



Executive Summary of the HRA of Post Submission Modifications Basildon Local Plan (2022)

Basildon Borough Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Introduction

1.1 The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report has been prepared by LUC, on behalf of Basildon Borough Council (the Council) of the Post Submission Modifications version of the Basildon Borough Local Plan (hereafter referred to as the “2022 Local Plan”).

1.2 This Executive Summary relates to the HRA Report for the Basildon 2022 Local Plan, containing Strategic and Spatial Policies, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies and addenda. This document is a summary of the key findings of the HRA report.

1.3 HRA is an iterative process, which Basildon Borough Council (the Council) is required to undertake by law to assess the potential effects of a development plan on one or more sites afforded the highest level of protection in the UK. A plan will only progress a development plan if it considers that the plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any 'European site', including Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites. The requirement for HRA does not apply to other nationally designated wildlife sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserves. This assessment is based on a precautionary principle, whereby if uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse effect is assumed.

1.4 HRA has informed this development plan through each stage of the plan-making process. A description and summary of all the previous HRA work that has been undertaken is provided in Chapters 1 of the full HRA Report.

Findings

1.5 The HRA of the 2022 Local Plan comprised of two stages. This included the Screening Assessment, which set out policies and impact types for which likely significant effects are predicted or cannot be ruled out prior to mitigation and avoidance measures, and an Appropriate Assessment, which considers the impacts of the plan (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of European sites with respect to their conservation objectives and to their structure and function.

1.6 At the Screening stage, likely significant effects on European sites, either alone or in combination with other policies and proposals, could not be ruled out in relation to the following plan policies:

- SD1 and SD3 Strategic approach to sustainable development and neighbourhood planning.
- H1, H3-H8, H11-H16, H22 (Housing).
- R2 Basildon town centre regeneration.
- R3 Laindon town centre regeneration.
- R5 Wickford town centre regeneration.

1.7 The HRA Screening stage identified that further consideration was required at the Appropriate Assessment stage to determine whether the 2022 Local Plan, either alone or in-combination, would adversely affect the integrity of European sites as a result of increases in recreational pressure, changes in water quality and quantity, and increased flood risk. All other impact types were considered to have no potential to result in likely significant effects on European sites as a result of the 2022 Local Plan proposals.

1.8 The Appropriate Assessment stage identified whether the above likely significant effects will, in light of mitigation and avoidance measures, result in adverse effects on integrity of the European sites either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. The findings of the Appropriate Assessment are detailed below.

1.9 With regards to recreational pressures, the implementation of recreational avoidance and mitigation strategies (RAMS) is now a widely accepted means of mitigating impacts associated with recreation at European sites and has been successfully demonstrated as a suitable means of avoidance and mitigation of recreational impacts for other Essex Authorities through the Examination in Public process. In light of this, and given that Basildon Council has prepared and adopted the Essex Coast RAMS in close consultation with Natural England and other key stakeholders, and has embedded the delivery and monitoring of the RAMS in specific policy commitments, there is certainty that the 2022 Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar Site, Crouch and Roach Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, Essex Estuaries SAC and Blackwater Estuary SPA and Ramsar either alone, or in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of recreational impacts.

1.10 With regards to water quality and quantity (flood risk), the provision of mitigation and avoidance safeguards committed to in the 2022 Local Plan were considered sufficient to provide assurance that new phases of development would only be delivered when the necessary infrastructure upgrades and provisions are in place. This was considered suitably robust to ensure that adverse effects on the integrity of European sites as a result of change in water quality or quantity arising from 2022 Local Plan would be avoided, either alone or in-combination.

Next Steps

1.11 Following the technical consultation on the 2022 Local Plan, all consultation comments received will be forwarded to the independent Planning

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Inspector, Paul Griffiths, to be considered as part of the ongoing Examination, along with the proposed modifications and new evidence. Providing the Local Plan is found sound by the independent Planning Inspector, and subject to modifications which may need to be subject to further HRA work and public consultation, the Council expect the Local Plan to be adopted towards the end of 2022.

Report produced by LUC

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