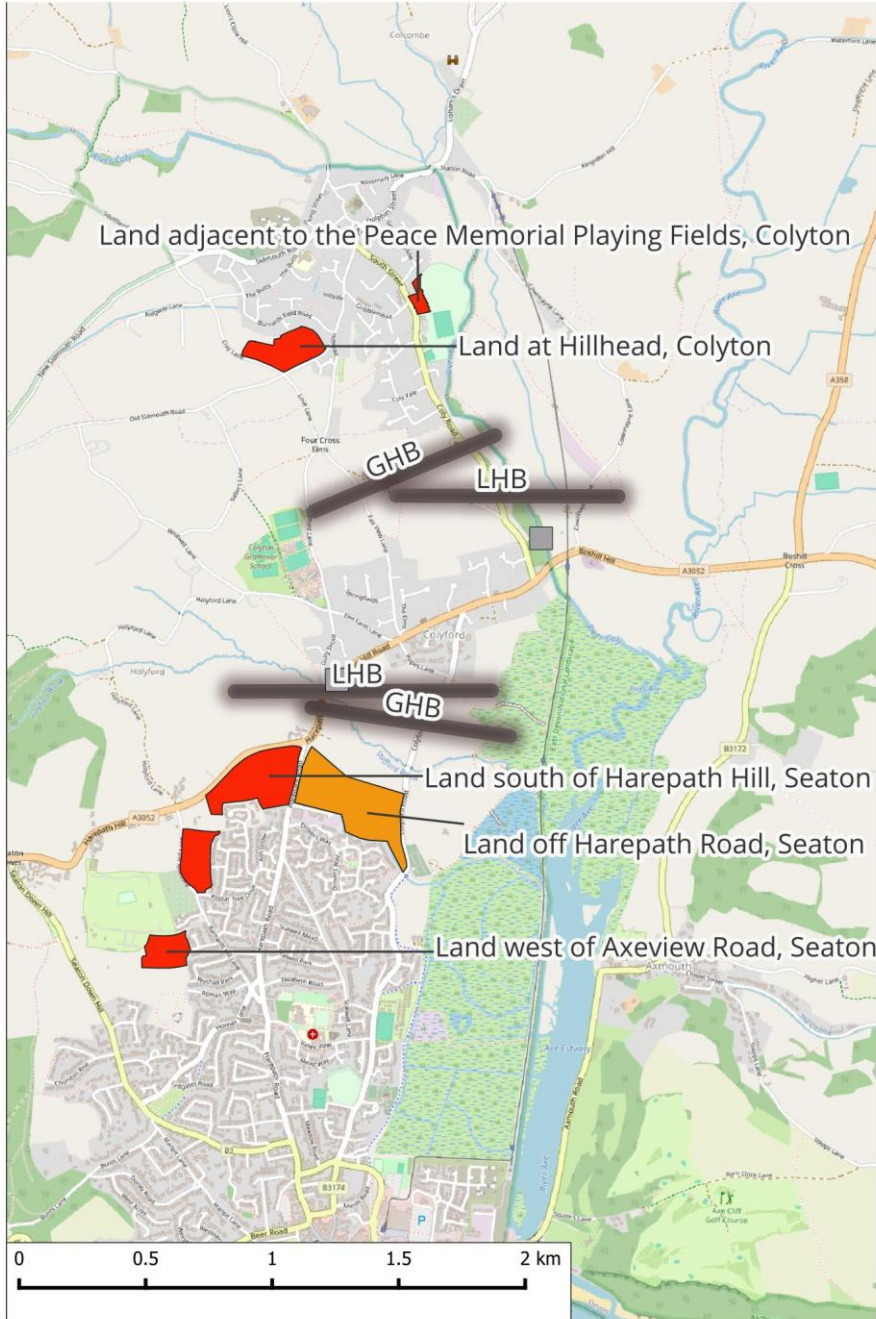
- Legend**
- Beer Quarry & Caves SAC
 - Bat Pinch Points
 - Landscape connectivity zones
 - Sustenance Zones (approximate) Bechstein's
 - GHB
 - LHB



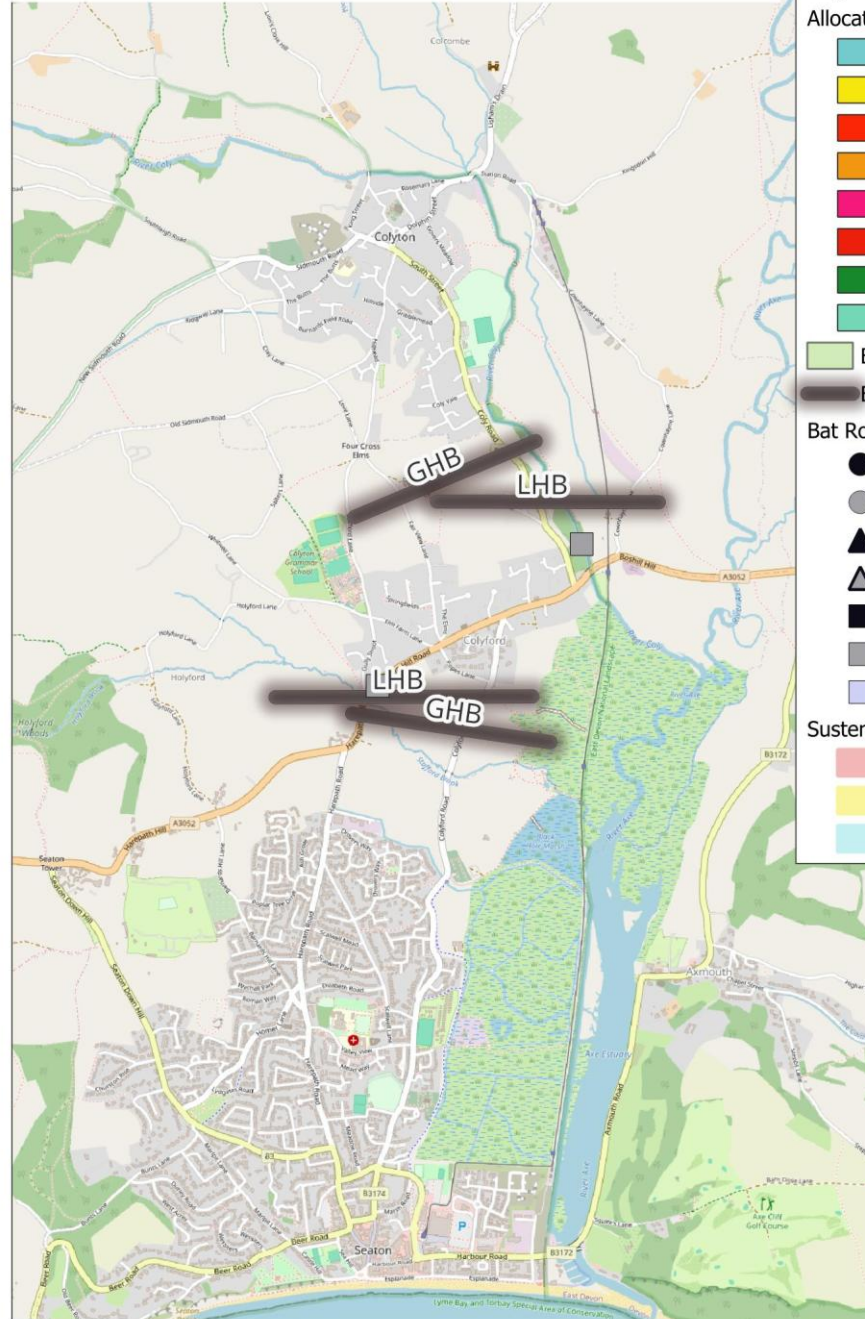
Map produced by Footprint Ecology. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and Database Right 2025. Contains map data © OpenStreetMap contributors. Terms: www.openstreetmap.org/copyright Designated site boundaries download from the Natural England website © Natural England.

Map 5: Pinch Points for Horseshoe Bats

With allocations shown



Allocations not shown



Legend

Allocations

- Employment
- Gypsy and Travellers
- Housing
- Housing and Employment
- Mixed Use and Education
- New Community
- Open Area
- Self-Build and Education
- Beer Quarry & Caves SAC
- Bat Pinch Points

Bat Roosts

- Key Bechstein's Hibernation Roost
- Key Bechstein's Roost
- Key GHB Hibernation Roost
- Key GHB Maternity Roost
- Key LHB Hibernation Roost
- Key LHB Roost
- Other LHB Maternity Roost within LCZ

Sustenance Zones (approximate)

- Bechstein's
- GHB
- LHB

Integrity test

- 5.17 At a plan level, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out for the Plan alone in relation to the Beer Quarry Caves SAC and loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land. This conclusion can be reached on the basis that the umbrella policy within the plan (PB04) ensures strict protection for European sites and specifically references the Beer Quarry and Caves guidance, highlighting the need for plans and proposals to be in accordance with the guidance. Policy PB04 further protects the pinch points and secures their long-term suitability for bat species. The guidance is strategic and provides the means to address the cumulative effects of incremental loss of habitat or impacts to bats (e.g. lighting). As such, no in-combination assessment is necessary.
- 5.18 This conclusion is made subject to minor amendments to the Plan to ensure all allocations listed in Table 6 have protective wording ensuring further checks for bats and project-level HRA. Such assessment should relate to the details of the site, layout etc and ensure any mitigation requirements are secured alongside planning permission. Such wording is currently absent for some policies (SD02, SD20 and SD21 and SD05 (Land west of Axeview Road allocation only). We also flag that there are two allocations at Seaton that are in very close proximity to pinch points; the project level HRA for these sites will require detailed information on the bat flight lines and lighting and the boundaries of the allocations may need to be refined.

