



**North York Moors  
National Park**

# **Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)**

## **Screening Assessment**

### **Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan**

#### **October 2025**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Guisborough Town Council are currently preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Guisborough area. In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council and the North York Moors National Park as the Competent Authorities for the purpose of the Habitats Regulations. This report has been prepared by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, in consultation with the North York Moors National Park Authority.
- 1.2 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 provide protection for sites that are of exceptional importance in respect of rare and endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species. The network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Both types can also be referred to as European sites. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also states that Ramsar sites should be afforded the same level of protection as European Sites.
- 1.3 The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of development plans is set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended). It is also a requirement of Regulation 32 schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
- 1.4 In order to proceed to referendum a Neighbourhood Plan must meet a series of “basic conditions”. Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) states:  
“Where a land use plan” is
  - a) likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects); and
  - b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, then the plan-making authority for that plan must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives.
- 1.5 The HRA is therefore undertaken in stages and should conclude whether or not a proposal or policy in the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of any sites.
- 1.6 STAGE 1: Determining whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. This needs to take into account of the likely impacts in combination with other relevant plans and policies. The assessment should be made using the precautionary principle. The screening assessment must reflect the outcomes of the 2018 judgement of the Court of Justice of the EU, which has ruled that where mitigation is necessary this must be identified through an Appropriate Assessment.
- 1.7 STAGE 2: Carrying out an Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity. The effects of the plan on the conservation objectives of sites should be assessed to ascertain whether the plan has an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.
- 1.8 STAGE 3: Identifying mitigation measures and alternative solutions. The aim of this stage is to find ways of avoiding or significantly reducing adverse impacts, so that the site integrity is no longer at risk. If there are still likely to be negative impacts, the option should be dropped, unless exceptionally it can be justified by imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

## 2. Identification or relevant sites

- 2.1 The first step of the HRA process is to identify Natura 2000 sites that could potentially be affected by the policies and proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan. The following identification of sites has been informed by the approach taken in the HRAs of the Redcar & Cleveland Local Plan, undertaken by PBA in 2016/2017 and the HRA of the North York Moors Local Plan (2019).
- 2.2 Parts of the North York Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and North York Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) lie within the south of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Whilst the Plan can only directly determine planning strategy or development within its boundary, there may be trans-boundary effects as a result of its implementation. Therefore, in addition to the sites located within the Plan area, a 15km buffer area has been used to identify if there are any Natura 2000 Sites that could conceivably be affected by the Plan. It is considered that beyond 15 km, any potential effects arising from the policies and allocations proposed would be so minimal as to have an imperceptible effect on Natura 2000 sites. The use of a 15 km buffer during screening for LSE was also accepted by Natural England (NE) when they were consulted during the production of the Redcar & Cleveland Local Plan.
- 2.3 Those Natura 2000 sites which could potentially be affected by the policies in the Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan, either alone or in combination with other policies are identified below.

## 3. European Sites within and around Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan area

### Sites within the Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan:

#### **North York Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

- 3.1 The North York Moors SAC contains the largest continuous tract of upland heather moorland in England. Dry heath covers over half the site and forms the main vegetation type on the western, southern and central moors where the soil is free-draining and has only a thin peat layer. Wetter, more peaty areas support wet heath communities, and areas of blanket bog. The transition from dry heathland to blanket bog is complemented by a diverse mosaic of wet heath and flush communities. (North York Moors SAC Citation, JNCC).
- 3.2 The conservation objectives for the SAC are to 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 the qualifying features
  - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
  - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- 3.3 The HRA of the North York Moors Local Plan identified the following pressures and threats:
  - Air pollution
  - Recreational pressure
  - Planning permissions

- Energy production
- Wildfire/arson

### **The North York Moors Special Protection Area (SPA)**

3.4 The North York Moors SPA has been designated as it supports approximately 3 percent of the Great British breeding population of Merlin - *Falco columbarius* and Golden Plover - *Pluvialis apricaria*. In addition, the SPA supports a rich upland breeding bird assemblage. (North York Moors SPA Citation, 2000). The North York Moors SAC and SPA cover the same geographical area.

