

## **Runnymede Borough Council**

### **Green & Blue Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

#### **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

Screening Statement – Determination under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

#### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

Screening Statement - Determination under Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004

July 2021

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.2 General

- 1.2.1 This final Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening determination has been undertaken by Runnymede Borough Council in their duty to determine whether the Green & Blue Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires HRA or SEA. **This screening assessment is based on the draft SPD dated June 2021.**
- 1.2.2 Regulation 9 (1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 requires authorities to determine whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required for certain plans, policies or programmes. This statement also sets out the Borough Council's determination as to whether Appropriate Assessment is required under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017.
- 1.2.3 Under the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations (2004), specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects or which require Appropriate Assessment must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.2.4 There are exceptions to this requirement for plans that determine the use of a small area at a local level and for minor modifications if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- 1.2.5 In accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (Regulation 9 (1)), the Borough Council must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. In accordance with Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017, the Borough Council is the competent authority for determining if a plan requires Appropriate Assessment.

### 1.3 Background to the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD

- 1.3.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) makes provision for local authorities to prepare and adopt Local Development Documents which can include SPD's. However, an SPD does not form part of the Development Plan for an area as set out in Section 38 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) but it is a material consideration in taking planning decisions.
- 1.3.2 An SPD is required to be consulted on and adopted by the Borough Council and once implemented sets out additional planning guidance that supports and/or expands upon the Policies of a Local Plan.
- 1.3.3 The proposed Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD covers all of the area within the jurisdiction of Runnymede Borough Council and contains the urban areas of Addlestone, Chertsey, Englefield Green, Egham, Ottershaw, Woodham & New Haw and Virginia Water. Interspersed between the urban areas is designated Green Belt holding numerous wooded copses, golf

courses and businesses as well as small pockets of development, agriculture and equestrian uses. The M25 and M3 motorways bisect the Borough north-south and east-west respectively and effectively cut the Borough into four quarters. There are six rail stations in Runnymede Borough offering direct services to London Waterloo, Reading & Woking. A plan of the designated area is shown in **Plan 1-1**.

1.3.4 There are numerous areas of woodland/copses designated as ancient/semi-natural or ancient replanted woodland which are also identified as priority habitat as well as swathes of woodpasture and parkland which is a national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) designation. Priority habitat designations also include areas of lowland meadows, lowland heathland, and lowland fens. There are five SSSIs located in the Borough area, Basingstoke Canal, Langham Pond, Thorpe Haymeadow, Thorpe no.1 Gravel Pit and Windsor Forest.

1.3.5 Unit 2 of the Basingstoke Canal SSSI lies to the south of the Borough and is in an unfavourable, no change status which does not meet the PSA target of 95% in favourable or unfavourable recovering status. Status reasons are extent of habitat, lack of plant diversity and poor water quality.

1.3.6 Langham Pond SSSI is formed of 3 units. 100% of the SSSI is in a favourable or unfavourable recovering status, meeting the PSA target. The Thorpe Haymeadow SSSI is formed of one unit in a favourable condition, which also meets the PSA Target.

The Thorpe no.1 Gravel Pit SSSI is formed of one unit and is in a favourable condition status meeting the PSA target. The SSSI also forms part of the wider South West London Water Bodies Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar, which forms part of the National Site Network of protected sites.

