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# **LBWF Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

# **Recreational Pressure and Urban Effects Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening and Appropriate Assessment Template**

# Undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of the decision maker as the Competent Authority for the purpose of the Habitats Regulations. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose. Please provide as much information as you can below.

# This template is to be used only for applications that would result in the creation of 1 or more new dwellings (net) in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, where recreational pressures are the only HRA issue. If the application site is 400m or less from the SAC boundary, Urban Effects also need to be considered and the appropriate HRA screening and appropriate assessment should be filled in.

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| HRA Drafting Date: |  |
| HRA Completion Date |  |
| Application Reference |  |
| Application Address |  |
| Is the application address 400m or more from the Epping Forest SAC boundary? | Yes No If yes, Urban Effects can be screened out. Please complete the relevant HRA template from the Council’s website. |
| Application Description |  |
| Lead Planning Officer |  |
| Please note that all references in this assessment to the ‘Habitats Regulations’ refer to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). | |

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| **Stage 1: Details of the Plan or Project** | |
| European site potentially impacted by planning application, plan or project: | Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) |
| Is the planning application within 400m of the SAC boundary? (Y/N) |  |
| Is the planning application directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (if yes, Applicant should have provided details)? | No.  The development proposal is for an increase in residential dwellings. This is neither connected to nor necessary to the management of any European site. |
| Are there any other projects or plans that together with the planning application being assessed could affect the site? | Yes.  All new housing development in Waltham Forest falls within the 6.2km Zone Of Influence (ZOI) of the Epping Forest SAC (in addition to development in other local planning authority areas). Such development is considered likely to contribute towards an impact on site integrity as a result of increased recreational disturbance in combination with other development in the ZOI. |

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| **Stage 2: HRA Screening Assessment** |
| Screening under Regulation 63(1)(a) of the Habitats Regulations – Evidence to allow a judgement to be made as to whether there could be any potential significant impacts of the development on the integrity of the relevant designated sites listed above. |
| Epping Forest SAC  *Qualifying Features*  The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:   * Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (Quercion robori-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion). (Beech forests on acid soils) * European dry heaths * Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix. (Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath)   *Qualifying Species:*  The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:   * Stag beetle (Lucanus Cervus)   *Conservation Objectives*  With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the ‘Qualifying Features’ and ‘Qualifying Species’ listed above), and subject to natural change, 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 and Species.  *Likely Significant Effect*  Recreational Pressure  The proposed development is within the 6.2km Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the Epping Forest SAC. In accordance with advice from Natural England and the analysis contained in the HRA of the Waltham Forest Local Plan Part 1, a net increase in housing development within the ZOI is considered likely to result in impacts to the integrity of the SAC through a consequent increase in recreational disturbance.  Development within the borough will increase the human population in the Epping Forest ZOI and is therefore considered likely to increase recreational impacts on the heathland and forest elements that are qualifying features of the SAC. The impacts of recreational disturbance (both at the site-scale and in combination with other development around the Epping Forest) are analogous to impacts from direct habitat loss, as recreation can cause important habitat to be unavailable for use. The habitat is functionally lost, either permanently or for a defined period. Ultimately, the impacts of recreational disturbance can be such that they affect the stated conservation objectives of the European sites.  As a result, when considered in combination with other plans and projects, and without any mitigation or avoidance measures in place, this proposal would result in a likely significant effect on the Epping Forest SAC as a result of recreational pressure.  Urban Effects  Development within 400m of the Epping Forest SAC could result in more regular visits from  new residents and potentially increases likelihood of impacts arising from habitation.  Specific potential urban effects include:   * Cat predation * Localised effects from construction (dust, disturbance) * Fires (wild fires, arson) * Flytipping / litter resulting in the spread of invasive species and diseases.   As a result, when considered in combination with other plans and projects, this development will have a likely significant effect on the Epping Forest SAC.  As a result, when considered in combination with other plans and projects, and without any mitigation or avoidance measures in place, this proposal would result in a likely significant effects on the Epping Forest SAC as a result of recreational pressure and urban effects. |

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| **Stage 3: Appropriate Assessment** |
| Appropriate Assessment under Regulation 63(1) - if there are any potential significant impacts, avoidance and/or mitigation measures must be assessed. This should include details of any long- term management and maintenance and funding of any solution. |
| Epping Forest SAC – Recreational Pressure  The application being assessed will result in a net increase of dwellings within the 6.2km ZOI of the Epping Forest SAC. As established in the HRA of Waltham Forest Local Plan Part 1, a permanent significant effect on the SAC site due to increase in recreational disturbance as a result of the new development, is likely. As such, and in order to lawfully be permitted, the proposed development must contribute to the package of avoidance and mitigation measures as set out in the Epping Forest Strategic Access Management and Maintenance (SAMM) Strategy, and the Council’s emerging Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) Strategy (Part 1 of the Waltham Forest Green Spaces and Places SPD)  In order to achieve appropriate avoidance of, and mitigation for, recreational effects likely to result from this application, the following are required:   * **SAMM:** In accordance with the agreed SAMM Strategy this proposal will make a financial contribution of £627 per new home towards mitigation SAMM measures within the SAC itself. This payment will be secured through a Section 106 legal agreement, to be paid prior to occupation. * **SANG:** An appropriate proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment made by this scheme upon commencement will be invested in line with the emerging Waltham Forest SANG strategy. Based on the methodology set out in the emerging strategy, it is anticipated that the *[no. of new homes proposed]* new homes proposed would result in a potential visitor uplift of *[potential visitor uplift[[1]](#footnote-1)]* daily visits. Of the proposed SANGs that this site falls within the catchment of, investment in *[identified SANG1]* is proposed to mitigate the potential recreational impacts on Epping Forest SAC.   Epping Forest SAC – Urban Effects  The application being assessed will result in a net increase of dwellings within 400m of the Epping Forest SAC boundary. As established in the HRA of the Waltham Forest LP1 Local Plan HRA , a permanent significant effect on the SAC site due to the urbansing effects of development within 400m of the SAC boundary as a result of the new development, is likely.  As such, in order to lawfully be permitted, the proposed development may need to include an additional package of avoidance and mitigation measures, to be agreed with Natural England and the City of London Corporation as Conservators of Epping Forest.  In order to achieve appropriate avoidance and/or mitigation of urban effects, likely to result from this application, the following has been agreed:  *[Additional measures agreed[[2]](#footnote-2)]*  As a result of the avoidance and mitigation measures set out above, the proposed development would **not** result in Likely Significant Effects (LSE) to the stated conservation objectives of the European sites as a result of recreational pressure. |

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| **Stage 4 – Summary of the Appropriate Assessment (To be carried out by the Competent Authority (the local planning authority) in liaison with Natural England** |
| This represents the authority’s Appropriate Assessment as Competent Authority in accordance with requirements under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive.  The authority has concluded that the adverse effects arising from the proposal are wholly mitigated by SAMM and SANG investment and other additional measures necessary to avoid or mitigate urban effects.  The authority’s assessment is that the application complies with the relevant guidance and mitigation strategies outlined in the relevant guidance documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the designated sites identified above. |
| Natural England Officer:……………………..  (if relevant) |
| **Competent Authority**  Authorised under delegated powers  Head of Service………………………  Signed ………………………………..  Date …………………. |

1. To be completed by LBWF [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To be completed following consultation with Natural England and City of London Corporation [↑](#footnote-ref-2)