

Darlington Local Plan (2016 - 2036)

Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment Report Addendum

Main Modifications Screening

October 2021



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1** Darlington Borough Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan (2016-2036) for the Borough which has been subject to a number of rounds of consultation and has now reached an advanced stage.
- 1.2** The Local Plan is currently being examined in public by an independent Planning Inspector and as a result of this process, informed by written and verbal representations, a number of main modifications are being proposed to the Local Plan to ensure it is compliant with the tests of soundness in national planning policy.

Purpose of Habitats Regs Screening Assessment Main Modifications Addendum

- 1.3** This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report Addendum has been prepared to take account of, and screen, the proposed main modifications to the Submission Local Plan (2016-2036) (CD01) in order to determine if any of these changes have the potential to impact on European Sites and will not themselves introduce new likely significant effects that were not thoroughly investigated for the HRA of the submitted Local Plan (2016-2036).
- 1.4** This report is to be treated as an 'Addendum' and should be read in conjunction with the Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment - Screening Report (CD07) published in August 2020. This HRA Report Addendum is structured as follows:
- Section 2: HRA Approach & Background
 - Section 3: Screening of Proposed Main Modifications
 - Section 4: Conclusions & Next Steps

2. HRA Approach & Background

- 2.1** Under the Habitats Regulations, including Regulation 105(1) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Local Planning Authorities must consider whether any plan or project – in this case the Local Plan – will have a ‘likely significant effect’ on one or more European sites of nature conservation importance. If so, they must carry out an ‘appropriate assessment’. This is known as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Projects and plans can only be permitted where the competent authority is satisfied that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the relevant European sites.
- 2.2** It should be noted there are no Natura 2000 (European) designated sites in the Borough of Darlington.
- 2.3** The HRA Appropriate Assessment – Screening Report (CD07) published by the Council in 2020 concluded that the Local Plan is not likely to give rise to any negative impacts on any Natura 2000 (European) sites should it be adopted and the need to carry out an ‘appropriate assessment’ was screened out.
- 2.4** As a number of main modifications are now being proposed to be made to the submission Local Plan policies it is now necessary for the Council to review these to determine if they will introduce any new likely significant effects that were not originally assessed through the HRA of the submission Local Plan (2016-2036).

3 Screening of Proposed Main Modifications

- 3.1** A number of Main Modifications are proposed to the submitted Local Plan (2016-2036) as a result of the examination hearing sessions and representations received. It is necessary to screen the modifications to determine if they will result in any new likely significant effects that were not originally identified.
- 3.2** All main modifications were screened reflecting the approach and method taken in the original HRA (CD07) and using professional judgement.
- 3.3** In summary all proposed main modifications were identified as having no likely significant effect on Natura 2000 (European) sites or altering the screening results of the original HRA (CD07). Most of the proposed main modifications involve minor edits to the Plan text for clarification, factual correction, to enhance readability or other reasons and have therefore been screened out as not relevant.
- 3.4** None of the proposed main modifications are additional policies, sites or requirements of significance or relevance to Natura 2000 (European sites).

4. Conclusions

4.1 Following the screening and assessment of the Main Modifications of the Darlington Local Plan (2016-2036) it can be concluded that they will not lead to likely significant effects on European sites and do not undermine the conclusions of the HRA (CD07) submitted in 2020. Also, no adverse effects on integrity would arise.