East Devon Heaths SPA

- 5.19 Nightjar are a qualifying feature of the East Devon Heaths SPA. Radio-tracking studies of Nightjar have shown that birds will fly a considerable distance (up to 7km away) away from the breeding sites to feed at night (Alexander & Cresswell, 1990; Cresswell, 1996; Evens et al., 2017). These showed that at night the birds were leaving the conifer plantations and heathland areas where they were known to be nesting to feed in a range of habitats. The work in Dorset (Cresswell 1996) highlighted the importance of deciduous woodland, orchards, village gardens and that they also used wetland sites such as streams, small ponds and water meadows and even saltmarsh. In Belgium (Evens *et al.* 2017) the Nightjar were shown to use extensively cultivated grasslands and recreational areas, these latter areas were described in more detail as “*man-made fishponds, wet meadows and extensively cultivated grasslands surrounded by hedgerows and scattered trees*”.

- 5.20 Nightjar feed on insects and predominantly catch them in flight, either in sustained flight or ‘fly-catching’ from a perch or the ground (see Cresswell, 1996 for details). Cresswell (1996) argues that habitats used on foraging trips – deciduous woodland and wet grassland in particular – may be of considerable importance to Nightjar: “when it comes to Nightjar conservation, we believe that there may be a need to consider both breeding and feeding habitats”.
- 5.21 More recent advances in technology have allowed the use of GPS tags, which do not require surveyors to ‘track’ the radio signal but automatically log the locations of birds. Nightjar have now been tagged at a number of different sites and data span multiple years. HRA work undertaken for the Borough of Poole Local Plan in 2018 (see Hoskin, Liley, & Underhill-Day, 2018) drew on GPS tracking, commissioned by developers (Souter, 2016, 2017). Results highlighted that Nightjar were using areas outside the heaths, often for extended periods. Multiple birds were using some locations (a disused area of gravel pit was particularly favoured) and individuals often returned to favoured locations. There was also evidence of some long flights, including birds moving to other heathland patches.
- 5.22 The issues are complex as Nightjar are summer migrants and present on the heaths from May through to August and September. During this time, it is likely that different areas and habitats will be important for foraging. Different areas are likely to be important depending on the weather (for example some areas will be more sheltered than others), depending on prey abundance (different insects will peak at different times and in different habitats) and for individual Nightjar (for example requirements may be different just after migration or when feeding chicks), as such it is expected that a range of habitats are likely to be important.
- 5.23 Loss of foraging habitat or disruption of routes to reach feeding areas could undermine the conservation objectives of the SPA in terms of the population of Nightjar and its distribution. The supplementary advice for the East Devon Heaths SPA, produced by Natural England, sets targets around supporting habitats. These include maintaining the safe passage of breeding Nightjar moving between their nesting and feeding areas. Also in relation to food availability within supporting habitat, maintaining a high abundance and availability of key prey items (e.g. moths, beetles) at prey sizes preferred by Nightjar.

5.24 Policies SP02, SP03 and SP04 set the overall quantum of housing and employment land and the broad distribution, which includes sites adjacent to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and these policies were therefore screened in. Also screened in was Policy SD01 (Exmouth and its development locations). This policy includes the large allocation (700 dwellings) at St. John's that directly abuts the southern parts of the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and the allocation at Marley's Drive (50 dwellings) which is just over 400m from the SAC/SPA boundary. These two sites both contain scattered trees, hedgerows etc and tree cover that means they could well be used extensively by Nightjar. In addition, a number of other allocations around Exmouth could result in changes or loss to Nightjar foraging habitats, these include:

- Land south of Littleham (housing allocation)
- Land directly east of Liverton business park (employment allocation)
- Land at Courtlands Cross (housing allocation).

5.25 Screening did not identify a risk for the East Devon New Community as the area allocated is primarily large arable fields with a low density of hedgerows and trees. Similarly, allocations around Woodbury, Lympstone and Ottery St. Mary were not screened in as they appear from aerial imagery to involve sites with few trees and are relatively contiguous with existing development (and as such likely to already be well lit and not to be commuting routes or on regular flight paths).

5.26 There has been no work to our knowledge on the off-site foraging undertaken by Nightjars on the East Devon Heaths. On the Dorset Heathlands SPA, regression analyses of Nightjar numbers in relation to housing levels in the surrounding landscape indicated that the population of Nightjar might be around 14% higher in the absence of development (Clarke et al., 2008). However, component SSSIs of the Dorset Heaths, such as Canford Heath and Upton Heath, are largely surrounded by development that extends over a wide area and yet the sites do still support substantial populations of Nightjar. The East Devon Heaths are very much more rural. Any birds moving away from the heaths to feed are likely to fly to the River Otter, including the extensive marshes and floodplain in the valley. There are also wooded areas just beyond the SPA including Hayes Wood and Uphams Plantation. None of these areas will be lost to development and neither do any allocations appear to create barriers to movement between the heath and surrounding landscape. As such risks at plan level are relatively low and

appear to be specific to the allocations around Exmouth. The umbrella policies within the plan (PB04) ensure strict protection at plan level and the restriction on any residential development within 400m of the SPA further reduces risk.

- 5.27 For Exmouth allocations it will however be necessary for further assessment at project level, once more information is available for each site and before planning permission is granted. Nightjar surveys at the allocation site, potentially involving GPS tracking may be necessary to better understand how Nightjar use particular areas. Site design may need to take account of certain parts of the landscape (likely to be mature trees, hedgerows etc) as informed by the survey work. Site design should be such that employment as well as residential development is restricted within 400m of the heath (as recommended by Natural England¹⁷) and lighting should also be limited in this area.

Integrity test

- 5.28 At a plan level, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out for the Plan alone for the East Devon Heaths SPA and loss of supporting habitat/functionally-linked land. There are only very limited allocations (around Exmouth) that encompass land that have the potential to be used by foraging Nightjar, and this accounts for a very small proportion of the available habitat for Nightjar around the SPA. Based on studies elsewhere, the most important likely foraging areas will include the floodplain of the River Otter and the Plan contains no proposals that might obstruct access to the valley.
- 5.29 The restriction on residential development within 400m of the SPA, as set out in Policy PB04 ensures new housing is set back from the SPA and further reduces risk.
- 5.30 East Devon District encompasses the area likely to be used by foraging Nightjar and the Plan sets out all relevant proposals around development. No other cumulative impacts are likely to impact the overall availability of supporting habitat and as such no in-combination assessment is necessary.
- 5.31 Project-level HRA, for the St. John's allocation and Marley's Drive allocation in Exmouth will be necessary and should draw on more detailed, site-specific

¹⁷ Representation at 1st Regulation 19 consultation

evidence. It may be necessary to retain trees, hedgerows or other features. Such reliance on further assessment is in keeping with guidance on the HRA process (see para 4.18).

6. Appropriate assessment: Recreation

Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects

6.1 Likely significant effects were identified in the screening for a range of policies (see Table 5), all of which support development that could result in increased recreation use of nearby European sites. Relevant European sites were:

- Dawlish Warren SAC;
- East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA;
- Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar;
- River Axe SAC;
- Sidmouth to West Bay SAC.

6.2 In addition, Policy PB04 includes specific mitigation text around the strategic mitigation scheme that covers recreation use of Dawlish Warren SAC, the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. WS09 also sets out mitigation measures through the SANG provision associated with the Clyst Valley Regional Park. In accordance with People Over Wind these policies have not been taken account in the screening and will need to be considered as part of the appropriate assessment.

Dawlish Warren SAC, East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA & Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar

6.3 For the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar, Dawlish Warren SAC and the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA concern about recreation impacts and links to local housing growth are long standing and a strategy was established in 2014 to mitigate the impacts from residential development. Public access/disturbance is identified in the respective site improvement plans (produced by Natural England) as a current pressure and/or future threat at all three sites. Recreation issues have the potential to undermine the conservation objectives of the European sites (where likely significant effects have been identified) in a range of ways (see Table 7).

Table 7: Summary of risks to the relevant European sites from recreation and urban effects.