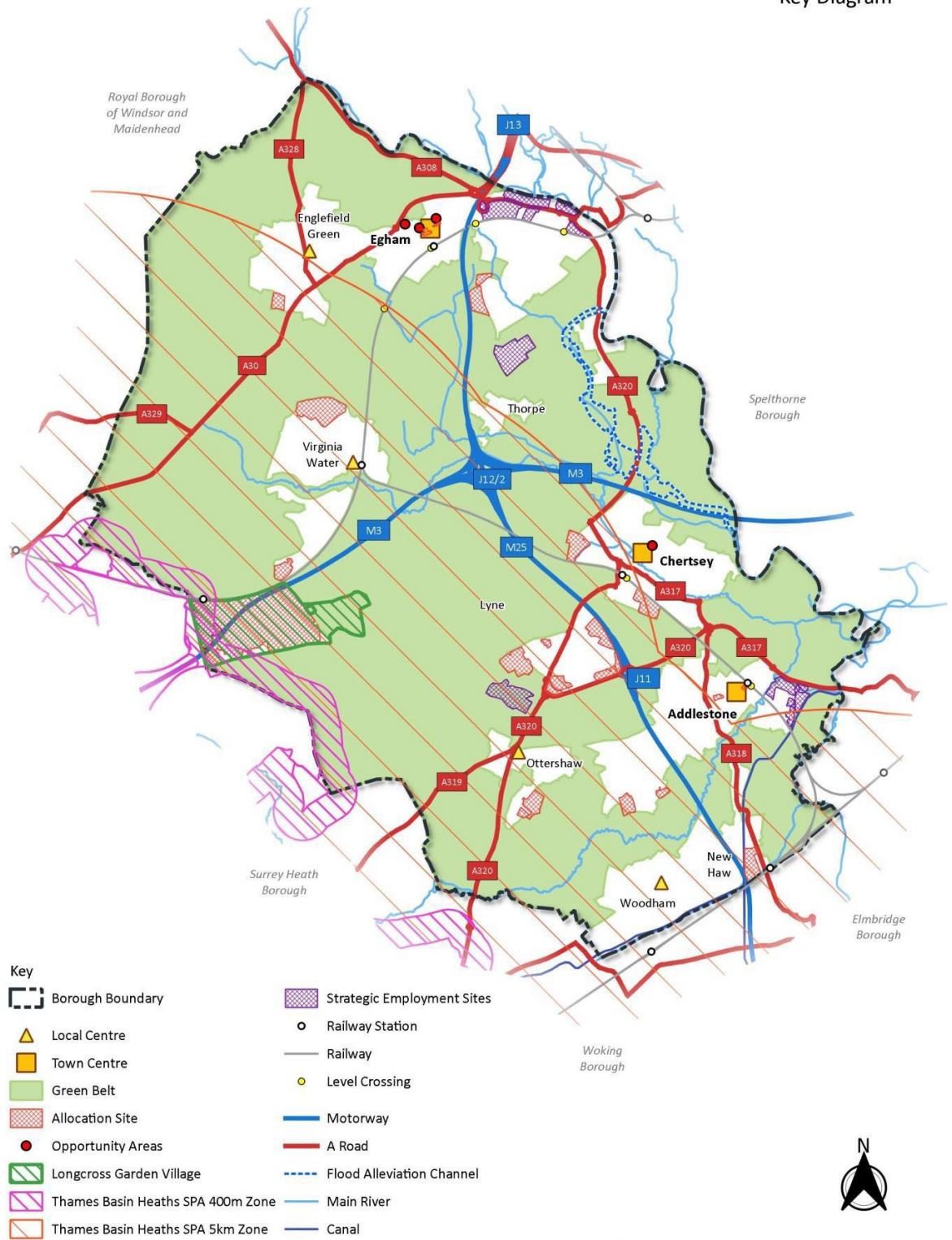
1.3.7 The Windsor Forest SSSI is formed of 22 units with units 10, 11 and 16 within or partly within Runnymede. The SSSI is in 100% favourable condition status and meets the PSA target of 95%. The SSSI also forms part of the Windsor Forest & Great Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC) another National Site Network site.

1.3.8 Other National Site Network sites, whilst not within the Borough but are within 5km include, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC. Chobham Common is also a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

1.3.9 The Borough also lies within 12km of the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC, 12.2km from Burnham Beeches SAC, 13km of the Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common SACs, 20km from the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, 23km from the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA and its component parts (including Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons SPA and Thursley & Ockley Bog Ramsar) and 30km from the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA.

# Plan 1-1: Map of Runnymede Borough

## Runnymede Borough Key Diagram



- 1.3.10 There are also over 30 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in the Borough as well as two Local Nature Reserves at Chertsey Meads and Riverside Walk in Virginia Water. The Borough lies within the River Wey and Tributaries catchment and there are large areas of the Borough, including within its urban areas which lie within flood risk zones 2 and 3 including functional floodplain.
- 1.3.11 From a heritage perspective, the Borough contains numerous statutorily listed or locally listed buildings and structures most notably the Grade I Royal Holloway College building in Englefield Green. There are 6 Conservation Areas in the borough as well as 6 scheduled ancient monuments, 48 areas of high archaeological potential and four historic parks and gardens.
- 1.3.12 The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD **dated June 2021** does not form part of the Development Plan for the area and does not allocate any sites for development or propose policies for the use of land, but is a material consideration in decision making. The 2030 Local Plan, which is the document which allocates sites and contains policies concerning land use, has been the subject of Sustainability Appraisal (including the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment) as well as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 1.3.13 The SPD instead sets out guidance on how planning applications for development under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act should contribute towards the delivery of Green & Blue Infrastructure in support of Policies SD7 (Sustainable Design), EE11 (Green Infrastructure), E12 (Blue Infrastructure) and other relevant policies of the adopted Runnymede Borough 2030 Local Plan including site allocation policies. Strengthening the Borough's networks of multi-functional Green and Blue Infrastructure role in halting biodiversity loss and nature recovery, building resilience to climate change and promoting healthy, resilient and safe communities are key aims of the SPD.
- 1.3.14 The SPD sets out planning principles for Green and Blue Infrastructure provision, supported by planning and design checklists, good practice case studies and signposts to further information and guidance. The Document outlines the Council's expectations for how Green and Blue Infrastructure should be embedded within development proposals.

