

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)
Screening Matrix and Appropriate Assessment Statement

PLEASE NOTE: 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 Qualifying Body to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose.

Stage 1 - Details of the plan or project	
Neighbourhood Plan:	Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan (2017 - 2029)
No houses indicated by Chichester Local Plan for Neighbourhood Plan Area:	25
No houses proposed by the Neighbourhood Plan:	<p>Up to 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land at The Old Granary, Boxgrove – 3 to 6 homes • The Old Coal Yard, Halnaker – 1 home and 5 holiday lets (granted permission so only referred to in the plan for completeness) • Brambles, Crockerhill – 1 home <p>In addition during the plan preparation, Land at Priors Acre was permitted on appeal for 22 homes. It is not included within the plan.</p>
Will the Neighbourhood Plan result in a net increase in residential development?	Yes
Other than residential development, what other key policy areas does the plan cover?	<p>The plan seeks to ensure that Boxgrove Parish will continue to be an attractive place to live and work, maintaining its intrinsic rural character whilst allowing for sustainable development and improving local services, communications and infrastructure. It establishes a settlement boundary which restricts development in the countryside, protects trees and hedgerows, restore land at 2 quarries to pasture and woodland, protect local distinctiveness, important local views, heritage and the dark night skies.</p> <p>With the exception of the housing allocations and windfall policy there are no site policies within the plan likely to directly lead to an increase in activity, although support is given to local employment uses, improved facilities at the primary school and protection of assets of community value etc.</p>
Status of Neighbourhood Plan:	Examination
European site potentially impacted - Is the plan area within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.6km radius of Chichester 	No

<p>and Langstone Harbours SPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.5km of Pagham Harbour SPA • 6.5km or 12km of Ebernoe Common SAC / The Mens SAC / Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC • 400m or 5km of Wealden Heaths Phase 2 SPA 	<p>No</p> <p>Yes – the plan area is within 6.5km and 12km of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC</p> <p>No</p>
<p>Are any allocations within any of the above zones of influence?</p>	<p>The allocations only fall within the 12km zone of influence for Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC. None fall within 6.5km.</p>
<p>Are there any other projects or plans that together with the plan / application being assessed could affect the site?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new development on greenfield sites and sites that support or are in close proximity to suitable commuting and foraging habitat for bats within 12km of the SAC may result in loss of habitat, disturbance by lighting, noise and vibration. • South Downs National Park Local Plan (now at Examination - in particular Core Policy SD 10: International Sites). The National Park designation covers part of the Parish. • Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol (currently in draft)
<p>Lead Planning Officer: Valerie Dobson (Principal Planning Officer)</p>	

Stage 2 - HRA screening assessment

Test 1: the significance test – The Qualifying Body to provide evidence so that a judgement can be made as to whether there could be any potential likely significant effects of the plan on the SPA/SAC/Ramsar.

The proposed allocations are within the 12km zone of influence of the Cocking to Singleton Tunnels SAC and in total amount to a maximum of 7 homes. In accordance with advice from Natural England and as detailed in the emerging 'Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol' development could result in the direct loss of habitats and commuting / foraging paths, lighting during construction and operation, and noise / vibration. Therefore development proposals on greenfield sites and sites that support, or are in close proximity to, suitable commuting and foraging habitat (including mature vegetative linear features such as woodlands, hedgerows riverine and wetland habitats) within the identified 6.5km and 12km ranges, should have due regard to the possibility that Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats will be utilising the site. Within the 6.5km zone all impacts to bats must be considered given that these habitats are considered critical for sustaining the populations of bats. Within the wider 12km zone significant impacts or severance to flightlines are to be considered.

Land at The Old Granary, Boxgrove is proposed for 3 – 6 courtyard style homes (7.3km from Singleton Tunnel SAC). There is a formally maintained hedge to the north of the site which might form part of a flightline, but there are no bat records near the site, neither is the hedgerow identified as part of the bat movement network mapped for CDC by Forest Research. Therefore the allocation would not result in significant impact on or severance of bat flightlines.