Impact	Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar	Dawlish Warren SAC	East Devon Heaths SPA/SAC	Notes	References and examples
Disturbance to breeding birds			✓	Risks from reduced breeding success and avoidance of otherwise suitable habitat.	Murison (2002); Liley & Clarke (2003); Murison <i>et al.</i> (2007).
Disturbance to wintering waterbirds	✓			Risks from avoidance of otherwise suitable areas, reduced feeding rate, stress and increased energetic costs.	Goss-Custard & Verboven (1993); Stillman <i>et al.</i> (2001); West <i>et al.</i> (2002); Liley <i>et al.</i> (2011).
Increased fire risk		✓	✓	Fire risk linked to recreation through discarded cigarettes, BBQs etc.	Kirby & Tantram (1999); Lake (2010).
Trampling and wear		✓	✓	Heavy footfall can result in vegetation wear, soil compaction & erosion.	Lowen <i>et al.</i> (2008); Lake (2010).
Interaction with predators	?		✓	Species such as Crows and Magpies may be drawn to areas with greater human activity or occur at higher densities; redistribution of birds may result in greater vulnerability to predation.	Marzluff & Neatherlin (2006).
Nutrient enrichment from dog fouling		✓	✓	Risks from dog fouling resulting in increased soil nutrient levels and changes in vegetation.	Bonner & Agnew (1983); Taylor <i>et al.</i> (2005); De Frenne <i>et al.</i> (2022).
Contamination of water bodies from dogs		✓	✓	Dogs swimming in ponds and other waterbodies brings potential risks from increased turbidity and pollution from flea treatments etc.	Groome <i>et al.</i> (2018); Denton & Groome (2017); Perkins <i>et al.</i> (2020).
Disruption of management		✓	✓	Disruption such as dog attacks to livestock; gates left open; theft of equipment/material; all issues to be expected at more urban sites or those with more recreation.	
Public opposition/objection to management	✓	✓	✓	Management interventions such as tree or scrub removal, water level management etc. can be sensitive and opposed by local residents, leading to issues achieving the necessary management.	Woods (2002).

Strategic mitigation

- 6.4 A strategic approach to mitigation has been in place since 2014. This strategic approach applies to residential and some tourist development within a zone of influence drawn around each European site and is applied consistently across Exeter City, East Devon and Teignbridge. Full details of the issues and mitigation measures are set out in the strategy (see the original 'South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy', Liley et al., 2014, as well as the emerging updated 'South East Devon Wildlife - Joint Habitat Sites Mitigation Strategy').
- 6.5 Mitigation has involved on-site measures such as rangers, management of parking and engagement with visitors on the respective sites (these measures are referred to as SAMM – Strategic Access Management and Monitoring) and the provision of alternative places for recreation use by local residents (SANG – Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace).
- 6.6 The mitigation strategy is long running, well established and ensures mitigation can be delivered. It provides transparency for developers as the costs and mitigation requirements are known in advance. The strategy is clearly referenced and mitigation requirements for the Plan established in Policy PB04.
- 6.7 The strategy was revised and updated during 2023 and 2024 (in a joint commission by East Devon, Exeter City and Teignbridge District) with the new strategy set up to continue indefinitely with reviews and updates scheduled at five-year intervals. The new strategy covers the period 2025-2030 at which point it will be revised and updated as necessary. Key parties, including Natural England and stakeholders involved in the delivery of the strategy (such as the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust) have been consulted and commented on early drafts.

Marlcombe

- 6.8 Policy WS01 is a strategic policy relating to the Marlcombe new community, east of Exeter. Land is allocated in the Plan for at least 8,000 homes and the Plan also makes reference to the allocation ultimately accommodating at least 10,000 new homes.
- 6.9 The allocation is around 2.8km, at its closest, to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. The A3052 runs along the south edge of the allocation and provides direct access to the East Devon Heaths. Car parks such as Joney's Cross, Estuary View and Woodbury Castle are a short drive and easily accessible from the allocation site. This scale of development represents a very marked shift and uplift in the level of housing around the East Devon Heaths, which currently have a relatively rural feel.

- 6.10 The vision for the site (dated August 2025) sets out design principles and the masterplan. Housing is focussed away from the south-east corner (closest to the East Devon Heaths) and incorporates 254ha of open space of which 150.4ha is proposed as SANG.
- 6.11 Given the scale of the allocation and proximity to the heaths, high quality and effective SANG is essential. The mitigation strategy appendices provide guidance as to how SANGs should work and key design criteria. At a strategic level the overall quantum of SANG matches the levels required in the mitigation strategy and reflects the delivery standard generally applied across the country (Beveridge et al., 2024; Liley et al., 2024; Natural England, 2021). There are however a number of risks and particular considerations that will need to be secured and addressed:
- The SANG provision will need to be phased so that there is high quality, fully-functional SANG available prior to occupation.
 - Funding for the management of the SANG will need to be secured in-perpetuity.
 - The SANG provision set out within the vision mostly comprises relatively narrow strips of land along the flood plain and that provide routes and connections through the allocation. While such a design has merits in ensuring easy, direct access from housing, there is a risk that these will flood in the winter and be largely inaccessible.
 - The proposed SANG is often narrow (potentially 100-200m wide in places) and given that the houses will be above (higher ground) the SANG is likely to feel quite urban in places, contrasting to the wild, open character of the nearby heathland. Design will need to ensure the SANG has an open, natural feel and is a viable alternative for recreation use (particularly dog walking) when compared to the heaths.
 - The SANG is also likely to provide active travel routes, which may further detract from the effectiveness, particularly where the SANGs are narrow and at risk of flooding. Dog walkers will be likely to avoid areas used by commuters (fast moving cyclists and dog walking can often be in conflict) and this could further deflect use towards the heaths.
- 6.12 Design of the SANG will need to ensure that the site works as a destination that deflects access away from the heaths (and the Exe Estuary SPA), rather than providing greenspace that fulfils something different to the European sites. For example, there is the potential that the SANG provides pleasant commuter routes and green corridors that are well used but fail to provide the destination for dog walking, mountain biking, horse riding and such activities that then become focussed on the heaths.
- 6.13 At the moment it is also not clear how the SANG role of the Cylst Valley Regional Park will function and fit with the Marlcombe SANG provision. The Clyst Valley

Regional Park is included within the Plan to provide mitigation through SANG, yet it is not directly linked to particular development nor the SANG potential clearly established.

St John's

6.14 The allocation at St. John's, Exmouth is directly adjacent to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA. Urban effects and mitigation requirements for this site are discussed in paras 4.15. In addition, to the points raised previously, the following will be important in terms of the site design in relation to recreation. Some of these points were identified by Natural England¹⁸:

- High quality SANG provision that is an alternative to the heath, this may necessitate exceeding the minimum delivery standard of 8ha per 1000 residents (identified in the mitigation strategy) in order to accommodate reasonable walking routes (Natural England have advised 16ha per 1000 residents).
- Site design that ensures parking is restricted within easy walking access (400m) of the heath, whether at employment or residential parts of the allocation.
- Robust barriers to the allocation adjacent to the heaths, to limit opportunities for diffuse access along the edge of the heath to become established.

Implications for the HRA

6.15 The mitigation strategy provides a robust and established means to deliver the mitigation and is in line with strategies in other parts of the country, for example the Thames Basin Heaths, the Dorset Heaths, the Solent Coast, the Suffolk Coast and the Essex Coast. As such there can be confidence in the broad approach as a means to address impacts arising from the cumulative effects of development across a wide area. Natural England have reviewed the updated strategy and are supportive of the approach.

6.16 As such the strategy provides the means to rule out adverse effects on integrity, from the Plan alone or in-combination with other local plans and development coming forward in the surrounding area. The strategy sets out the necessary SAMM and SANG requirements. SAMM is resourced and delivered strategically and the level of SAMM is sufficient to address the scale of growth coming forward. All local planning authorities that fall within the respective zones of influence are involved in the scheme. The strategy sets out the necessary SANG requirements,

¹⁸ Natural England representation at 1st Regulation 19 consultation.

necessary to be secured alongside the SAMM. Conformity with the strategy ensures risks are addressed.

- 6.17 The SANG details relating to WS01 need to be confirmed and checked further in order to ensure compliance with the mitigation strategy. A SANG management plan or equivalent visitor strategy will need to form part of project level assessment for WS01 to address the concerns set out above.

Integrity test

- 6.18 The strategic mitigation scheme is well established, set out in Policy PB04 and the strategy has been updated to reflect levels of growth in the Plan. The approach is in line with strategies in other parts of the country, for example the Thames Basin Heaths, the Dorset Heaths, the Solent Coast, the Suffolk Coast and the North Kent Coast (Beveridge et al., 2024). This means there can be confidence in the strategy as a means to address impacts arising from the cumulative effects of development across a wide area. The strategy ensures the necessary SAMM is adequately resourced and deliverable. Natural England have reviewed the updated strategy and are supportive of the approach.
- 6.19 As such, through compliance with the strategy, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out at a Plan-level alone or in-combination with respect to recreation and Dawlish Warren SAC, the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar. All local planning authorities that fall within the respective zones of influence are involved in the scheme, meaning in-combination effects are addressed.

River Axe SAC

- 6.20 Recreation use of the River Axe SAC is relatively low risk compared to the sites considered above, however increased recreation use could result in harm. Of primary concern would be contamination of the water as a result of people swimming and dogs entering the water. This can result in increased turbidity and there is growing evidence of contamination of water bodies well used by dogs as a result of proprietary flea treatments (Denning et al., 2024; Perkins et al., 2024). Localised damage to spawning sites for fish could occur if people enter the water and trample over gravel or use such areas to launch kayaks. Other concerns could relate to damage to the banks where people enter the water and risks of damage to aquatic vegetation from kayaks, paddleboards and people in the water.