## **1.4 Sustainability Appraisal**

- 1.4.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated Regulations (as amended), requires a local authority to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for their Local Plan documents. This considers the social and economic impacts of a plan as well as the environmental impacts. SPDs are not Local Plan documents and therefore a Sustainability Appraisal is not required.

## 2.0 HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT – SCREENING

### 2.1 Assessment Process

2.1.1 The need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment as part of an HRA is set out within Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Appropriate Assessment stage of HRA is only required should the preliminary screening assessment not be able to rule out likely significant effects.

2.1.2 The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations require that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a National Site Network site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment. The Regulations state that any plan or project not connected to or necessary for a site's management, but likely to have significant effects thereon shall be subject to appropriate assessment. There are four distinct stages in HRA namely:

- **Step 1: Screening** – Identification of likely impacts on a National Site Network site either alone or in combination with other plans/projects and consideration of whether these are significant. Following the decision of the ECJ in the *People Over Wind & Sweetman v. Coillite Teoranta (C-323/17)* case, avoidance and/or mitigation measures cannot be taken into account at the screening stage and it is purely an exercise to determine if possible pathways for effect exist and whether these can be ruled out taking account of the precautionary principle. It is the opinion of this HRA screening assessment and in light of the Planning Practice Guidance Note on Appropriate Assessment that adopted policies of the current development plan cannot be taken into account at this stage of HRA where they are proposing mitigation for National Site Network sites. Similarly any HRA undertaken for other development plan documents which have not been through Examination in Public (EiP) and found sound should only be given limited weight.
- **Step 2: Appropriate Assessment** – consideration of the impact on the integrity of the National Site Network site whether alone or in combination with other plans or projects with respect to the sites structure, function and conservation objectives. Where there are significant effects, step 2 should consider potential avoidance and/or mitigation measures.
- **Step 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** – Assessing alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan/project which avoids impact, if after Step 2 significant effect cannot be ruled out even with avoidance or mitigation measures; and

**Step 4: Assessment of Compensatory Measures** – Identification of compensatory measures should impact not be avoided and no alternative solutions exist and an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) deems that a project should proceed.

2.1.3 Should step 1 reveal that significant effects are likely or effect cannot be discounted because of uncertainty, then it is necessary to move onto step 2: Appropriate Assessment. If step 2 cannot rule out significant effect even with avoidance and/or mitigation, then the process moves onto step 3 and finally step 4 if no alternative solutions arise.

## 2.2 Step 1 - Screening

2.2.1 There are four stages to consider in a screening exercise:

- **Stage 1:** Determining whether the plan/project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
- **Stage 2:** Describing the plan/project and description of other plan/projects that have the potential for in-combination impacts;
- **Stage 3:** Identifying potential effects on the European site(s); and
- **Stage 4:** Assessing the significance of any effects.

### Stage 1

2.2.2 It can be determined that the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a National Site Network site.

### Stage 2

2.2.3 Information about the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD can be found in paragraphs 1.3.14 to 1.3.15 of this screening assessment. **Table 1-1** lists those other plans and projects, which may have in-combination impacts.

**Table 1-1: Other Key Plans/Projects**

**National Planning Policy Framework (2019):** High level national planning policy covering topics such as housing, economy, employment, retail as well as biodiversity, flood risk and heritage.

**South East Plan 2009:** Saved Policy NRM6 sets out protection for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

**London Plan 2016:** Contains planning policies for the development of land across the wider London area including housing and employment allocations with a target of 42,000 new homes per annum.

**Runnymede 2030 Local Plan:** Sets policies for the consideration of development and the spatial strategy for the Borough including provision of 7,920 dwellings over the Plan period and allocations for residential, employment and retail development.

**Other Local Authority Local Plans within 10km or adjoining sites identified in Section 2.2:** Housing target for areas around National Site Network sites set out in **Table 1-2**.

**Large Scale Projects within 10km or adjoining European Sites:** Large scale projects within 10km are subsumed in the consideration of 'Other Local Authority Local Plans' above.

**Thames Basin Heaths Joint Delivery Framework 2009:** Sets out the agreed Framework regarding the approach and standards for avoiding significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

**Environment Agency, Thames River Basin District Management Plan (2015):** Sets out actions to improve water quality. Future aims for the River Wey include implementing Lower Wey Oxbow Restoration Project to enhance and restore the main Wey river channel and Wey Diffuse Advice Project throughout the catchment.

**Environment Agency, Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009):** Aim is to promote more sustainable approaches to managing flood risk. Will be delivered through a combination of different approaches.