Brambles, Crockerhill (8.65km from Singleton Tunnel SAC) – The site has significant tree cover on the eastern side which links with a linear feature of trees and open farm land, which is identified as bat home network and bat movement network. There is a record of common pipistrelle bats immediately adjacent to the site, but no evidence of Barbastelle or Bechstein bats associated with Singleton and Cocking tunnels SAC. However, an impact cannot be screened out at this stage.

The plan gives support to a number of other development types including local employment uses, residential windfall sites within the settlement boundary and improved facilities at the primary school, the impact of which cannot be screened out at this stage.

Stage 2 Conclusion

Without mitigation, would the proposal lead to likely significant effects on the integrity of a European Site? **Yes** – the proposals could lead to likely significant effects in combination with other plans and likely development proposals within 12km of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC

(If yes, continue to Stage 3)

Stage 3 - HRA – Appropriate Assessment

Test 2: the integrity test – If there are any potential significant impacts, the competent authority must be satisfied that adequate mitigation is in place to allow the AA to be carried out Other than for Bird Aware Solent and the Joint Pagham Scheme of Mitigation, the competent authority must also be satisfied that all details which demonstrate any long term management, maintenance and funding of any solution have been provided.

The reasons for the designation of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC are as follows:

Singleton and Cocking Tunnels constitute the most important sites for hibernating bats in south-east England, in particular Barbastelle and Bechstein's bats. These two disused brick railway tunnels support, during the winter months, large numbers of hibernating bats. In addition to Barbastelle and Bechstein's bats those also best represented include Natterer's, Daubenton's, brown long-eared and Brandt's /whiskered and this is the only known location in Britain for the mouse-eared bat.

The qualifying species for the SAC are:

Barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*

Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*

The site conservation objectives are:

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 the habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Potential Effect	Site Conservation Objective(s)	Qualifying features	Potential for Impact?	Relevant Mitigation Measures
<p>The plan being assessed may result in impacts on (through the loss or degradation of hedgerows, trees, water features etc.) or severance of flightlines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species •The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species •The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely •The populations of qualifying species 	<p>All for Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC</p>	<p>Yes (Indirect Impact).The loss of supporting features and/or degradation of potential flightlines in themselves these may be minor (as regards the Boxgrove NP) but in combination with other plans and proposed developments within 12km of the SAC this may result in significant effects on the extent and distribution of the qualifying species and the population of the qualifying species.</p>	<p>The South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan (at examination) Policy SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Policy SD11: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows support developments within the National Park that retain, protect and enhance biodiversity features such as commuting routes through sites. The loss or damage of non-protected trees, woodland or hedgerows should be avoided but if it is unavoidable appropriate replacement or compensation will be required.</p> <p>The Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan Policy EH1: Protection of trees and hedgerows resists development that damages or results in the loss of trees / hedgerows unless the need for development</p>

				clearly outweighs the loss. Development proposals much seek to enhance ecological networks.
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Relevant Mitigation measures

Natural England's advice is that, with mitigation, an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC can be ruled out as the Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating any development that is likely to have significant impacts on, or result in severance to, bat flightlines for either of the qualifying species of bat. In addition to this the open space and protection of trees/hedgerows policies and strict controls of external lighting in the Neighbourhood Plan, combined with relevant policies in the Local Plans are likely to be beneficial for bat habitats and flight lines.

Stage 4 – Summary of the Appropriate Assessment (To be carried out by the Competent Authority (the local planning authority) in liaison with Natural England

Conclusion

The Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan will have a likely significant effect in combination with other proposals on the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC.

However, having considered the mitigation measures Chichester District Council concludes that the Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to any significant or adverse effects on the integrity of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC.

Having made this assessment and having consulted with Natural England and fully considered any representation received (see below), the authority may now agree to the Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Natural England Officer:

Summary of Natural England's comments:

Natural England agrees with the conclusion of the Appropriate Assessment, that the policies in the Boxgrove NP, alongside those of the South Downs National Park Local Plan, are sufficient to avoid any adverse impact on the integrity of the Singleton to Cocking Tunnels SAC.

Alison Giacomelli
28 February 2018

Does the Boxgrove neighbourhood plan require amending as a result of Natural England's comments? NO

If 'YES', what needs to change?