- 6.21 Such impacts could undermine the conservation objectives in terms of the structure and function of the qualifying habitat, or the populations or distributions of qualifying species.
- 6.22 There is currently very little access to much of the river as, for example, there are very few footpaths that allow access to the river bank. Risks will only relate to specific sections of river that are close to housing allocations and where there is direct and easy access to the river banks. As such any risks will be localised. Public access or disturbance was not recognised as a threat or pressure for the SAC by Natural England in their site improvement plan in 2014 and neither is recreation identified by Natural England as a current pressure for the River Axe SSSI which underpins the SAC designation. Checks on the internet¹⁹ suggest that kayaking use is focussed around the estuary around Axmouth, which is outside the SAC. There appear to be limited launch points within the SAC, however kayaks do sometimes launch at Whitford Bridge.
- 6.23 Policies SP02 and SP03 set the overall quantum of housing and the broad distribution, and were therefore screened in for recreation impacts and the River Axe SAC. The following policies include allocations with direct access to the River Axe SAC and were therefore also screened in:
- SD02: Axminster and its development locations
 - SD20: Development allocations at Kilmington
- 6.24 At Axminster, the Land at Chard Road site abuts the SAC while the Axminster Carpets factory site is relatively close but the railway acts in part as a barrier to direct access. There are also various footpaths that provide scope for new residents at the allocations North of Shoals, Land off Wyke Lane and Great Jackleigh Farm to access the river bank. At Kilmington, both the allocations (Land east of George Lane and Land west and southwest of the Old Inn) are relatively close to the SAC and there is a byway open to all traffic that provides access to the river bank to the south of the village.
- 6.25 The number of allocations and the extent of the SAC that is likely to be affected is therefore small. For the allocations above, project level assessment will need to check the local environment, access opportunities for new residents and ensure any design elements necessary to further avoid risks are incorporated. There may be a need for very localised and targeted mitigation which for example could

¹⁹ E.g. <https://www.songofthepaddle.co.uk/devon-and-the-axe-t32964.html> and <https://gopaddling.info/rivers/river-axe/>

involve fencing on footpaths to ensure dogs do not enter the water, planting to create a barrier to the water's edge or signage.

Integrity test

- 6.26 Adverse effects from recreation on the River Axe SAC can be ruled out as a result of the Plan alone on the basis that the risks are relatively low and recreation pressure has not been identified as a current threat by Natural England. Very few sites within the Plan are in locations where there is likely to be any increase in recreation use of the river and any changes will be slight. The umbrella policy within the plan (PB04) ensures strict protection at plan level and means no sites will be able to come forward if adverse effects on integrity cannot be ruled out. Project level HRA will ensure that, where necessary, design of sites or local mitigation measures are secured. Such reliance on further assessment is in keeping with guidance on the HRA process (see para 4.18).
- 6.27 In-combination effects can also be ruled out on the basis that there are no new proposals for access to waterways in general or to the River Axe. Given the limited access along much of the River Axe SAC and limited opportunities to enter the water, locations where in-combination effects could arise are limited. There could be the possibility of in-combination effects from recreation and changes in water quality, however given the very low risks from recreation associated with the Plan, and their very localised nature, there is no credible risk or meaningful concern.

Sidmouth to West Bay SAC

- 6.28 The Sidmouth to West Bay SAC qualifies for three habitat types, namely:
- H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines;
 - H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts;
 - H9180 Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines.
- 6.29 The latter two habitats occur on the cliffs and are largely inaccessible to the public, and as such recreation impacts are only relevant in relation to the annual vegetation of drift lines feature. This habitat type occurs on deposits of shingle lying at or above mean high-water spring tides. These shingle deposits occur as fringing beaches that are subject to periodic displacement or overtopping by high tides and storms. The distinctive vegetation, which may form only sparse cover, is ephemeral and composed of annual or short-lived perennial species. Level or gently-sloping, high-level mobile beaches, with limited human disturbance, support the best examples of this vegetation.

- 6.30 The supplementary conservation advice sets a target to maintain and restore the management measures (either within and/or outside the site boundary as appropriate) which are necessary to maintain and restore the structure, functions and supporting processes associated with the annual vegetation of drift lines feature. The notes in the advice highlight that: *“Measures should be considered to manage the impact of visitor pressure on certain high footfall areas by protecting areas of suitable substrate from continuous disturbance, preventing the establishment of annual vegetation of drift lines. Additionally, any new proposals that could adversely increase footfall in areas where annual vegetation of drift lines is possible (due to sediment size) should be carefully considered and ideally avoided.”*
- 6.31 The supplementary conservation advice for the SAC notes in the introduction that *“a common characteristic of the coast is that of a predominantly undisturbed, remote coast, punctuated by points where access is easy and visitor numbers high, albeit to quite small stretches.”* It also highlights that *“The South West Coast Path National Trail runs the entire length of the SAC, allowing public access along the coast, although much of the SAC and cliffs are largely inaccessible due to topography and dense unmanaged cliff scrub and woodland. Public access to the coast and beaches is high in some locations (principally Sidmouth, Branscombe, Lyme Regis and Charmouth)...”*. Given that the distribution of the habitat feature changes over time, impacts are hard to predict however the beaches that are likely to be popular with visitors are also likely to have the potential to support the habitat.
- 6.32 Public access or disturbance is not identified as a current pressure or threat to the SAC in Natural England’s site improvement plan. Natural England have however identified recreational disturbance as a current pressure for the Sidmouth to Beer Coast SSSI stretch of the SAC, however this is classified as a low risk.
- 6.33 The coast is part of the King Charles III England Coast Path and coastal access rights came into force for the Kingswear to Lyme Regis stretch in July 2024²⁰. Proposals associated with the route were subject to HRA, undertaken by Natural England who concluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposals would not have a likely significant effect on any of the qualifying features of the Sidmouth to West Bay SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. While that HRA predates the HRA work for the Local Plan and did not account for new levels of local housing, the conclusions are useful in informing the HRA for the East Devon Local Plan.

²⁰ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-kingswear-to-lyme-regis> for background and details

6.34 Access to the undercliff and beaches is relatively restricted and Sidmouth, Seaton and Lyme Regis are the main locations where access is likely to be focussed. These are already busy locations where existing footfall will already have impacts on any vegetation present. Climate change, increased storminess and the distribution of landslides will affect how people spread around the coast and these are likely to make access to most beach areas more challenging over time. The nature of the habitat makes access relatively difficult (shingle is hard to walk on for long distances and not all areas of undercliff are accessible in the first place). The scale of housing growth and distribution of the growth is unlikely to generate significantly different use or a marked uplift that might further hinder any restoration on the existing easy to access beaches. As such risks from the Plan are very low.

Integrity test

6.35 Following detailed consideration of the risks, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out alone or in-combination as there is little credible evidence of harm. Given the scale of the risks identified and very limited extent and locations, there is no need for in-combination assessment.

7. Appropriate assessment: Water supply

Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects

7.1 Likely significant effects were identified in the screening (see Table 5), in relation to the overall quantum of growth and the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar.

Introduction

7.2 South West Water provide water to homes and businesses across the region. Any increases in development and the number of people in East Devon potentially means additional water being required. Where the water is being deflected from European sites this can have implications for the habitats and species in those sites. Risks are exacerbated by climate change, with drought and high temperatures increasing demand and reducing the availability of water.

Role of the Environment Agency

7.3 It is the role of the Environment Agency to make sure that abstraction is sustainable and does not damage the environment. Water abstraction is managed through a licensing system originally introduced by the Water Resources Act 1963.

7.4 The Environment Agency oversees the publication of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). These set the legally binding locally specific environmental objectives that underpin water regulation. They set out how the management of water bodies will be undertaken, the roles of relevant bodies and the steps undertaken to ensure environmental targets are met.

7.5 The most recent South West River Basin Management Plan was updated in 2022²¹. The Plan commits the Environment Agency to assess all licence applications and only issue licences that adequately protect and improve the environment; where necessary each should be subject to an individual HRA. The Agency will only grant replacement licences where the abstraction is environmentally sustainable, and abstractors can demonstrate they have a continued need for the water, and it will be used efficiently. In addition, for existing licences, the Agency will prioritise actions to protect and improve European sites and address the most seriously damaging abstractions during this plan period. All abstractors in surface water and groundwater bodies where serious damage is occurring or could occur without

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/south-west-river-basin-district-river-basin-management-plan-updated-2022>

action should expect that their licences will be constrained over the next 6 years. The South West River Basin Management Plan was subject to HRA²² which determined that the RBMP was not likely to have any significant effects on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Water Resource Management Plan

- 7.6 The Water Act 2003 introduced a legal requirement into the Water Industry Act 1991 for water companies to prepare, publish and maintain Water Resources Management Plans (WRMPs). South West Water's most recent WRMP (WRMP24, draft from October 2023²³) predicts demand for water and identifies issues around supply. East Devon is supplied with domestic water from the Wimbleball Water Resource Zone (WRZ), which also includes Exeter. Wimbleball Reservoir is located in the headwaters of the River Exe and is the main source of water for the WRZ, with water from the reservoir also being supplemented by ground water. Forecasts are made based on population forecasts from the Office of National Statistics and property forecasts from local plans. The WRMP used water supply and demand forecasts, together with climate change and target headroom values to forecast baseline supply demand for a 25 year period, to 2050. This shows that, without any interventions the Wimbleball WRZ is in immediate risk of deficit.
- 7.7 In order to close the deficit the draft WRMP includes measures to incorporate smart meters and networks, address leakage, increase water efficiency and draw on new water supplies. The draft WRMP24 has been subject to HRA²⁴ which screened all relevant measures, including supply and drought options and included appropriate assessment for those where likely significant effects were identified. The HRA concludes that South West Water will be able to ascertain beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed updated WRMP24 will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
- 7.8 Given the potential deficit (in the absence of interventions) predicted for the Wimbleball Water Resource Zone, it is reasonable and appropriate for Policy AR02

²²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/635246fae90e07768c1a73a2/South_west_river_basin_management_plan_2022_HRA.pdf

²³ <https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/about-us/what-we-do/improving-your-service/water-resources-management-plan>.

