



# Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement

## Playford Neighbourhood Plan

August 2023

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# 1. Introduction

1.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended) provide protection for sites that are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species. The network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Both types can also be referred to as European Sites. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also states that Ramsar sites should be afforded the same level of protection and refers to SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites as ‘Habitat Sites’.

1.2 The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of development plans is set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended). It is also a requirement of Regulation 32 schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). In order to proceed to referendum a Neighbourhood Plan must meet a series of ‘basic conditions’, which include that it does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

1.3 Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended through EU Exit legislation) states:

‘Where a land use plan:

(a) Is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) Is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

The plan-making authority for that plan must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.’

1.4 The HRA is therefore undertaken in stages and should conclude whether or not a proposal or policy in the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of any sites.

Stage 1: Determining whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. This needs to take account of the likely impacts in combination with other relevant plans and projects. This assessment should be made using the precautionary principle. The screening assessment must reflect the outcomes of the 2018 judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union<sup>1</sup>, which has ruled that where

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<sup>1</sup> C-323/17 – People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta

mitigation is necessary this must be identified through an Appropriate Assessment.

Stage 2: Carrying out Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity. The effects of the plan on the conservation objectives of sites should be assessed, to ascertain whether the plan has an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.

Stage 3: Identifying mitigation measures and alternative solutions. The aim of this stage is to find ways of avoiding or significantly reducing adverse impacts, so that site integrity is no longer at risk. If there are still likely to be negative impacts, the option should be dropped, unless exceptionally it can be justified by imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

- 1.5 The Playford Neighbourhood Plan is being produced by Playford Parish Council. This report considers whether there are likely to be significant effects on protected Habitat Sites and where a full Appropriate Assessment may be required.
- 1.6 The Playford Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. East Suffolk Council is covered by two Local Plans, the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan adopted September 2020 and the Waveney Local Plan adopted March 2019. The relevant Local Plan for Playford is the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.
- 1.7 The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan was subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment as part of its production. Where screening identified a likely significant effect, an Appropriate Assessment was undertaken and mitigation measures identified were incorporated within the Local Plan, resulting in a conclusion that the plan will not lead to any adverse effects on Habitat sites within and in the vicinity of the (then) Suffolk Coastal District. The Local Plan Appropriate Assessment identified recreational disturbance particularly from dog walkers as the main significant effect. The Council has therefore produced a Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and requires payment towards mitigation from residential developments within 13km of the protected Habitat Sites.
- 1.8 This screening report contains the results of Stage 1 (above) in relation to the Playford Neighbourhood Plan. Stages 2 and 3 are only required if the screening stage concludes that there is likely to be a significant impact on a Habitat site. The initial screening has

been undertaken by East Suffolk Council and is subject to consultation with Natural England as a statutory consultee.

## 2. Protected sites covered by this screening report

- 2.1 Sites included in this assessment are listed in Table 1. This includes all sites that are within 20km of the Playford Neighbourhood Plan area (for consistency with the distances applied within the HRA of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and adopting the precautionary approach). The locations of the sites are shown on maps in Appendix 2 and the Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives of the sites are contained in Appendix 3, along with a summary of the pressures and threats as documented in the Appropriate Assessment for the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

**Table 1: Relevant Habitat sites**

<b>Name</b>
Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC
Dew's Pond SAC
Orfordness – Shingle Street SAC
Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden SAC
Southern North Sea SAC
Alde-Ore Estuary SPA
Deben Estuary SPA
Minsmere- Walberswick SPA
Outer Thames Estuary SPA
Sandlings SPA
Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA
Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar
Deben Estuary Ramsar
Minsmere- Walberswick Ramsar
Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar

## 3. Playford Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.1 Playford Parish Council is producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Playford in order to set out the vision, objectives and policies for the development of the parish up to 2036, within the context of the Local Plan. This Habitats Regulations Assessment screening

assessment reviews ‘Playford Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2036 Pre-Submission Draft Plan March 2023’.

- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan includes a range of policies covering the Playford Neighbourhood Plan area. A number of polices relate to the full Neighbourhood Plan area whilst others are area/location specific. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate specific sites for development.
- 3.3 The policies in the Playford Neighbourhood Plan are listed in Table 2 below. An assessment of whether each policy is likely to have a significant effect on Habitat sites is included in section 5 of this report.

**Table 2: List of Neighbourhood Plan policies**

PFD1	Playford’s Clusters
PFD2	Areas of Greater Landscape value and Sensitivity
PFD3	Protection of Important Views
PFD4	Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Natural Features
PFD5	Non-Designated Heritage Assets
PFD6	Design Considerations
PFD7	Artificial Lighting
PFD8	Parish Services and Facilities
PFD9	Public Rights of Way

## 4. Other Plans and Projects

- 4.1 Regulation 105 of the 2017 Regulations (as amended) requires consideration to be given to whether a Plan will have an effect either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 4.2 As noted in the introduction, the other key plan is the Local Plan. The Local Plan was adopted in September 2020. The Local Plan sets out the broad scale and distribution of development across the area of East Suffolk formerly covered by Suffolk Coastal District. This was subject to an Appropriate Assessment as part of its production.
- 4.3 Policy SCLP12.1 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan does not allocate a minimum housing figure to the Playford Neighbourhood Plan area (it anticipates development as per the countryside policies) and the draft Neighbourhood Plan does not include any site allocation policies. The draft Playford Neighbourhood Plan policies interpret the

strategy and policies of the local plan at a local level. The policies contained in the draft Playford Neighbourhood Plan are proposed to provide locally specific policy for the determination of planning applications in compliance with the local plan's strategy.

- 4.4 A screening process considered each policy in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and concluded whether significant effects were likely and if an Appropriate Assessment was needed. The Appropriate Assessment subsequently considered the following themes - recreation pressure from new residential development, recreation pressure from tourism, urbanisation effects in close proximity, air quality from increased road traffic, water quality and resources and biodiversity net gain. Mitigation measures were identified within the Appropriate Assessment and were incorporated within the final Local Plan, resulting in a conclusion that the plan will not lead to any adverse effects on Habitat Sites within and in the vicinity of the (then) Suffolk Coastal District.
- 4.5 The (now superseded) 2013 Core Strategy was also previously subject to strategic level Appropriate Assessment which concluded that without mitigation there would be a significant effect on Habitat Sites, alone and in combination with other plans. The Appropriate Assessment of that Plan identified recreational disturbance particularly from dog walkers as the main significant effect. The Council subsequently produced a Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy and now requires payment towards mitigation of likely significant effects from residential developments within 13km of a Habitat Site. This approach continues to operate and was included within policies in the Local Plan, adopted in 2020.

## 5. Assessment of likely significant effects of the Playford Neighbourhood Plan on Habitat sites

- 5.1 Table 3 below considers each policy of the Playford Neighbourhood Plan in relation to whether there is potential for a likely significant effect on Habitat sites. This constitutes Stage 1 as set out under paragraph 1.4 above. Consideration is given to the characteristics and location of the protected sites. The policies are considered within the context of the Local Plan policies which they must be in general conformity with and which have themselves been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment, as set out in section 4 above.

**Table 3: Likely significant effects of the Playford Neighbourhood Plan**

Policy	Assessment of potential impact on Habitat sites	Habitat sites that could possibly be affected	Likely significant effect identified	AA needed?
PFD1: Playford’s Clusters	<p>This policy identifies two clusters within the Neighbourhood Plan area where new dwellings will be supported if they are in accordance with Local Plan policy SCLP5.4 and the “Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside” Supplementary Planning Document.</p> <p>This policy does not allocate land for development, it clarifies where Policy SCLP5.4 of the Local Plan will apply. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified no likely significant effects from policy SCLP5.4. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.</p>	None	None	No
PFD2: Areas of Greater Landscape Value and Sensitivity	<p>This policy identifies an area of Greater Landscape Value and Sensitivity within which development proposals will only be permitted where they protect and enhance special landscape qualities, harmonise with the setting of the site and provide suitable landscape impact mitigation.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development and builds on SCLP10.4: Landscape Character of the Suffolk</p>	None	None	No



	Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified no likely significant effects from policy SCLP10.4. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.			
PFD3: Protection of Important Views	<p>This policy seeks to protect important views within and into and out of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The accompanying map identifies 7 important views to be given particular protection.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development and builds on SCLP10.4: Landscape Character of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified no likely significant effects from policy SCLP10.4. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.</p>	None	None	No
PFD4: Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Natural Features	<p>This policy seeks to avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows and other natural features such as ponds and watercourses. Where such losses or harm are unavoidable, the policy requires that the benefits of the development must outweigh the impacts, and that suitable mitigation measures are secured.</p> <p>The policy builds on SCLP10.1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified Likely Significant Effects through the HRA</p>	None	No	No

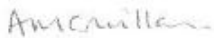
	<p>screening for policy SCLP10.1. Full Appropriate Assessment was undertaken and mitigation incorporated into the Local Plan.</p> <p>Policy FD4 does not promote development and contributes towards the principles of the enhancement of the wider environment and therefore no likely significant effects are identified.</p>			
PFD5: Non-Designated Heritage Assets	<p>The policy identifies 11 non-designated heritage assets and requires proposals for works to these to be assessed in accordance with the Local Plan.</p> <p>The policy builds on Policy SCLP11.6: Non-designated heritage assets of the Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of Policy SCLP11.6 concluded no likely significant effects. This policy will not have a direct effect on any Habitat Sites and no likely significant effects are identified.</p>	None	None	No
PFD6: Design Considerations	<p>This policy sets out a number of design criteria for new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area in order to reflect local character and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.</p> <p>The policy builds on SCLP11.1: Design Quality of the Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of Policy SCLP11.1 concluded no likely significant effects. This policy will not have a direct effect on any Habitat Sites and no likely significant effects are identified.</p>	None	None	No

<p>PFD7: Artificial Lighting</p>	<p>The policy promotes dark skies and sets number of criteria relating to the provision of artificial lighting within development schemes.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>PFD8: Parish Services and Facilities</p>	<p>This policy identifies 3 parish services and facilities for protection. Proposals for the enhancement of the identified facilities are generally supported through the policy, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and the amenity of residents.</p> <p>The policy builds on SCLP8.1: Community Facilities and Assets of the Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of Policy SCLP8.1 concluded no likely significant effects. This policy will not have a direct effect on any Habitat Sites and no likely significant effects are identified.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>PFD9: Public Rights of Way</p>	<p>This policy supports the improvement and extension of the existing Public Rights of Way network in the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <p>The policy may have indirect positive effects on Habitat Sites by ensuring access to local recreation opportunities, thereby reducing potential for increased pressure on</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No</p>

	Habitat Sites. Therefore no likely significant effects are identified.			
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## 6. Summary and conclusions

- 6.1 The Playford Neighbourhood Plan will provide policies which will be used for determining planning applications alongside the Local Plan. It includes policies with locally specific criteria to be used for the determination of planning applications within the Playford Neighbourhood Plan area. The Plan does not allocate any land for development.
- 6.2 The Playford Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the relevant policies in the East Suffolk Council- Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, September 2020.
- 6.3 Screening of the policies in the draft Playford Neighbourhood Plan has not identified any Likely Significant Effects on protected Habitat Sites.
- 6.4 Natural England were consulted on a draft of this Screening Statement as statutory nature conservation body and they agreed with the conclusions set out above. Their response can be found in Appendix 4.

Signed: 