**Environment Agency, River Wey Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (2019):** identifies the Wey having restricted 'Water available for licensing'.

**Environment Agency, Water Resources Strategy: Regional Action Plan for Thames Region (2009):** Key priorities for Thames region include ensuring sufficient water resources are available, making water available in over-abstracted catchments and reducing demand.



**Table 1-2: List of Local Authority Housing Targets within 10km of National Site Network Sites**

Site	Local Plan Area	Housing Target
Thames Basin Heaths SPA*	Waverley Borough	11,210
	Guildford Borough	10,678
	Woking Borough	4,964
	Surrey Heath Borough	3,240
	Runnymede Borough	7,920
	Elmbridge Borough	3,375
	Bracknell Forest Borough	11,139
	Windsor & Maidenhead	14,260
	Wokingham Borough	13,230
	Rushmoor Borough	8,884
	Hart District	6,208
<b>Total</b>		<b>95,108</b>
Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC	Runnymede Borough	7,920
	Woking Borough	4,964
	Surrey Heath Borough	3,240
	Spelthorne Borough	3,320
	Elmbridge Borough	3,375
	Windsor & Maidenhead Borough	14,260
	Bracknell Forest Borough	11,139
	Slough Borough	6,250
	South Bucks District	2,800
	LB Hillingdon	6,375
	LB Hounslow	13,040
<b>Total</b>		<b>76,683</b>
South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar	Runnymede Borough	7,920
	Elmbridge Borough	3,375
	Spelthorne Borough	3,320
	Epsom & Ewell Borough	3,620
	Mole Valley District	3,760
	Windsor & Maidenhead Borough	14,260
	Slough Borough	6,250
	Bracknell Forest Borough	11,139
	South Bucks District	2,800
	LB Hillingdon	6,375
	LB Hounslow	13,040
	LB Ealing	14,000
	LB Kingston	5,625
LB Richmond	3,150	
<b>Total</b>		<b>98,634</b>

\* Also includes the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC

### Stage 3

2.2.4 Information regarding the National Site Network site(s) screened and the likely effects that may arise due to implementation of the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD can be found in **Tables 1-3 to 1-6** and **Table 1-7**. All other National Site Network sites were screened out of this assessment at an early stage as it was considered that their distance from the Borough area meant that there is no pathway or mechanism which would give rise to significant effect either alone or in combination. In this respect regard has been had to the 2030 Local Plan HRA specifically paragraphs 2.1-2.2.

**Table 1-3: Details of Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Potential Effects**

European site:	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).
Site description:	The Thames Basin Heaths SPA was proposed in October 2000, and full SPA status was approved on 9 March 2005. It covers an area of some 8,274 ha, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Surrey, to Berkshire in the north, through to Hampshire in the west. The habitat consists of both dry and wet heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation.
Relevant international nature conservation features:	Thames Basin Heaths SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:  During the breeding season: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>: 7.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain (count mean, 1998-1999);</li> <li>• Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>: 9.9% of the breeding population in Great Britain (count as at 1997);</li> <li>• Dartford warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>: 27.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain (count as at 1999).</li> </ul>
Environmental conditions which support the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate management</li> <li>• Management of disturbance during breeding season (March to July)</li> <li>• Minimal air pollution</li> <li>• Absence or control of urbanisation effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species</li> <li>• Maintenance of appropriate water levels</li> <li>• Maintenance of water quality</li> </ul>
Potential Effects arising from the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None (see <b>Table 1-7</b>)</li> </ul>

**Table 1-4: Details of Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC and Potential Effects**

International site:	Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Site description:	The Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC covers an area of some 5,154 ha with areas of wet and dry heathland, valley bogs, broad-leaved and coniferous woodland, permanent grassland and open water.
Relevant international nature conservation features:	The Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation is designated for three Annex I habitats. The qualifying Annex 1 habitats are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath</li> <li>• Dry heaths</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates</li> </ul>
Environmental Conditions which Support the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate management;</li> <li>• Managed recreational pressure;</li> <li>• Minimal air pollution;</li> <li>• Absence or control of urbanisation effects such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species;</li> <li>• Maintenance of appropriate water levels;</li> <li>• Maintenance of water quality.</li> </ul>
Potential Effects arising from the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None (see <b>Table 1-7</b>)</li> </ul>

**Table 1-5: Details of Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC and Potential Effects**

International site:	Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC
Site description:	The Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC covers an area of some 1,680 ha with Atlantic acidophilus beech forests with Ilex and sometimes Taxus. It is one of four outstanding locations in the UK for oak woods on sandy plains and is one of only three areas in the UK for Limoniscus violaceus (violet click beetle).
Relevant international nature conservation features:	Annex I habitat of oak woods on sandy plain which is the primary reason for designation with Atlantic beech forests.
Environmental Conditions which Support the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of trees through forestry management</li> <li>• Urbanisation</li> <li>• Managed recreational pressure</li> <li>• Air Quality</li> </ul>
Potential Effects arising from the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None (see <b>Table 1-7</b>)</li> </ul>