²⁴ Dated December 2023. See <https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/siteassets/documents/about-us/wrmp/revised-wrmp/sww-dwrmp24-appendix-7-sea-report-dec23-annex-h-hra.pdf>

in the Plan to emphasise the need for future development to incorporate water-saving measures, in accordance with South West Water advice. Policy AR02 relates to water efficiency and is a strategic policy requiring new residential development to achieve water efficiency of 110 litres per day per person.

Integrity test

- 7.9 As the water company and Environment Agency represent the most suitable competent authorities to assess the WRMP24, once produced its findings can and should be adopted by East Devon Council with respect to the Local Plan HRA. While the final WRMP24 has not been published, the draft plan and accompanying HRA provide sufficient confidence and are sufficiently advanced to allow adverse effects on integrity to be ruled out, alone or in combination, in relation to water resources.

8. Appropriate assessment: Water quality

Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects

- 8.1 Likely significant effects were identified in the screening (see Table 5) in relation to the River Axe SAC. All allocations within the catchment were screened in.
- 8.2 In addition, Policy PB04 includes specific mitigation text around nutrient neutrality. In accordance with People Over Wind this policy has not been taken account in the screening and will need to be considered as part of the appropriate assessment.

Introduction

- 8.3 Wastewater or sewage can be very damaging to water bodies as it can contain large amounts of nutrients (such as phosphorus and nitrates), ammonia, bacteria, harmful chemicals and other damaging substances. Issues arise where sewage treatment technology to adequately reduce levels of phosphorus and harmful chemicals is not in place, where leakages occur from privately owned septic tanks and, in wet weather, storm overflows can discharge untreated sewage. Poorly installed domestic washing machines and even washing cars at home can, in places, also add to the pollution load. Outcomes can include increased turbidity, algal blooms, reduced dissolved oxygen and an overall increase in the nutrient status of receiving waterbodies. Simply, increases in housing increase pressure on the sewage network and the volume of wastewater.
- 8.4 The pollution of inland and coastal waters has received greater recognition in recent years and the significance of such potential impacts and the need to mitigate has been given emphasis by Natural England's demands. These state that new development affecting vulnerable water bodies must achieve 'nutrient neutrality', i.e. avoid any net increase in nitrate and phosphate pollution. Whilst this relates primarily to the disposal of foul water, run-off from hard surfaces can also be a factor. This reflects contemporary case law (the Dutch case) which makes clear that where water quality targets of European sites are not being met, further inputs of pollutants should not be allowed.
- 8.5 With respect to the East Devon Local Plan, the key concern is the River Axe SAC. There is a significant issue with phosphate levels which are having a detrimental

impact on the SAC and Natural England have advised East Devon Council accordingly²⁵.

Policy PB04

- 8.6 The Council has included policy wording within PB04 that requires development proposals within the River Axe SAC catchment to demonstrate how nutrient neutrality will be achieved in accordance with the latest advice and guidance from Natural England. The policy wording also recognises that legislation and government guidance requires the planning authority to be confident beyond reasonable scientific doubt that proposals will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site. Consequently, the policy states that the Council require evidence of a high quality and accuracy to inform HRA and they will seek the advice of the statutory conservation body (Natural England).
- 8.7 PB04 therefore ensures strict protection and means that any new development in the catchment of the River Axe SAC does not add to the nutrient loading.

Advice from DTA Ecology

- 8.8 To inform the HRA of the Plan, East Devon Council commissioned DTA Ecology to provide advice on water quality issues (see DTA Ecology, 2024b). The DTA work was undertaken in Autumn 2024 prior to final housing provision and allocation numbers being determined. The report nonetheless provides background information required for appropriate assessment and the integrity test. The DTA Ecology report advises that before progressing with nutrient neutrality as a mitigation approach, the Council needs to be satisfied that nutrient neutrality principles set out by Natural England can be met. DTA Ecology highlight that there will be a degree of overlap between the measures which could be implemented to deliver overall reductions in nutrient loading and those which might be relied on to achieve nutrient neutrality. The delivery of restoration is a duty which is more closely aligned with the remit and statutory powers of the Environment Agency and Natural England. There is a risk that nutrient neutrality may deplete the availability of measures which the Environment Agency and Natural England might otherwise be relying upon to deliver proactive restoration duties.
- 8.9 Natural England and the Environment Agency both provided consultation responses (first Regulation 19 consultation) relating to the issues raised in the DTA Ecology advice. Natural England responded that there is insufficient evidence at

²⁵ See <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/phosphates-on-the-river-axe/> and <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5533796329062400> for background

present to demonstrate that mitigation measures will not use up the available restoration measures. Natural England suggested that the ongoing delivery of the evidence needed to be included in Chapter 17 Implementation and Monitoring (which has now been updated to reflect this change, in light of Natural England advice). The Environment Agency commented that they do have a role in nutrient neutrality but only insofar as they are contributing to NE's aims and therefore, they will continue to support NE and the Council.

- 8.10 East Devon District Council's website²⁶ provides further information about the current situation. The Council commissioned a draft solutions mitigation report for the River Axe SAC in 2023, and this sets out potential options that could be used to deliver nutrient mitigation. The report and accompanying and nutrient budget calculator are yet to be formally adopted. There is currently no estimated date when a strategic mitigation strategy/nutrient credits will be ready.

Integrity test

- 8.11 The protective wording in PB04, requiring nutrient neutrality for all development within the River Axe catchment, should allow a conclusion of no adverse effects on integrity from the Plan alone (including all policies which support development within the catchment). Given that nutrient neutrality would ensure no net increase in nutrients entering the catchment, there would be no residual effects to assess in combination.
- 8.12 However, at this stage, in line with the advice from DTA Ecology, there is not sufficient certainty that the policy wording can be relied on, as mitigation is yet to be secured and there is concern that mitigation measures may need to involve measures that would otherwise be necessary to restore the SAC. No mitigation strategy has been adopted or agreed. As the Plan progresses through to submission, there is a need for the Council to check with Natural England and the Environment Agency to understand the extent to which measures to deliver restoration and the necessary reductions in nutrient loading are achievable in practice, whether they have been identified and whether they have been secured and/or are being implemented.

²⁶ See <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/phosphates-on-the-river-axe/draft-river-axe-phosphates-mitigation-strategy-and-policy/>

9. Appropriate assessment: Air quality

Relevant policies from the screening for likely significant effects

- 9.1 Likely significant effects were identified in the screening for a range of policies (see Table 5), all of which support development that could result in increased traffic on roads within 200m of the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.
- 9.2 In addition, Policy PB04 includes specific mitigation text around vehicle emissions impacting the Pebblebed Heaths. In accordance with People Over Wind this policy has not been taken account in the screening and will need to be considered as part of the appropriate assessment.

Introduction

- 9.3 Development is typically associated with increased traffic and emissions which can increase the airborne concentration of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and ammonia (NH₃), and the subsequent rate of nitrogen deposition from the atmosphere. This can lead to the nutrient enrichment and acidification of soils, encouraging more tolerant ruderal species at the expense of sensitive plant, lower plant and invertebrate communities. In high concentrations, ammonia can result in direct toxic effects on vegetation, a factor which may also be true of NO_x. Larger animals, such as small mammals and birds are considered immune to direct effects but can be vulnerable to change in their supporting habitats. Furthermore, it can exacerbate the effects of other factors such as climate change or pathogens, for example.
- 9.4 However, levels of deposition typically fall quickly over the first few metres from the roadside before gradually levelling out; beyond 200m, they can become difficult to distinguish from background levels. In other words, impacts at 10m, 50m or 200m can be very different from those at the roadside.