Dated: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

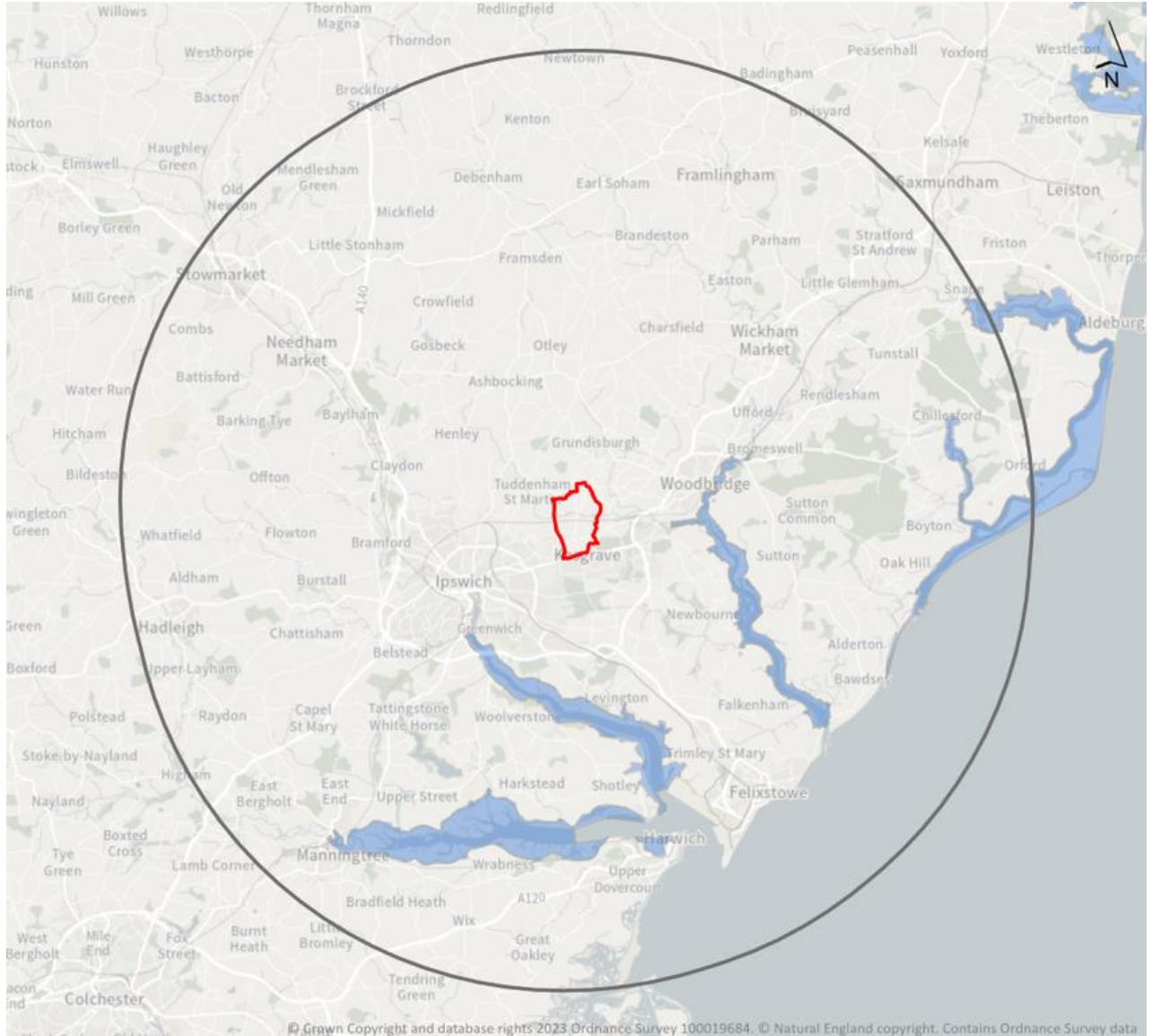
Andrea McMillan  
Planning Manager (Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services)  
East Suffolk Council

## Appendix 1: Sources of background information

- East Suffolk Council Suffolk Coastal Local Plan adopted September 2020
- Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan at Final Draft Plan stage (December 2018)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy for Ipswich Borough, Babergh District, Mid Suffolk District and East Suffolk Councils (May 2019)