3.5 Part of the Neighbourhood Plan area, to the south, are within the SPA boundary.

3.6 Conservation objectives for the site are to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

3.7 The HRA of the North York Moors Local Plan identified the following pressures and threats:

- Air pollution
- Recreational pressure
- Planning permissions
- Energy production
- Wildfire/arson

### **Sites within 15km of Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan:**

#### **Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area (SPA)**

3.8 The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA is a wetland of European importance, located on the coast of north-east England between Castle Eden Dene Mouth in the north and Marske-by-the-Sea in the south. The coastal parts of the site include a rocky limestone headland with sandy beaches stretching to the north, and much of Tees Bay to the south. South of Hartlepool, the Magnesian limestone is replaced by sandstones and mudstones, as far as Saltburn, creating low cliffs and sandy beaches. The SPA comprises a wide variety of habitats including intertidal sand and mudflats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh, saline lagoons, sand dunes and estuarine and coastal waters on and around the Tees estuary, which has been considerably modified by human activities. These habitats provide feeding and roosting opportunities for important number of waterbirds in winter and during passage periods including in particular common redshank, red knot and ruff, which occur in internationally important numbers. Freshwater and brackish pools also support breeding avocet during summer. The saltmarsh and mudflat habitats of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA are of great importance to a diverse assemblage of bird species. Mudflats support high densities of benthic invertebrates, including worms, molluscs and crustaceans, which provide an important food resource for migrant and overwintering SPA bird species. Areas of saltmarsh provide significant feeding and roosting opportunities for many species of waterbird including common redshank and red knot. In

summer, little tern breed on the sandy beaches within the site and feed out at sea while the common tern, which breed at various locations, feed within the River Tees and associated water bodies and within the wider estuary mouth and bay. In late summer, Sandwich tern aggregate in important numbers at Coatham Sands, Seal Sands, North Gare Sands/Seaton Snook and Bran Sands when on passage (Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA citation, Natural England, 2020).

3.9 The Conservation objectives for the SPA are to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

3.10 The Conservation Advice for the site lists non-physical disturbance as potentially causing deterioration or disturbance to the SPA and was considered through the Appropriate Assessment of the Redcar & Cleveland Local Plan and Redcar and Cleveland Recreation Management Plan.

3.11 Additionally, the Natural England Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area/Ramsar Evidence Pack August 2022 (TIN204) confirms that this protected area is currently in an unfavourable condition due to nutrient enrichment, which includes pollution from nitrates, including Nitrogen. Development proposals which result in an increase in nitrogen discharge into the River Tees may, therefore, have an adverse effect upon the SPA through increasing nutrient pollution.

#### **Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast RAMSAR**

3.12 The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar is a wetland of international importance. It is described as a medium-large site encompassing a range of habitats (sand and mudflats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh and sand dunes) on and around an estuary which has been much modified by human activities. Together these habitats support internationally important numbers of waterbirds and a rich assemblage of invertebrates including seven nationally rare species. The site has been extended in extent from 943ha when first designated to its current extent of approximately 1254ha. There are proposals to extend the Ramsar further to include larger areas of wetlands such as Portrack Marsh Nature Reserve in Stockton-on-Tees and additional areas of Greetham Marshes. These extensions were classified on 16 January 2020, but the boundary amendments showing the additional area are not included on the Natural England mapping system, and the extension is still showing as 'proposed'. (Defra, 2020).

#### **4. Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

4.1 The vision of the Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan is to 'maintain Guisborough Parish as a community that is prosperous and attracts people to live, work, visit and spend more time here. Its unique character and plentiful leisure opportunities keep the parish as a key regional destination of choice. This continued success is built on a long history of warm hospitality and is supported by a vibrant local economy and effective public services'.

4.2 The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan is to identify and promote the aspects of Guisborough Parish which contribute towards the vision, and to address the issues which detract from the goal. The Plan states that the aim will be supported by:

- Promoting the economic, social, health and environmental well-being of our community.
- Providing an opportunity for local people to influence local decision making through greater democratic participation.
- Collecting and analysing the views and opinions of the community to build on their local expertise, knowledge and insights to identify areas of potential improvement.

4.3 The Neighbourhood Plan includes the following policies:

Policy BE1: Housing Mix

Policy BE2: Design Principles and Maintenance of Distinctive Character

Policy BE3: Provision of well-designed energy-efficient buildings and places

Policy GS1: Nightingale Road Park

Policy GS2: The Branch Walkway

Policy GS3: Rufford Close Link

Policy GS4: Allotment Gardens

Policy GS5: Privately-owned Meadows

Policy GS6: Dorset Road Green

Policy GS7: Highway verges

Policy GS8: Amenity Spaces

## 5. Other Plans and Projects

5.1 The development plan for Redcar & Cleveland comprises of the Redcar & Cleveland Local Plan (2018) and Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and Policies and Sites DPDs (2011). The development plan for the North York Moors National Park comprises of the North York Moors Local Plan (2020) and the Minerals and Waste Joint Plan (2022).