**Table 1-6: Details of South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar and Potential Effects**

International site:	South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar
Site description:	The South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar covers an area of some 825 ha and is formed from 7 former gravel pits and reservoirs which support overwintering populations of protected bird species.
Relevant international nature conservation features:	Supports overwintering populations of:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gadwall</li><li>• Shoveler</li></ul>
Environmental Conditions which Support the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managed recreational pressure</li><li>• Water quality</li><li>• Water abstraction</li></ul>
Potential Effects arising from the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None (see <b>Table 1-7</b>)</li></ul>

## Stage 4

2.2.5 The consideration of potential effects are set out in **Table 1-7**.

**Table 1-7: Assessment of Potential Effects**

<p>Indirect effect from recreational disturbance and urbanisation.</p>	<p>The likely effects of recreational disturbance have been summarised in the Underhill-Day study for Natural England and RSPB (2005); this provides a review of the urban effects on lowland heaths and their wildlife. The main issues relating to the conservation objectives and the integrity of the SPAs and SAC's effected by recreational disturbance and urbanisation as a whole are: fragmentation, disturbance, fires, cats, dogs (as a result of nest disturbance and enrichment), prevention of management, off-roading, vandalism and trampling.</p> <p>Natural England has advised that recreational pressure, as a result of increased residential development within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA &amp; Thursley, Ash, Pirbright &amp; Chobham SAC (or sites of 50 or more dwellings within 7km), is having a significant adverse impact on the Annex I bird species. Woodlark and Nightjar are ground nesting and Dartford Warblers nest close to the ground. They are therefore sensitive to disturbance, particularly from dogs, but also from walkers, and cyclists etc. They are, in addition, vulnerable to other effects of urbanisation, in particular predation by cats.</p> <p>Joint work involving Natural England and the authorities affected by the SPA/SAC have agreed a mechanism to avoid impacts to the SPA/SAC from recreational activities in the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management &amp; Monitoring (SAMM) and from the impacts of urbanisation by not allowing any net additional dwellings within 400m of the SPA.</p> <p>In terms of the Windsor Forest &amp; Great Park SAC the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA states that forestry management and recreational impacts has the potential for loss of trees and damage to trees from burning (arson).</p> <p>For the South West London Water Bodies SPA &amp; Ramsar threats arise through unmanaged recreational activities such as use of motorboats and fishing.</p> <p>The Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD contains guidance on how planning applications for development under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act should contribute towards delivery of Local Plan Policies SD7 (Sustainable Design),</p>
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	<p>EE11 (Green Infrastructure), E12 (Blue Infrastructure) and other relevant policies including site allocation policies. However, it does not allocate or safeguard any land or sites for net additional dwellings or other types of development including infrastructure projects that could give rise to increased recreation or urbanisation impacts.</p> <p>As such, there are no pathways for effect for impacts either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. Therefore it is considered, at the time of undertaking this assessment and even in the absence of avoidance and/or mitigation measures which cannot be taken into account at the screening stage of HRA (including any adopted policies in the Local Plan Part 1 or emerging policies in the 2030 Local Plan) that the Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD will not give rise to likely significant effects on any of the National Site Network sites in terms of recreation or urbanisation. <b>In this respect an Appropriate Assessment is not required.</b></p>
Atmospheric Pollution	<p>The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA concludes no likely significant effect as a result of atmospheric pollution in combination with other plans and projects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright &amp; Chobham SAC or the Windsor Forest &amp; Great Park SAC, given the findings of the Council’s air quality evidence.</p> <p>The Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD contains guidance on how planning applications for development under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act should contribute towards delivery of Local Plan Policies SD7 (Sustainable Design), EE11 (Green Infrastructure), E12 (Blue Infrastructure) and other relevant policies including site allocation policies. However, it does not allocate or safeguard land or sites for any development including transport infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Therefore it is considered, at the time of undertaking this assessment and even in the absence of avoidance and/or mitigation measures which cannot be taken into account at the screening stage of HRA (including any adopted policies in the Local Plan Part 1 or emerging 2030 Local Plan) that the Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD will not give rise to likely significant effects on any of the National Site Network sites in terms of air quality. <b>In this respect an Appropriate Assessment is not required.</b></p>
Water Quality & Resource	<p>The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA concludes no likely significant effects to European sites as a result of water quality or abstraction.</p>