## Appendix 2: Locations of Habitat sites

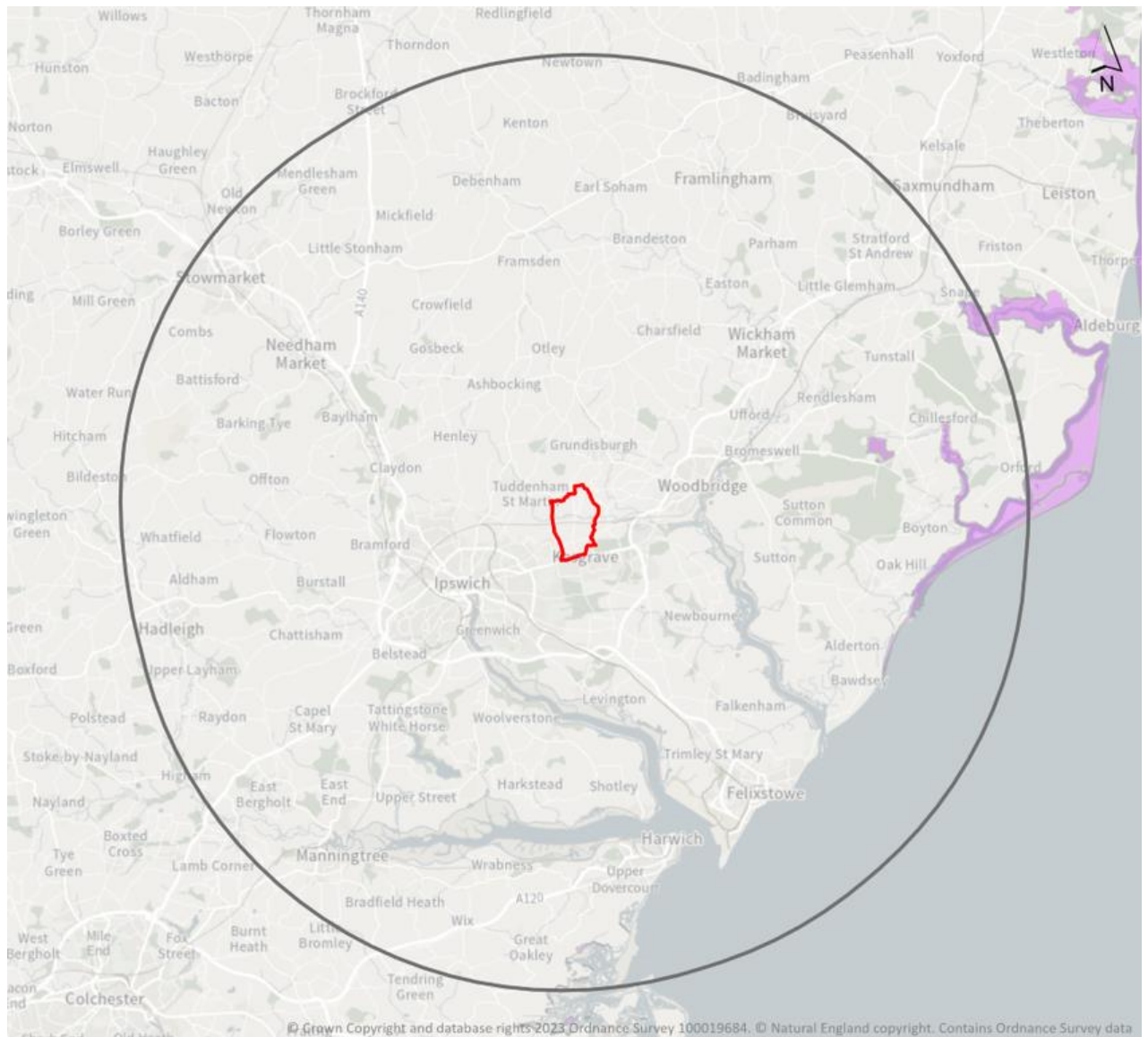
### Ramsar Sites



- Playford Neighbourhood Plan Area
- 20Km Buffer
- Ramsar Sites



### Special Areas of Conservation

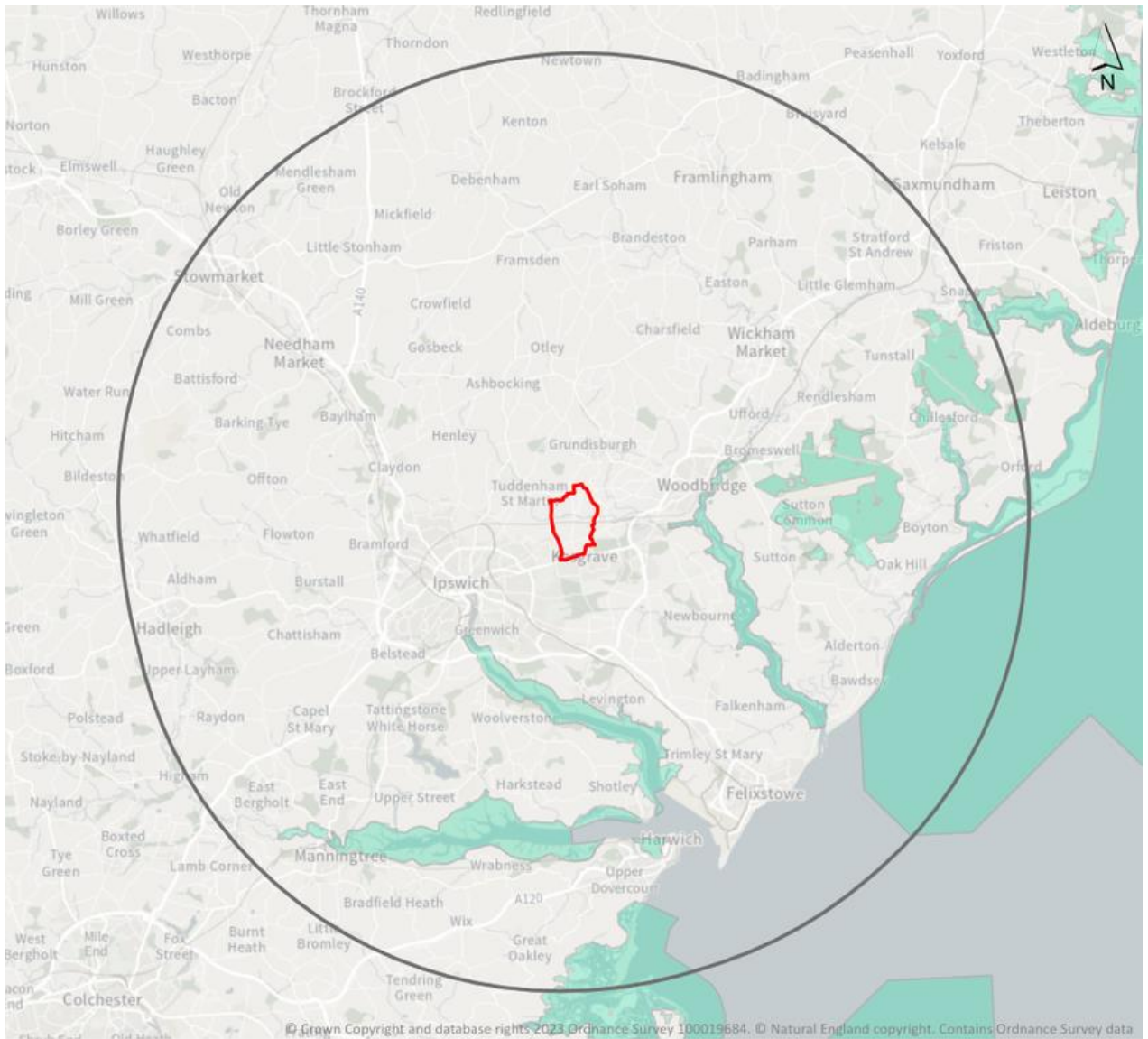


- Playford Neighbourhood Plan Area
- 20Km Buffer
- Special Areas of Conservation





### Special Protection Areas



-  Playford Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  20Km Buffer
-  Special Protection Areas



## Appendix 3: Relevant Habitat sites

Name	Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Pressure and threats (as summarised in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan at Final Draft Plan Stage (December 2018))
<b>Special Areas of Conservation</b>			
Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries	H1130:Estuaries H1140: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Intertidal mudflats and sandflats H1330: Atlantic salt meadows	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	Hydrological changes, public access/disturbance, inappropriate coastal management, coastal squeeze, inappropriate pest control, changes in species distributions, invasive species, air pollution, fisheries (commercial marine and estuarine) (Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC and Alde-Ore SPA)
Dew's Pond	S1166 Triturus cristatus: Great crested newt	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;	None identified.