5.2 The draft Local Plan HRA Screening Report identified that policies within the RCBC could lead to Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on one or more European Sites. The sites considered at risk were the North York Moors SAC and SPA and the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar site. In accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, this Appropriate Assessment report considered the potential for those policies to lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the identified European Sites.

5.3 This Appropriate Assessment concluded that direct land take, disturbance and displacement, air quality impacts, increased demand for water supplies and waste water treatment and heightened predation from domestic cats would not lead to adverse effects on the integrity of any European Sites.

5.4 The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar site could be subject to increased recreational disturbance and it was considered that an adverse effect to the integrity of the European Site could occur. Measures were proposed, and subsequently a Recreation

Management Plan implemented, which would avoid, control or otherwise mitigate potential residual adverse effects. The Local Plan will therefore not lead to adverse effects on any European Site and no further HRA work was considered necessary in support of the Local Plan. The assessment has also taken into account in-combination effects with other relevant plans and strategies.

5.5 The HRA of the North York Moors Local Plan found that all 64 policies could be screened out of the need for further assessment. Policies screened include those which lack spatial specificity and, by way of precaution, rely on the specific protection for European sites afforded through strategic policy to ensure that any effects which might undermine the conservation objectives (should a policy ever be applied in a sensitive location) will be avoided. The HRA found that the North York Moors Local Plan will not lead to any likely significant effects alone on the European sites both within and beyond the National Park boundary. There are no residual effects and, therefore, no need for an in-combination assessment or, indeed, an appropriate assessment.

5.6 The Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in general accordance with these overarching Local Plans and does not propose any additional allocations.

## 6. Assessment of the likely effects of the Guisborough Local Plan

<b>Stage 1: HRA screening opinion analysis for impacts of Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan on identified SPA/SAC/RAMSAR sites</b>		
<b>Neighbourhood Plan Policy</b>	<b>Description/analysis</b>	<b>Potential for likely significant effects</b>
<b>Policy BE1: Housing Mix</b>	<p>This policy is designed to ensure that new housing development reflects identified local need. It states that proposals designed to meet the needs of elderly or people with disabilities will be supported.</p> <p>It is a general statement of policy and does not directly lead to development and cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy BE2: Design Principles and Maintenance of Distinctive Character</b>	<p>This policy identifies the design principles which should be considered, where appropriate, as part of any development to maintain the distinctive character of the area.</p> <p>The policy provides general criteria, does not directly lead to development and</p>	None identified.

	cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.	
<b>Policy BE3: Provision of well-designed energy-efficient buildings and places</b>	<p>This policy seeks to ensure that new development aims to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction, such as being optimised for energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions.</p> <p>The policy provides general criteria, does not directly lead to development and cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS1: Nightingale Road Park</b>	<p>Designates Nightingale Road Park as an 'open space'.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS2: The Branch Walkway</b>	<p>Designates The Branch Walkway from Kemplah Park to Belmangate as an 'open space'.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS3: Rufford Close Link</b>	<p>Designates Rufford Close Link as an 'open space'.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.

<b>Policy GS4: Allotment Gardens</b>	<p>This policy seeks to designate four privately owned allotment gardens as 'open space'.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS5: Privately-owned Meadows</b>	<p>This policy seeks to designate a privately owned meadow as an 'open space' and two sites as a Local Green Space.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or create new uses on the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS6: Dorset Road Green</b>	<p>This policy designates Dorset Road Green as an 'open space'.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS7: Highway verges</b>	<p>This policy designates a number of highway verges as 'open spaces'.</p> <p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	None identified.
<b>Policy GS8: Amenity Spaces</b>	<p>This policy designates a number of amenity spaces as 'open spaces'.</p>	None identified.

	<p>The proposed designation does not directly lead to development or change the existing use of the land. It cannot conceivably have an effect on any European sites.</p>	
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## 7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 The Guisborough Neighbourhood Plan will provide policies which will be used for determining applications alongside the Redcar & Cleveland Local Plan (2018) and Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, and within the Nation Park area the North York Moors Local Plan (2020) and Joint Minerals and Waste Plans.
- 7.2 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in general conformity with the adopted development plans. No clear impact pathways have been identified between the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan on any designated European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans. The policies include locally specific criteria and do not propose any new allocations or alternative uses of land which could have adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites. As the policies will not lead to likely significant effects on protected European sites an Appropriate Assessment is not required.