	<p>The Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD contains guidance on how planning applications for development under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act should contribute towards delivery of Local Plan Policies SD7 (Sustainable Design), EE11 (Green Infrastructure), E12 (Blue Infrastructure) and other relevant policies including site allocation policies. Whilst the SPD does set out guidance on natural flood mitigation solutions and sustainable drainage systems, it does not allocate or safeguard any land or sites for development including water related infrastructure projects such as the River Thames Scheme or site specific flood/drainage projects. This is the role of the Local Plan and as such there are no pathways for effect for impacts either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.</p> <p>Therefore it is considered, at the time of undertaking this assessment and even in the absence of avoidance and/or mitigation measures which cannot be taken into account at the screening stage of HRA (including any adopted policies in the Local Plan Part 1 or emerging 2030 Local Plan) that the Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD will not give rise to likely significant effects on any of the National Site Network sites in terms of water quality or resource. <b>In this respect an Appropriate Assessment is not required.</b></p>
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## 2.3 Conclusion

- 2.3.1 It is the conclusion of this HRA that following a screening assessment, it can be ascertained in light of the information available at the time of assessment, and even in the absence of avoidance and mitigation measures, that the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD **will not** give rise to significant effects on National Site Network sites either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects. Given the findings of the screening assessment it is considered that a full appropriate assessment is not required.
- 2.3.2 This final assessment was made on the 1 July **2021**.

### 3.0 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – SCREENING

#### 3.1 Assessment Process

3.1.1 The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called ‘screening’. For some types of plan or programme SEA is mandatory and includes the following:

- Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
- Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive (this has already been screened out as set out in **Section 2.3** of this screening assessment).

3.1.2 However, the main determining factor when considering whether a plan or programme requires SEA is whether it will have significant environmental effects.

3.1.3 Within 28 days of making its determination, the determining authority must publish a statement, such as this one, setting out its decision. If it is determined that an SEA is not required, the statement must include the reasons for this.

3.1.4 This Screening Report sets out the Council’s determination under Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 on whether or not SEA is required for the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD. The Borough Council must consult with the three statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) and take their views into account before issuing a final determination. The responses received from the three statutory bodies and how the Council has taken these into account in this screening determination are set out in **Table 1-8**.

**Table 1-8: Statutory Bodies Consultation**

Statutory Body	Response	Comment & Action
Environment Agency	No comments	Noted.
Historic England	No response	N/A
Natural England	Due to the fact that the Green and Blue Infrastructure SPD does not allocate sites or development or safeguard infrastructure projects, support the conclusion of the screening that a SEA will not be required.  Natural England is in agreement with the conclusion of the HRA that, the Green and Blue Infrastructure SPD will not give rise to significant effects on European Sites either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects and that given the findings	Noted



	<p>of the screening assessment, it is considered that a full Appropriate Assessment is not required.</p> <p>Further comments made on the content of the draft SPD and how these have been taken into account are set out in the Regulation 12 Statement of Consultation.</p>	
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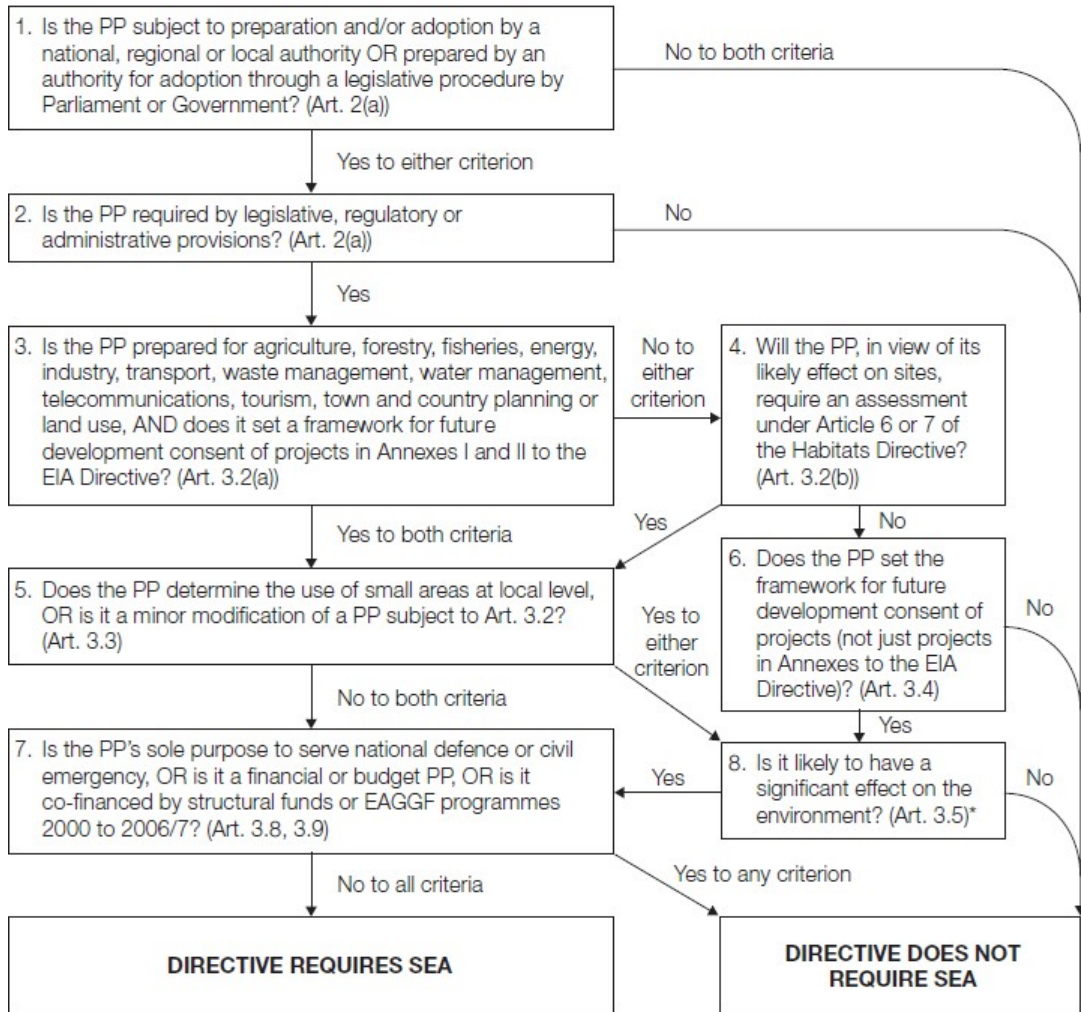
- 3.1.5 The determination is based on a two-step approach, the first of which is to assess the plan against the flowchart as set out in government guidance A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive<sup>1</sup>. The flow chart is shown in **Figure 1**.
- 3.1.6 The second step is to consider whether the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD will have significant environmental effects when considered against the criteria set out in Schedule I of the Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Process (2005) ODPM. Available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