		The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	
Orfordness – Shingle Street	H1150: Coastal Lagoons H1210: Annual vegetation of drift lines H1220: Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	Not identified in Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan HRA.
Southern North Sea	1351: Phocoena phocoena	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	Not identified in Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan HRA.
Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden	H9190: Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains; Dry oak-dominated woodland.	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring:	Woodland management, disease, atmospheric pollution.

		<p>The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.</p>	
<p>Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths and Marshes SAC (also SPA and Ramsar site)</p>	<p>H4030 European dry heaths H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines H1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks A052(B) <i>Anas crecca</i>: Eurasian teal A021(B) <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>: Great bittern A081(B) <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>: Eurasian marsh harrier A082(NB) <i>Circus cyaneus</i>: Hen harrier A224(B) <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>: European nightjar A056(B) <i>Anas clypeata</i>: Northern shoveler A056(NB) <i>Anas clypeata</i>: Northern shoveler A051(B) <i>Anas strepera</i>: Gadwall A051(NB) <i>Anas strepera</i>: Gadwall A132(B) <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>: Pied avocet A195(B) <i>Sterna albifrons</i>: Little tern A394(NB) <i>Anser albifrons</i>: Greater white-fronted goose</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <p>The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats, The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and, The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.</p>	<p>Coastal squeeze, public access/disturbance, changes in species distributions, invasive species, inappropriate pest control, air pollution, water pollution, deer, fisheries (commercial marine and estuarine)</p>

<b>Special Protection Areas</b>			
Alde-Ore Estuary (also Ramsar site)	A081: Eurasian marsh harrier (breeding) A132: Pied avocet (non-breeding) A132: Pied avocet (breeding) A151: Ruff (non-breeding) A162: Common redshank (non-breeding) A183: Lesser black-backed gull (breeding) A191: Sandwich tern (breeding) A195: Little tern (breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or 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 population of each of the qualifying features; and The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.	Hydrological changes, public access/disturbance, inappropriate coastal management, coastal squeeze, inappropriate pest control, changes in species distributions, invasive species, air pollution, fisheries (commercial marine and estuarine) (Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC and Alde-Ore SPA)
Deben Estuary (also Ramsar site)	A046a: Dark bellied brent goose (non-breeding) A132: Pied avocet (non-breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or 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 population of each of the qualifying features; and The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.	Coastal squeeze, disturbance to birds, water and air pollution.

Outer Thames Estuary	A001: Red-throated Diver (Non-breeding) A195: Common Tern (Breeding) A193: Little Tern (Breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or 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 population of each of the qualifying features; and The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.	Not identified in Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan HRA. SIP identifies fisheries.
Sandlings	A224: European nightjar (breeding) A246: Woodlark (breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or 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 population of each of the qualifying features; and The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.	Changes in species distributions, inappropriate scrub control, deer, air pollution, public access/disturbance.
Stour and Orwell Estuaries (also Ramsar site)	A046a: Dark bellied brent goose (non-breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and	Coastal squeeze, disturbance to birds, air pollution and new development.

	<p>A054: Northern pintail (non-breeding)  A132: Pied avocet (non-breeding)  A141: Grey plover (non-breeding)  A143: Red knot (non-breeding)  A149: Dunlin (non-breeding)  A156: Black-tailed godwit (non-breeding)  A162: Common redshank (non-breeding)  Waterbird assemblage</p>	<p>ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or 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 population of each of the qualifying features; and  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	
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# Appendix 4: Natural England Consultation Response

Ms Laura Mundy  
East Suffolk Council

BY EMAIL ONLY



Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Mundy

## **Playford Neighbourhood Plan - SEA/HRA Screening Consultation**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 23 June 2023.

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

### **Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
- significant effects on Habitats sites<sup>1</sup>, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected

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<sup>1</sup> Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".



species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle  
Consultations Team