DTA Ecology advice

- 9.5 East Devon Council commissioned DTA Ecology to provide specific advice around air quality impacts to inform the HRA (see DTA Ecology, 2024a). This draws on traffic predictions undertaken by Devon County Council and air quality modelling undertaken by Air Quality Consultants.
- 9.6 The report shows that the baseline levels of key pollutants are already high for the East Devon Heaths and are in exceedance of the critical load for nitrogen deposition and critical level for ammonia. The air quality modelling predicts that,

as a result of the increased traffic associated with the Plan, further deterioration is expected, such that around 20% of the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA would have levels of nitrogen deposition contributions in exceedance of 1% of the critical load and around 10% of the SAC/SPA would exceed the 1% critical level for ammonia. Much of these areas contain qualifying heathland habitat.

- 9.7 The DTA advice provides the necessary information for the appropriate assessment. This states (para 7.2.2) that, in the absence of proactive conservation measures and necessary steps to avoid deterioration (which might otherwise be relied upon to achieve the conservation objectives through reductions to other sources), when applying the integrity test to the predicted effects associated with traffic emissions from the Local Plan growth, it is not possible to conclude there will be no adverse effect to site integrity as a result of increased pollution loading for ammonia and nitrogen deposition. Further technical work with updated dispersion modelling has also been undertaken by Ricardo (Adams et al., 2025a).

Mitigation strategy

- 9.8 East Devon District Council subsequently commissioned an air quality mitigation strategy from Ricardo (Adams et al., 2025b). This work does not set out a clear mitigation strategy in terms of specific measures that can be secured and relied on to rule out adverse effects on integrity. Instead, the report states that it is possible that there may be no practicable options which would fully mitigate the impacts of the East Devon Local Plan.
- 9.9 The report makes a number of recommendations. It recommended that further work be conducted in regard to traffic and emissions modelling to enable mitigation to be specified in more detail, and the appropriate assessment to be completed. The report recommended further development and refinement of strategic mitigation options for testing:
- EV Strategy / similar
 - Slurry stores
 - Land management
 - Implementation of electric Refuse Collection Vehicles across a proportion of the fleet to be deployed on routes crossing the EDPH.
 - Amended development policies
 - Sensitivity testing to estimate the proportion of EDLP traffic that would need to be removed from the LP scenario in order to rule out likely significant effects
 - Review of species and habitat data for the areas where exceedances of the 1% screening threshold or likely significant effects are forecast to occur, or completion of surveys if data is not available.

- 9.10 The strategy provides confidence that these would reduce impacts on site integrity, but at present there is not complete certainty on the effectiveness of the strategic mitigation options to determine if these would be sufficient to avoid effects such that no adverse effects to site integrity will occur. Hence a need for further testing and mitigation design.
- 9.11 Further recommendations related to allowing developers to identify and propose mitigation at project level and removing allocations and development to a level at which any residual adverse effects could be ruled out.

Policy wording (PB04)

- 9.12 Policy PB04 states that development will not be permitted where there is potential for increased vehicle numbers, applying a precautionary approach, resulting in unacceptable increases of emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and/or ammonia (NH3) or other polluting emissions falling on designated sites.
- 9.13 The policy also commits the Council to the production of the 'Pebblebed Heaths air quality mitigation strategy'. This strategy will identify a suite of costed mitigation measures, specifically including promoting accelerated uptake of electric vehicles, that will ensure delivery of mitigation and therefore allow for individual planning application compliance under the Habitat Regulations.
- 9.14 The Policy also applies a break clause such that any proposal that results in a net increase in emissions from traffic (along the relevant roads), would only proceed where there is sufficient headroom (created through the mitigation strategy) and no deterioration in site quality as a result of the proposal. Monitoring will be undertaken to determine and assess site quality and application of the break clause. As such the granting of planning permission for new development will depend upon the monitoring and associated assessment demonstrating that there is and has been no deterioration in site quality to any site part/s that development will generate future vehicle flows over.
- 9.15 The policy potential provides a means to allow development to take place without harm to European sites. However, without a mitigation strategy in place and any specific mitigation measures secured, nor the necessary monitoring protocols established, it is not possible to rule out harm from the growth proposed in the Plan.

Integrity test

- 9.16 In the absence of proactive conservation measures and necessary steps to avoid deterioration (which might otherwise be relied upon to achieve the conservation

objectives through reductions to other sources) it is not possible to conclude there will be no adverse effect to site integrity as a result of increased pollution loading for ammonia and nitrogen deposition.

- 9.17 The plan contains wording in Policy PB04 that “Development will not be permitted where there is potential for increased vehicle numbers, applying a precautionary approach, resulting in increases of emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and/or ammonia (NH3), from internal combustion engine vehicles exceeding threshold levels of harm to designated sites (specifically the Pebblebed Heaths).” While this wording hypothetically should ensure any impacts from the plan are avoided, there is inherent conflict in that the growth proposed in the Plan would exceed threshold levels and there is, as yet, no means to mitigate or address the risks. Policy PB04 refers to proposed HRA guidance/a strategy on vehicle emissions. It is clearly necessary for this document to be progressed in order to inform further iterations of this HRA.

10. Integrity Test

- 10.1 The East Devon District Local Plan (second Regulation 19 version) has been subjected to an appropriate assessment and integrity test according to the statutory provisions laid out in the Habitats Regulations 2017, as amended. The outcomes allow the following conclusions to be drawn.
- 10.2 Adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out for the Plan, alone or in-combination, for each of the following European sites and impact pathways, as set out at the end of each appropriate assessment section:
- East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA and urban effects (see paras 4.25 - 4.26) and recreation (see paras 6.18 - 6.19);
 - East Devon Heaths SPA and loss of supporting habitat/functionally-linked land (see paras 5.28 - 5.31);
 - Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and urban effects(see paras 4.25 - 4.26); recreation (see paras 6.18 - 6.19) and water supply (see para 7.9);
 - Dawlish Warren SAC and recreation (see paras 6.18 - 6.19);
 - River Axe SAC and recreation (see paras 6.26 - 6.27);
 - Sidmouth to West Bay SAC and recreation (see para 6.35).
- 10.3 With respect to Beer Quarry Caves SAC and loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land, additional wording is required in the Plan for policies SD02, SD20, SD21 and SD05 (Land west of Axe View Road allocation only) to ensure project level HRA and the need for further information on potential risks to bats associated with Beer Quarry & Caves SAC. Such wording is in place for other relevant policies. With the inclusion of this wording, adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out for the Plan, alone or in-combination (see 5.17 - 5.18).
- 10.4 It is however not possible to rule out adverse effects on integrity in relation to the following two impact pathways:
- Water quality and the River Axe SAC;
 - Air quality and the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA.
- 10.5 As such, further evidence and details of mitigation are necessary before the Plan can be adopted in its current form.

11. Next steps

11.1 At this stage in the plan-making, there is not sufficient certainty to rule out adverse effects on integrity in relation to water quality (River Axe SAC) and air quality (East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA). The HRA will be finalised only at the point at which the Plan is adopted and as such there is scope for the HRA to be further updated as the Plan progresses.

11.2 Key steps for the Council to take involve:

- Checks with Natural England and the Environment Agency regarding nutrient neutrality to understand the extent to which measures to deliver restoration and the necessary reductions in nutrient loading are achievable in practice, whether they have been identified and whether they have been secured and/or are being implemented.
- Depending on the above, securing mitigation or ensuring a range of mitigation options are available;
- Securing mitigation around vehicle emissions and air quality for the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA; while a range of options have been identified their remains doubt as to whether these can be delivered, their effectiveness and the potential timing.

11.3 It is also necessary to flag that, in the case of some allocations, there is a reliance on further assessment once further details are available. This places a necessary reliance on lower tier assessment (project level HRA). For completeness we have listed all such allocations below. Policy PB04 provides strict umbrella protection for European sites and need for HRA at project level is made clear in the Plan. In addition, in many cases the allocation policy does contain information to guide project level HRA; however, this is not always the case. Ideally any reliance on project level HRA should be reflected in policy. We list all allocations here for reference:

- Land at Chard Road (Axminster), with respect to recreation use of the River Axe SAC;
- The Axminster Carpets factory (Axminster), with respect to supporting habitat for Greater Horseshoe Bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC and with respect to recreation use of the River Axe SAC;
- North of Shoals (Axminster), with respect to recreation use of the River Axe SAC;
- Land off Wyke Lane (Axminster), with respect to recreation use of the River Axe SAC;
- Great Jackleigh Farm (Axminster), with respect to recreation use of the River Axe SAC;

- St. John's (Exmouth) with respect to urban effects, foraging Nightjar and SANG design relating to the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA;
- Land directly east of Liverton business park (Exmouth), with respect to foraging Nightjar associated with the East Devon Heaths SPA;
- Marley's Drive (Exmouth) with respect to urban effects, SANG design and foraging Nightjar and the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA
- Courtlands (three allocations at Exmouth) in relation to urban effects and the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and also with respect to foraging Nightjar associated with the East Devon Heaths SPA
- Allocations at Colyton: allocations at Hillhead and adjacent to the Peace Memorial Fields, with respect to supporting habitat for bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC and a necessity to ensure the pinch points are protected and dark flight lines remain;
- Little Paddocks (Lympstone): Urban effects and the Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar
- All Seaton allocations, in particular the two Harepath Road allocations, with respect to supporting habitat for bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC and a necessity to ensure the pinch points are protected and dark flight lines remain;
- Land at Baxter's Farm, The Street, Musbury with respect to supporting habitat for bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC;
- Land south of Littleham (Exmouth), with respect to foraging Nightjar associated with the East Devon Heaths SPA;
- All allocations at Kilmington, with respect to supporting habitat for Bechstein's Bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC and with respect to recreation use of the River Axe SAC;
- Land east of Musbury Road, Axminster with respect to supporting habitat for Greater Horseshoe Bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC;
- Land south of Furzehill, Sidbury with respect to supporting habitat for bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC;
- All allocations at Sidmouth, in particular south of Woolbrook Road, with respect to supporting habitat for bats associated with the Beer Quarry & Caves SAC.
- The Marlcombe allocation (Policy WS01) and Clyst Valley Regional Park (WS09) with respect to recreation and the East Devon Heaths SAC/SPA, Exe Estuary SPA/Ramsar and Dawlish Warren SAC, in particular checks that SANG will be effective.