**Figure 1: SEA Flow Chart**

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



\*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

## 3.2 Step 1

3.2.1 The findings of step 1 are shown in **Table 1-9**.

**Table 1-9: SEA Screening Step 1**

Stage in Flowchart	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the plan/programme subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by parliament or Government? (Article 2(a))	Y	The provision to prepare and adopt a Local Development Document is given by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD will be prepared and adopted by Runnymede Borough Council. The preparation and adoption procedure is set out in the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012. Whilst not forming part of the Development Plan the SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions. <b>Move to Stage 2</b>
2. Is the plan/programme required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	N	There is no mandatory requirement to prepare or adopt Supplementary Planning Documents and if adopted it will not form part of the Development Plan for Runnymede. <b>As answer is No, flowchart identifies end to screening process, but move to Stage 3 for completeness.</b>
3. Is the plan/programme prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a))	N	Whilst the plan is prepared for town & country planning, the SPD does not set the framework for future development consents for projects in Annex I or II to the EIA Directive. <b>Move to Stage 4.</b>
4. Will the plan/programme, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of	N	The HRA screening undertaken in <b>Section 2.0</b> of this assessment has

Stage in Flowchart	Y/N	Reason
the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2(b))		determined that Appropriate Assessment is not required.  <b>Move to Stage 6.</b>
5. Does the plan/programme determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Article 3.3)	N/A	The SPD will not form part of the Runnymede Development Plan and does not therefore determine the use of small areas at a local (or any) level. The plan is not a minor modification of an existing plan.  <b>Move to Stage 6</b>
6. Does the plan/programme set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article 3.4)	N	The SPD does not allocate any land or sites for development or set a framework for future development consents.  <b>As answer is No, flowchart identifies end to screening process, but move to Stage 8 for completeness.</b>
7. Is the plan/programme's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article 3.8, 3.9)	N	The sole purpose of the SPD is not to serve national defence or civil emergency. Whilst the SPD does refer to financial matters concerned with developer contributions, this is not its sole purpose and it is not a budget plan or programme.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5)	N	Effects on the environment and whether these are significant are considered in <b>Table 1-10</b> .  <b>No Significant Effects identified in Table 1-10, so determine that SEA is not required.</b>

### 3.3 Step 2

3.3.1 The findings of step 2 are shown in **Table 1-10**.

**Table 1-10: SEA Screening Step 2**

<b>Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)</b>		<b>Response</b>	
<b>Characteristics of the plan or programme</b>			<b>Significant Effect?</b>
(a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD does not set out policies against which development proposals in the Runnymede area will be considered, although it will be a material consideration in decision making. Whilst the SPD does refer to financial matters concerned with developer contributions, it is not the document which secures the contributions or allocates the land for physical provision but simply guides the Council in its negotiations with developers to make a project acceptable in planning terms. As such, it is considered that the SPD only sets a framework for projects to a limited degree.		N
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD does not influence other plans or programmes but is itself influenced by other plans or programmes. It therefore does not influence any plans in a hierarchy.		N
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD sets out guidance for embedding green/blue infrastructure provision into development proposals. As a consequence, the SPD has relevance to the integration of environmental considerations and is likely to promote sustainable development but effects are not considered to be significant given that the SPD is guidance rather than allocating any projects or infrastructure.		N
(d) Environmental problems relevant to	Environmental problems include potential recreational or urbanising impacts, atmospheric pollution and water resources to National Site		N

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
the plan or programme.	Network sites. <b>Section 2.0</b> of this assessment sets out the effects of the SPD on National Site Network sites and has determined no significant effects.	
(e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community (EU) legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD has some relevance to the implementation of Community legislation on the environment, such as the EU Water Framework Directive, but effects are not considered to be significant given that the SPD sets out guidance for development rather than allocating any projects or related infrastructure.	N
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</b>		
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD does not allocate any land or sites for development or safeguard any infrastructure projects. Therefore the probability of any effect is low. Duration of any effects would likely be long term (beyond 2030) and generally positive but could be reversible depending on the next iteration of the Local Plan and its priorities. On the whole, effects are not considered to be significant.	N
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD does not allocate any land or sites for development or safeguard any infrastructure projects. As set out above, the probability for effects is likely to be low, but generally positive. Taken with the allocation of sites and safeguarding of infrastructure in the emerging 2030 Local Plan and the mitigation measures set out therein, cumulative impacts with the SPD are likely to remain positive as the two documents work in tandem. Cumulative effects are likely to last over the plan period and possibly beyond but could be reversible depending on future iterations of the Local Plan and its priorities.	N

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
	On the whole however, cumulative effects are not considered to be significant.	
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects	Given the geographic scope of the SPD it is considered that no transboundary effects will arise.	N
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	None.	N
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD will cover the whole of the geographic area of Runnymede in Surrey. The area covered is 78km <sup>2</sup> with a population of around 83,448. Given the nature of the SPD it is considered that effects will not be significant.	N
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; iii) Intensive land-use.	Given the nature of the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD:  i) The area covered by the SPD contains 5 SSSIs with the majority in a favourable condition status which meets the PSA target of 95% in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition status. The Basingstoke Canal SSSI is in an unfavourable no change status which does not meet the PSA target. The Runnymede area contains numerous statutorily or locally listed buildings and structures as well as conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments and areas of high archaeological potential. The area is a mixture of urban and Green Belt and contains features such as green spaces, wooded copses and golf courses. However, the SPD does not allocate any land for development or set development targets or safeguard any infrastructure projects. Inclusion of green/blue infrastructure guidance in the SPD is likely to have positive effects on natural characteristics and also cultural heritage to some extent.  ii) There are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Runnymede area, along the	N

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
	<p>entire length of the M25 which runs through the Borough and the other in Addlestone at the High Street and Station Road junction. Air quality standards are exceeded at 5 air quality monitoring sites in the Runnymede area<sup>2</sup>. The Environment Agency has identified the Wey catchment as having restricted water available for licensing. However, the SPD does not allocate any land for development or set development targets or safeguard infrastructure projects. Inclusion of guidance in the SPD on green/blue infrastructure and sustainable flood mitigation/drainage is likely to have positive effects on air quality and water availability/quality, and inclusion of guidance on local green/blue infrastructure improvements and active/sustainable travel may also have positive effects on air quality, especially in areas designated as AQMAs where congestion is reduced.</p> <p>iii) Intensive land use occurs in the urban areas (built development), but the SPD does not allocate any land or sites for development or safeguard any infrastructure projects. As such significant effects are unlikely with any effects being generally positive.</p>	
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status.	The effects on National Site Network sites for Nature Conservation are dealt with in (d) above. There are no landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status in the Runnymede area.	N
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>The Green &amp; Blue Infrastructure SPD is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and as such an SEA is not required.</b>	

<sup>2</sup> Runnymede 2017 Air Quality Annual Status Report (2017) RBC, Available at: <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/airquality>



### 3.4 Conclusion

3.4.1 On the basis of the Screening process it is determined that the Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD does not require an SEA under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004). This is because:

- The SPD is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects given that it does not allocate sites or development or safeguard infrastructure projects; and
- The content of the SPD when taken as a whole and in combination with policies in the emerging 2030 Local Plan will likely have positive environmental effects.

3.4.2 This final assessment was made on the 1 July **2021**.