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Appendix 1: Conservation Objectives

- 11.4 As required by the Directives, 'Conservation Objectives' have been established by Natural England, which should define the required ecologically robust state for each European site interest feature. All sites should be meeting their conservation objectives. When being fully met, each site will be adequately contributing to the overall favourable conservation status of the species or habitat interest feature across its natural range. Where conservation objectives are not being met at a site level, and the interest feature is therefore not contributing to overall favourable conservation status of the species or habitat, plans should be in place for adequate restoration.
- 11.5 In 2012, Natural England issued a set of generic European site Conservation Objectives, which should be applied to each interest feature of each European site. The list of generic Conservation Objectives for each European site includes an overarching objective, followed by a list of attributes that are essential for the achievement of the overarching objective. Whilst the generic objectives are standardised, they are to be applied to each interest feature of each European site, and the application and achievement of those objectives will therefore be site specific and dependant on the nature and characteristics of the site.
- 11.6 For SPAs, the overarching objective is to:
- 'Avoid the deterioration of the habitats of qualifying features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of the Birds Directive.'*
- 11.7 This is achieved by, subject to natural change, maintaining and restoring:
- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features.
 - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features.
 - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely.
 - The populations of the qualifying features.
 - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
- 11.8 For SACs, the overarching objective is to:
- 'Avoid the deterioration of the qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species, and the significant disturbance of those qualifying species, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving Favourable Conservation Status of each of the qualifying features.'*

- 11.9 This is achieved by, subject to natural change, maintaining and restoring:
- The extent and distribution of the qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species.
 - The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species.
 - The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species rely.
 - The populations of qualifying species.
 - The distribution of qualifying species within the site.
- 11.10 Conservation objectives inform any HRA of a plan or project, by identifying what the interest features for the site should be achieving, and what impacts may be significant for the site in terms of undermining the site's ability to meet its conservation objectives. Site specific supplementary advice highlights the importance of typical species, processes or ecological characteristics that are critical to the interest features of the site. Within the supplementary advice these are normally referred to as 'attributes' and can refer to a range of ecological characteristics such as population number, extent of habitat or a supporting process such as hydrology. Each attribute has a 'target' for the required condition of the attribute.
- 11.11 In Appendix 2 the hyper-links cross reference to the relevant conservation objectives page (on the Natural England website) for all the relevant European sites.

Appendix 2: Summary of European Sites

Summary of European sites and their interest features. Links in the site column relate to the conservation objectives for each site or (in the case of the Ramsar sites) the relevant page with the information sheet on the Natural England website. # in the interest features column denotes an interest feature for which the UK has a special responsibility. Descriptions are drawn from the description in the relevant site improvement plans.

Site	Interest features	Description
Beer Quarry & Caves SAC	S1303 <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> : Lesser horseshoe bat S1304 <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> : Greater horseshoe bat S1323 <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> : Bechstein`s bat	This complex of abandoned mines in south-west England is divided in two by a road, with a working quarry to the north and a disused quarry and cave system to the south. This site supports important populations of hibernating bats. Its use as a hibernation site by the Bechstein's Bat is the primary reason for its designation as a SAC. The area also supports a significant presence of both the Lesser Horseshoe Bat and the Greater Horseshoe Bat which are both qualifying features but are not primary reasons for the site's selection.
Bracket's Coppice SAC	S1323 <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> : Bechstein's bat H6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>); Purple moor-grass meadows	Bracket's Coppice lies close to Corscombe in the vales of West Dorset. The site comprises oak and ash woodland, wooded stream valleys, and a mosaic of herb rich grassland and fen-meadow contained within small fields bounded by tall native hedges. The site is designated for Bechstein's bat and Purple moor-grass <i>Molinia</i> meadow. One of the first maternity colonies of Bechstein's bat was discovered using bat-boxes in this small woodland.
Chesil & The Fleet SAC	H1150 Coastal lagoons H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves H1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) H1420 Mediterranean and thermos-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sacrocornetea fruticose</i>); Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub	The Fleet is the largest example of lagoonal habitat in England, bordered by the shingle barrier of Chesil Beach, through which sea water penetrates and mixes with freshwater inlets. Extensive populations of two species of eelgrass, three species of tasselweed and a rare spiral tasselweed can be found within the lagoon, along with a number of nationally rare and scarce fauna. Chesil Beach is sparsely vegetated where it is subject to storm conditions, however supports sea kale <i>Crambe maritima</i> and sea pea <i>Lathyrus japonicus</i> , alongside other grassland and lichen-rich communities towards the

Site	Interest features	Description
		eastern end of the beach. A dynamic equilibrium exists between the drift line vegetation and Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub, which is replaced by the former when subject to disturbance, across the inner shore of Chesil Beach.
Culm Grasslands SAC	H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> ; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath H6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>); Purple moor-grass meadows S1065 <i>Euphydryas</i> (<i>Eurodryas</i> , <i>Hypodryas</i>) <i>aurinia</i> : Marsh fritillary butterfly	Culm Grasslands represents Molinia meadows in south-west England. This site contains extremely diverse examples of the heathy type of M24 <i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Cirsium dissectum</i> ; fen-meadow, ranging from short, grazed swards through to stands that are transitional to scrub. M26 <i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Crepis paludosa</i> ; mire occurs more locally in wet upland grasslands also. Structural diversity accounts for the conservation of a wide range of flora and fauna, particularly of species characteristic of south-western Europe, such as meadow thistle <i>Cirsium dissectum</i> and whorled caraway <i>Carum verticillatum</i> . The site contains extensive areas of wet heath also, dominated by M16 <i>Sphagnum compactum</i> . Culm Grasslands contains the largest cluster of sites for Marsh fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> in the south-west peninsula. It is judged to be the most important location for the species in its major south-west stronghold.
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC	H4030 European dry heaths S1044 <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i> : Southern damselfly H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> ; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths is the largest block of lowland heath in Devon, and it is internationally important for its Northern Atlantic wet heaths and extensive areas of lowland European dry heaths. The diversity of heathland reflects the varied topography, geology, hydrology and water chemistry of the area, and supports associated plant and animal communities. Among the 21 breeding dragonfly species recorded at the site is the southern damselfly, an Annex II species.
East Devon Heaths SPA	A302 (B) <i>Sylvia undata</i> : Dartford warbler A224 (B) <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> : European nightjar	The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths is the largest block of lowland heath in Devon. There is an important assemblage of birds, and breeding European nightjar and Dartford warbler afford the site SPA status.
Dawlish Warren SAC	H2190 Humid dune slacks S1395 <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> : Petalwort	Dawlish Warren is a geomorphologically important sand spit which protects the mouth of the Exe estuary. Herb-rich neutral grassland

Site	Interest features	Description
	H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes"); Shifting dunes with marram H2130# Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes"); Dune grassland	hosts the only mainland population of the Warren Crocus <i>Romulea Colomnae</i> . A mosaic of reed bed, marsh, scrub and open water support several nationally rare plants, including Petalwort <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> , an Annex II species for which the site is designated.
Exe Estuary SPA	A141 (NB) <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> : Grey plover A046a (NB) <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> : Dark-bellied brent goose A132 (NB) <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> : Pied avocet A156 (NB) <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> : Black-tailed godwit A149 (NB) <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> : Dunlin A007 (NB) <i>Podiceps auritus</i> Slavonian grebe A130 (NB) <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> : Eurasian oystercatcher Waterbird assemblage	The Exe estuary is of international importance for wintering and migratory wetland birds. It is also of national importance for its marine life, especially that associated with intertidal sand and mud flats. Dawlish Warren is a geomorphologically important sand spit which protects the mouth of the Exe estuary. Salt marsh in the lee of the spit is an important habitat and provides a winter roost for wildfowl and waders, particularly dark-bellied Brent geese and oystercatcher.
Exe Estuary Ramsar	Waterfowl assemblage of international importance (under criterion 5) Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance (under criterion 6): <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> : Dark-bellied brent goose	As above.
Hestercombe House SAC	S1303 <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> : Lesser horseshoe bat	Hestercombe House SAC is a Lesser horseshoe bat summer maternity roost and winter hibernacula of national importance in the vale of Taunton Deane. It consists of two roof voids within the former stable block and main house of Hestercombe House - a former country house and estate consisting of mixed woodland, pasture, lakes and landscaped garden. This site holds only a small proportion of the UK population, it has been selected as a representative of the species in south-west England. The UK holds one of the largest populations of this species in western Europe.
Holme Moor & Clean Moor SAC	H6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>); Purple moor-grass meadows	Holme Moor and Clean Moor SAC is important as alkaline/calcareous fen, with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> , and is highly species rich, with transitions from <i>Cladium</i> fen to mire with Black Bog-Rush and Blunt-Flowered Rush. It consists of fen, marsh and swamp habitats associated with high

Site	Interest features	Description
	<p>H7210# Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>; Calcium-rich fen by great fen sedge (Saw sedge)</p> <p>H7230 Alkaline fens; Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens</p>	<p>water tables fed by base rich, nutrient poor ground water, and has Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils. These wetland areas are of international importance, with communities of local, nationally rare and uncommon plant species. Clean Moor supports the only Black bog-rush - Blunt-flowered rush calcareous flush community in Somerset, and Holme Moor supports a rare swamp community dominated by Great Fen-Sedge. Both sites are the only Somerset sites for Broad-leaved Cotton Grass.</p>
<p>Lyme Bay & Torbay SAC</p>	<p>H1170 Reefs</p> <p>H8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves</p>	<p>The two sections of the Lyme Bay and Torbay SAC off the Devon coast of England contain a greater diversity of habitats than found in other existing SACs in the Western English Channel and Celtic Sea. Within the Lyme Bay Reefs portion, bedrock and stony reef, boulders and cobble and sediments comprise a type of reef uncommon in the region. This complex and diverse reef habitat supports particularly high species richness. Hydroids, anemones, sea squirts, sponges and corals populate the area to the extent the area has been identified as a marine biodiversity 'hotspot.' The pink sea fan and the nationally rare southern cup coral is found throughout the site. The diverse geology of the 'Mackerel Cove to Dartmouth Reefs' in Torbay, limestone reefs and outcrops, sandstone, slate reef, granite outcrops, and stony reef, supports a similarly rich assemblage of animal communities, including an extensive coverage of kelp and blue mussel communities on shallower reefs, and species of sponge, anemone, soft corals and crustaceans on the deeper reefs. The area also contains a diversity of wave-eroded sea caves at Babbacombe to Hopes Nose and Broad Sands to Berry Head. The freshwater and saltwater mix in these caves makes them some of the best examples of coastal solution caves in the UK. The caves also support a richness of animal life including many nationally significant species such as sponges, pink sea fingers, burrowing anemones and southern cup coral.</p>

Site	Interest features	Description
Quants SAC	S1065 <i>Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i> ; Marsh fritillary butterfly	This damp and sheltered site on the slopes of the Blackdown Hills supports a medium-sized but strong marsh fritillary population in an unimproved neutral grassland/fen mosaic. It is strategically placed close to other smaller sub-populations, with which it forms a metapopulation, and may exchange individuals with the large population at Southey Moor (outside the SAC series).
River Axe SAC	H3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation; Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot S1095 <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> : Sea Lamprey S1096 <i>Lampetra planeri</i> : Brook Lamprey S1163 <i>Cottus gobio</i> : Bullhead	The lower reaches of the River Axe feature a mixed catchment geology of sandstones and limestones giving rise to calcareous waters and associated Water-Crowfoots <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and Water-Starworts <i>Callitriche batrachion</i> . The river also supports the significant presence of Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey, Bullhead and Atlantic Salmon.
Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts H9180# <i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Mixed woodland on base rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Sidmouth to West Bay is an example of a highly unstable soft cliff coastline subject to mudslides and landslips. The principal rock types are soft mudstones, clays and silty limestones, with a small chalk outlier in the west. Vegetation is very varied, and includes pioneer communities on recent slips in addition to short-lived ephemeral and perennial species, calcareous grassland and scrub on detached chalk blocks, and extensive self-sown woodland dominated by ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> or sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> . This mosaic of habitats makes this site rich in invertebrates, especially bees and wasps. The Red Data Book lichen <i>Parmelia quercina</i> occurs on ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> trees.
South Dartmoor Woods SAC	H4030 European dry heaths H91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles; Western acidic oak woodland	The SAC consists of fine examples of old sessile oak woods, some of the best remaining in South Devon. The SAC forms a complex mosaic of woodland, grassland and heathland, which supports an assemblage of animal species, nationally rare invertebrate species of Pearl Border Fritillary and High Brown Fritillary and rare lichen species.
South Hams SAC	H8310 Caves not open to the public H6210# Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>)	The South Hams SAC is comprised of several but separate component SSSIs. The SAC is thought to hold the largest population of Greater horseshoe bat in the UK and is the only one containing

Site	Interest features	Description
	<p>H4030 European dry heaths H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts H9180# <i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes S1304 <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>: Greater Horseshoe Bat</p>	<p>more than 1,000 adult bats. It contains the largest known maternity roost in the UK and possibly Europe. The site contains both maternity and hibernation sites. Many of the roosts are within caves not open to the public. The SAC is important for its extensive limestone grassland, some areas on the plateau support European dry heath characteristic of acid soil. The limestone headland cliffs of Torbay support calcareous grassland and scrubland facies. The site is exceptional in that it supports a number of rare and scarce vascular plants typical of the oceanic southern temperate and Mediterranean-Atlantic elements of the British flora. The SAC also supports areas of <i>Tilio-Acerion</i> ravine forest which is woodland containing ash, wych elm and small leaved lime and field maple.</p>
<p>Somerset Levels & Moors SPA</p>	<p>A142(NB) <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>: Northern Lapwing A037(NB) <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>: Bewick Swan A140(NB) <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> : European Golden Plover A052(NB) <i>Anas crecca</i>: Eurasian Teal Waterbird assemblage</p>	<p>The Somerset Levels and Moors are located in south-west England and are one of the largest and richest areas of traditionally managed wet grassland and fen habitats in lowland UK. The SPA is within this area and covers about 35,000 ha in the floodplains of the Rivers Brue, Parrett, Tone and their tributaries. The majority of the site is only a few metres above mean sea level and drains through a large network of ditches, rhynes, drains and rivers. Flooding may affect large areas in winter depending on rainfall and tidal conditions. Parts of the site in the Brue Valley include areas of former raised peatbog that have now been substantially modified by agricultural intensification and peat extraction. This has created areas of open water, fen and reedbed. The site attracts important numbers of waterbirds (swans, ducks and waders) in winter.</p>
<p>Somerset Levels & Moors Ramsar</p>	<p>17 species of red-listed invertebrate (under criterion 2) Waterfowl assemblage of international importance (under criterion 5) Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance (under criterion 6): <i>Anas crecca</i>: Eurasian Teal <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>: Northern Lapwing</p>	<p>As above.</p>

Site	Interest features	Description
West Dorset Alder Woods SAC	<p>H6410 <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>); Purple moor-grass meadows</p> <p>H9190 Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains; Dry oak-dominated woodland</p> <p>H91E0# Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>); Alder woodland on floodplains</p> <p>S1065 <i>Euphydryas</i> (<i>Eurodryas</i>, <i>Hypodryas</i>) <i>aurinia</i>: Marsh Fritillary butterfly</p> <p>S1166 <i>Triturus cristatus</i>: Great Crested Newt</p>	<p>The SAC comprises mixed ash-alder woods found along the sinuous valleys in West Dorset. They have developed along the headwaters of alkaline streams and seepages having their origin in the chalk downland and issuing from the underlying Upper Greensand at its junction with the Gault Clay. The wetter woods or carr form transitions to drier oak-ash woodland as well as associated further transitions to base-rich fens, reedswamp, fen meadow and acid grassland. This mosaic of grassland and scrub habitat supports a population of Marsh fritillary species and combined with aquatic habitat in parts of the SAC provides ideal breeding and foraging conditions for the great crested newt.</p>

Appendix 3: Site pressures and threats for relevant European sites

The table lists the threats and pressures identified for each European site in the relevant site improvement plan. The links are for the relevant plan and the threats/pressures are listed in prioritised order.

Site	Site pressures and threats
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC/SPA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Inappropriate scrub control 2 Undergrazing 3 Change in land management 4 Public access/disturbance 5 Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition 6 Water pollution 7 Hydrological changes
Exe Estuary SPA and Dawlish Warren SAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Public access/disturbance (affecting birds) 2 Changes in species distributions 3 Coastal squeeze 4 Change in land management 5 Public access/disturbance (visitor pressure at Dawlish Warren) 6 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
Lyme Bay & Torbay SAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 & 2 Fisheries: commercial marine and estuarine 3 Public access/disturbance
Sidmouth to West Bay SAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Invasive species 2 Disease 3 Direct impact from third party 4 Planning permission: general 5 Water pollution 6 Vehicles 7 Habitat fragmentation 8 Inappropriate coastal management 9 Air pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
South Dartmoor Woods SAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
South Hams SAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Change in land management

Site	Site pressures and threats
	2 Planning permission: general 3 Physical modification 4 Inappropriate vegetation management 5 & 7 Public access/disturbance 6 Forestry and woodland management 8 Inappropriate scrub control 9 Air pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition