

Wilton Park
Beaconsfield

**HABITAT
REGULATIONS
ASSESSMENT (HRA)
SCREENING REPORT
UPDATE FOR
BURNHAM BEECHES
SPECIAL
AREA OF
CONSERVATION**

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for

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 A HRA screening exercise has been undertaken to identify potential effects upon Burnham Beeches, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which could potentially be caused by the regeneration of land at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield. Wilton Park is designated as an Opportunity Site in the adopted South Bucks Core Strategy.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to assess the effects of the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) with the Habitats Regulations. The SPD has been prepared alongside this HRA screening report. The Sustainability Appraisal has been drafted. The specific details of the planned development (in the form of a planning application) have not come forward.
- 1.3 Based upon the emerging development parameters, it is concluded that the development of Wilton Park is unlikely to generate significant adverse effects.
- 1.4 The Habitat Regulations Assessment for the South Bucks Core Strategy Screening Statement (March 2010) concludes that the Core Strategy (which includes the comprehensive redevelopment of Wilton Park) will not lead to any significant effects on Burnham Beeches SAC or any other European site either alone, or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 1.5 The proposals for Wilton Park include managed, informal recreational use of woodland, to include walks and at least 17 hectares of new public open spaces of a high quality. The new public open space will be mix of parkland, open space, and play areas, all linked to existing woodlands (approximately 8 hectares), which will provide a circular route of approximately 4-5km. The residual impacts (the impacts after mitigation) are likely to be insignificant.

2.0 INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

Introduction

- 2.1 This report addresses the potential impacts upon Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC), or 'European Site', in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the Wilton Park Opportunity Site at Beaconsfield.
- 2.2 When preparing an application for certain plans or projects, developers should consider the potential effects on protected habitats, in particular 'European Sites'.
- 2.3 The UK is bound by the terms of the EC Habitats Directive, the aim of which is to conserve natural habitats and wild species across Europe by establishing a network of sites known as Natura 2000 sites, or 'European Sites'.
- 2.4 European sites include Special Protection Areas, or SPAs, and Special Areas of Conservation, SACs.
- 2.5 It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to assess potential impacts of a plan or project upon a European Site, through a process known as 'Habitat Regulations Assessment', or HRA. It is the responsibility of the developer to provide the necessary information where appropriate.
- 2.6 The HRA consists of several stages, of which one or more may be required, depending upon the findings of the first stage. The first stage is known as the HRA screening report.
- 2.7 Where the findings of the HRA screening report conclude that significant effects are unlikely, a 'finding of no significant effects report' should be produced. Where significant effects are judged likely or there is a lack of information to prove otherwise, an 'appropriate assessment' should be carried out within Stage 2 of the HRA process. This report sets out the findings of the first stage and is known as the HRA screening report.
- 2.8 Under Article 6(3) of the 2010 Habitats Directive (transposed in UK law by the 2010 Habitats Regulations), an 'appropriate assessment' is required when a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect upon a European site, either individually or in combination with other projects.
- 2.9 The stages in HRA are given in Table 1 below.

STAGE	TASK	OUTCOME
<p>Stage 1:</p> <p>Screening</p>	<p>Description of the plan</p> <p>Identification of potential effects on European sites</p> <p>Assessing the effects of European sites</p>	<p>Where effects are unlikely, prepare a 'finding of no significant effects report'.</p> <p>Where effects judged likely, or lack of information to prove otherwise, proceed to Stage 2.</p>
<p>Stage 2:</p> <p>Appropriate Assessment</p>	<p>Gather information (plan and European Sites)</p> <p>Impact prediction</p> <p>Evaluation of impacts in view of conservation objectives</p> <p>Where impacts considered to affect qualifying features, identify alternative options</p> <p>If no alternatives exist, define and evaluate mitigation measures where necessary</p>	<p>Appropriate Assessment report describing the plan, European site baseline conditions, the adverse effects of the plan on the European site, how these effects will be avoided through, firstly, avoidance, and secondly, mitigation including the mechanisms and timescale for these mitigation measures.</p> <p>If effects remain after all alternatives and mitigation measures have been considered proceed to Stage 3.</p>
<p>Stage 3:</p> <p>Assessment where no alternatives exist and adverse impacts remain taking into account mitigation</p>	<p>Identify 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI)</p> <p>Identify potential compensatory measures</p>	<p>This stage should be avoided if at all possible. The test of IROPI and the requirements for compensation are extremely onerous.</p>

Table 1: Stages involved in carrying out a full HRA. Sources: ^{1, 2, 3}

2.10 This report deals with Stage 1, the screening process, and deals specifically with the potential impacts from the proposed redevelopment of the Wilton Park Opportunity Site upon Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

¹ *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting European Sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission Environment DG, November 2001.

² *Planning for the Protection of European Sites. Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents.* Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), August 2006.

³ *The Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England. A guide to why, when and how to do it.* RSPB. August 2007.

3.0 METHODOLOGY AND CONSULTATION

Methodology

3.1 The screening stage of the HRA process identifies the likely effects of a plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, upon a European site, and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. This assessment comprises four steps:

1. Determining whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
2. Describing the plan or project and the description and characterisation of other plans or projects that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the European site/s;
3. Identifying the potential effects on the European site/s; and
4. Assessing the significance of any effects on the European site/s.

3.2 The following sources of information were used to inform the Screening Report:

- City of London Corporation. 2010. *Burnham Beeches NNR & SAC Local Management Plan 2010 – 2020*. City of London Corporation Open Spaces Department, London.
- DEFRA, 2012. *Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (Magic). Interactive Map*. [online]. Available from: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/> Accessed 10th September 2012.
- Liley, D., Hoskin, R., Fearnley, H., White, J. & Underhill-Day, J. 2012. *Urban Development and Burnham Beeches SAC*. Footprint Ecology, Wareham.
- Natural England, 2012. *Condition of SSSI units for Burnham Beeches SAC* [online]. Available from: <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/special/sssi/reportAction.cfm?report=sdrt13&category=S&reference=1000513>. Accessed 7th September 2012.
- UE Associates, 2010. *Habitat Regulations Assessment for the South*

Bucks Core Strategy Screening Statement [online]. Available from:
http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/h/1_habitats_regulations_assessment.pdf Accessed 7th September 2012.

- South Bucks District Council, 2011. *South Bucks Local Development Framework. Core Strategy Development Plan Document*. South Bucks District Council, Denham, Bucks.
- Liley, D., Floyd, L. and Fearnley, H. *Burnham Beeches Visitor Survey Footprint Ecology* February 2014. Available from
<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5804&p=0>
- Miles King and Durwyn Liley *Urban development around Burnham beeches SAC: a synthesis*. Footprint Ecology May 2014
- *Development Management Guidance Note; Hydrology in Burnham Beeches* South Bucks District Council February 2014
<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=4887&p=0>
- *Burnham Beeches Hydrology Study October 2013* WHS for South Bucks District Council
<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/article/3971/Guidance-Notes-and-other-Material-Considerations>

Consultation

- 3.3 The request for a HRA Screening Report addressing potential impacts upon Burnham Beeches SAC in relation to the regeneration of land at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield, has arisen from a request by South Bucks District Council and Inland Homes PLC.

4.0 NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF PLAN OR PROJECT

- 4.1 South Bucks District Council has identified an opportunity for the redevelopment and regeneration of land at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield.
- 4.2 The site is designated as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt and identified as an Opportunity Site within the adopted South Bucks Core Strategy under Policy CP14.
- 4.3 The Wilton Park site lies to the east of Beaconsfield Old Town, to the north of the A40. It extends to approximately 40 hectares, about half of which is previously developed land. The site was previously occupied by the Ministry of Defence School of Languages, MOD housing and student accommodation, open space, and indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities. It is now owned by Inland Homes PLC.
- 4.4 The habitats present within the site include woodland, amenity grassland, coarse semi-natural grassland and tall ruderal vegetation.
- 4.5 Figure 1 shows the Wilton Park Opportunity Site.
- 4.6 The proposals are for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site to deliver a high quality mix of residential and employment uses, community facilities and open space.

Key stages of the project

- 4.7 Hitherto the key stages and timescales of the project are not known. The Development Brief, which must be prepared before any planning application is submitted, is yet to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.8 The proposed regeneration at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield will consist of multiple development phases, including the creation of around 300 new dwellings, employment uses, community facilities and associated infrastructure.



Figure 1: Wilton Park Opportunity Site

5.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN SITE

Distance of the project from the European site

- 5.1 The distance from the Wilton Park Opportunity Site to the Burnham Beeches SAC is shown in Figure 2.
- 5.2 Burnham Beeches SAC is 382.76 hectares in size. Only 200 hectares of the SAC is publicly accessible whilst the remainder of the SAC is private, although public footpaths run through the site.
- 5.3 The primary reasons for the qualification of the site as an SAC are the presence of Annex I habitat Atlantic beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrub layer (*Quercion robori – petraeae* or *Ilici-Fagenion*). The SAC is an extensive area of former beech wood-pasture with many old pollards and associated beech *Fagus sylvatica* and oak *Quercus* spp. High forest. It is also one of the richest sites for saproxylic invertebrates in the UK, including 14 Red Data Book species, and over 60 red book data species of plants and animals. It also retains nationally important epiphytic communities, including the moss *Zygodon forsteri*.
- 5.4 There are no other Annex I or Annex II habitats present as a qualifying feature or a primary reason for the selection of the site.

Details of the baseline conditions of the site

- 5.5 As well as being designated a European Site, Burnham Beeches is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR). The SSSI boundary covers the same area as the SAC boundary. SSSI designations underpin the European site SAC designation.
- 5.6 Burnham Beeches is divided into four parcels, or 'SSSI Units'. Of the four SSSI units, Units 1, 3 and 4 are assessed as being in 'Favourable' condition, whilst Unit 2 is assessed as being in 'Unfavourable recovering' condition. According to Liley, *et al.* (2012), Unit 2, which accounts for 37.34% of the total area (Natural England, 2012), is in private ownership. The reasons for the 'Unfavourable recovering' condition of Unit 2 are the presence of conifer stands and a lack of regeneration of beech, and thus a gap in the representation of age classes of trees, and some patchiness in ground vegetation.

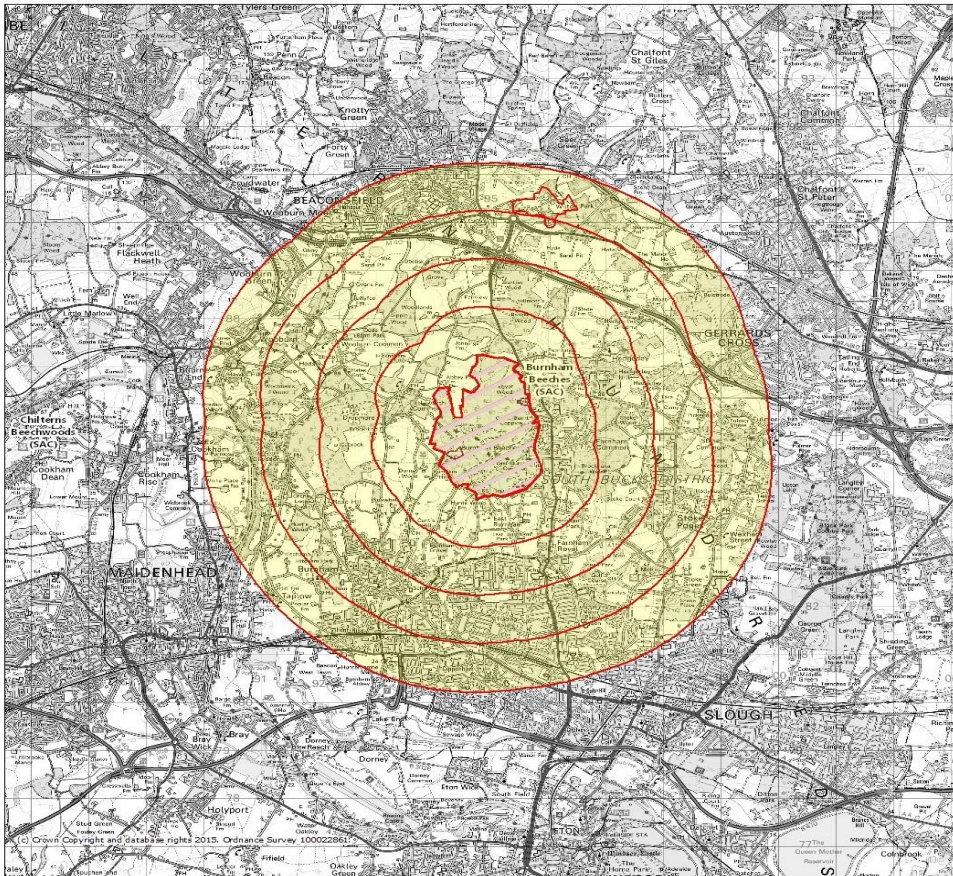


Figure 2: Map showing Burnham Beeches SAC (centre of map) in relation to Wilton Park with, 1km bands. Source: Magic website. <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/>

Potential impacts upon the condition of the site and vulnerability of the qualifying features

- 5.7 Despite Burnham Beeches SAC being assessed as being in favourable condition, those involved in the management of the site highlighted concerns (Liley, *et al.* 2012). The reasons for the deterioration included an increased rate of veteran tree loss (probably due to the cessation of regular pollarding in the past), and indications that the woodland as a whole may be suffering ill health from various causes.
- 5.8 There was also considerable concern at Burnham Beeches in relation to the decline in the number of old and ancient trees, in particular oak, and the specific concerns over the increasing gap between young and ancient trees. Many of the notable and scarce species of invertebrates, mosses, lichens and fungi are dependent on the ancient trees.
- 5.9 Monitoring of trees is carried out at Burnham Beeches, with staff undertaking detailed surveys of ancient pollards on a 10 year cycle, a less intensive check for management requirements every two years and separate tree health surveys in both winter and summer, which includes trees of a variety of ages (Liley, *et al.* 2012). Members of staff who carry out the health monitoring have noticed that the young trees are showing signs of ill health.
- 5.10 Liley, *et al.* (2012) highlighted the following potential urban development-related impacts to the nature conservation interest of Burnham Beeches:
- Trampling and soil compaction;
 - Climbing of veteran trees;
 - Dog fouling;
 - Disease spread;
 - Disturbance (not particularly relevant to SAC interest features);
 - Introduction/spread of alien species;
 - Litter/fly-tipping;
 - Vandalism;
 - Fire incidence;
 - Reduction in water levels/supply;

- Reduction in air quality;
- Increased fragmentation and isolation of the site; and
- Increase in cats visiting the site (not particularly relevant to SAC interest features).

5.11 It is widely accepted that for SACs designated primarily for their habitats (as opposed to their species; for example Special Protection Areas for important bird assemblages), it is difficult to demonstrate adverse relationships between volumes of housing surrounding SACs and impacts upon them, particularly indirect effects such as disease spread. However, this does not necessarily mean that a development will not cause any impacts.

Visitor management in the site

5.12 In recent years, various management measures have been put into place in order to limit the impacts from visitors upon the integrity of the site. The following measures have been implemented by the City of London Corporation in recent years:

- Car access has been prevented through the site, including a car-free zone in the Northern part of the site;
- Car parking has been limited on roads around the outside of the site;
- Car parking charges have been implemented during busier periods such as bank holidays;
- Access is limited around vulnerable areas, including particularly vulnerable trees (by installing fencing), and wet mire areas during certain times of the year;
- Leaflets, signage and other information which dictate codes of conduct have been created and are provided to visitors; and
- Less vulnerable areas, such as open grassland, have been allocated to concentrate visitors away from sensitive areas.

Visitor survey work and current levels of recreation

5.13 The publically accessible part of the Burnham Beeches site (owned by the City of London Corporation) has benefitted from robust and detailed visitor information, with two visitor surveys completed in recent years using direct counts of visitors and automated counters (Liley, *et al.* 2012), in

addition to a visitor survey undertaken in 2013. The current estimates are of 585,000 visitor numbers per annum, with 215,000 dogs. Car is the most important form of travel to the site, accounting for 56% of all visits to the site. 70% of people come for a walk, whilst 29% of people visit the site to walk dogs. 66% of visitors live within 5 miles of the site.

- 5.14 A visitor survey commissioned by the Corporation of London and South Bucks District Council in 2013 (Liley et al 2014) determined that half the visitors interviewed travelled from homes within 3.1 km of the survey point. Visitor rates decline with distance. Visitor numbers also relate very closely to changes in local housing i.e. the increase in housing nearby has mirrored the increase in visitors. Dog walkers typically spend less time visiting the site but are more regular users. The report by Liley et al (Table 24) estimates that an additional 110 visitors per annum could be expected to visit Burnham Beeches as a result of 300 new dwellings being built at Wilton Park.
- 5.15 Visitors were asked which areas of Burnham Beeches they had visited and this information was mapped - see Map 2 in the report, this clearly shows the areas which experience the most use/pressure, and indicate possible patterns between ecological degradation (e.g. death of trees, soil compaction), and highly-pressurised areas. There is a clear link between dog walker routes and tree impacts. The Corporation of London has recently instigated a Dog Control Order to ameliorate this problem.

Conservation objectives of the European site

- 5.16 The main conservation objective of the part of the Burnham Beeches site managed by the City of London, taken from the Management Plan (2010 – 2020) is “To restore and maintain the key habitats of Burnham Beeches to favourable condition”. To fulfil the overall objective, the following specific objectives are included within the Management Plan:
- To keep the old beech and oak pollards alive for as long as possible (as of 2007 there were 348 old beech and 78 old oak trees alive);
 - Manage 50 old pollards each year;
 - 60 new pollards for the first three years of the plan;
 - Restore wood pasture on Seven Ways Plain;
 - Ensure at least 40 m³ of dead wood per hectare on the ground and 50 standing dead trees per hectare;

- Create a new trial oak coppice area;
- Explore the feasibility of restoring beech coppice on hedge banks;
- Eliminate Rhododendron completely;
- Establish the age structure of beech trees;
- Manage the heathland and mire;
 - Bracken control;
 - Weed wiping;
 - Clearance of regenerating birch;
 - Fell secondary woodland;
 - Control scrub;
- Manage the grassland habitats;
 - Cutting regimes;
 - Grazing regimes;
- Target non-native and undesirable plant species;
 - Removing turkey oak, Japanese knotweed, goldenrod and other species;
 - Remove larch plantation at Towerwood;
 - Promote the growth and survival of BAP species;
- Reduce the negative impacts of wood ants;
- Avoid damage to key species and recording plots;
- Keep abreast of climate change issues and impacts on Burnham Beeches; and
- Comment on local planning issues that have the potential to negatively affect Burnham Beeches.

Mitigation Scheme for Burnham Beeches

- 5.17 The condition of the Burnham Beeches SAC is currently favourable in relation to its statutory nature conservation designation. Direct and indirect pressures have been identified within the report by Liley, *et al.* (2012).
- 5.18 The implementation of the 2010-2020 Management Plan for Burnham Beeches is in its preliminary stages. The reports by Liley, *et al.* (2012, 2013 and 2014), suggests specific mitigation measures to address some of the issues identified through their work, and additionally the Council has worked with the Corporation of London and Natural England to considering potential planning policy approaches, to assist with protection of Burnham Beeches SAC. The recently commissioned Hydrology Report has led to specific development management guidance for all new development within the catchment areas of the watercourses feeding the SAC site. Wilton Park has no hydrological connection with Burnham Beeches and is therefore not affected by this guidance.
- 5.19 The South Bucks Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and is the key document in the South Bucks Local Development Framework / local plan. The Core Strategy document was subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRS) screening exercise as a land use plan. The Assessment takes into consideration the Wilton Park site, which is identified in Core Policy 14.
- 5.20 The HRA Assessment concluded that the Core Strategy (which includes the Wilton Park site) would not generate any significant impacts upon Burnham Beeches SAC, either alone in in combination with other plans or projects. The Assessment states that where there is potential for a specific development project to have significant effects, a project level HRA will be undertaken.
- 5.21 The HRA for the Core Strategy also states that the Core Policies place particular protection on Burnham Beeches SAC, that the Burnham Beeches Management Plan is in place to deal with onsite impacts, and visitor numbers are not expected to significantly increase with the quantum of housing proposed within the Core Strategy (which includes the Wilton Park site). However, these conclusions should be considered along with the recent survey work to estimate visitor numbers. It should also be considered whether the Burnham Beeches Management Plan can deal with those associated increased visitor numbers.

5.22 Liley, *et al.* (2012) suggested that the then proposed Development Management Local Plan, which along with the Core Strategy would set out in further detail the measures to ensure that development can proceed without causing any adverse impacts upon the SAC, should take forward a formal mitigation strategy for Burnham Beeches. A new emerging Local Development Scheme for South Bucks does not include a DMLP. Instead, it is proposed that a new District-wide Local Plan will be prepared. The evidence commissioned to support the DMLP, including the Burnham Beeches Hydrology Study and the Burnham Beeches Visitor Survey, will be taken forward and used as part of the evidence base for a new Local Plan.

6.0 INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)

6.1 The following information details the preliminary activities relating to the proposed regeneration at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield that could potentially generate impacts upon Burnham Beeches SAC:

- Demolition operations;
- Environmental incidents and accidents;
- Fires;
- Ground and excavation works;
- Provision of services and utilities (i.e. underground power lines, water supply, drainage);
- Removal or disruption of top-soil/sub-soil, etc; and
- Vegetation clearance.

6.2 The following information details the decommissioning phase activities relating to the proposed development that could potentially generate impacts:

- Removal of contaminated water or soil;
- Removal or demolition of disused structures that may have been colonized by, e.g. roosting bats, barn owls, etc;
- Removal of ancillary developments; and
- Removal or neglect of structures which might cause pollution if they fail.

6.3 The following information details the occupational/operational activities relating to the proposed development that could potentially generate impacts:

- Access;
- Drainage;
- Damage to mitigation work through accident or vandalism;
- Implementation of landscape design and habitat management;

- Presence of people, vehicles and typical uses and activities (including factors likely to cause disturbance, e.g. increased public access and recreational pressure, risk of fires, lighting, noise, regular emissions, etc);
- Presence of pets; and
- Site operations and management (e.g. maintenance, operations, industrial processes generating emissions, etc).

Likely direct, indirect, or secondary impacts of the project (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) in the construction, operation and decommissioning phase on the European site

6.4 The summary impacts table describes the type of impacts upon the European site, and details the likely significance of each impact in relation to the sites key characteristics and qualifying features.

Proposed activity	Characterisation of unmitigated impact on the feature	Significance without mitigation and confidence level	Mitigation and enhancement	Residual significance and confidence level
Preliminary and de-commissioning phase activities				
Site clearance and construction and demolition operations, ground and excavation works. Removal of structures which might cause pollution if they fail.	Potential air pollution. Removal of contaminated water or soil.	Negative effect on conservation status: unlikely . Therefore, significant negative impacts: unlikely .	Investigating and remediating potential contaminated land. Best practice measures on site to prevent air and water pollution. Construction Environment Management Plan to be implemented.	Negligible.
Environmental incidents and accidents.	Including fires, chemical spillages, explosions, etc.	Negative effect on conservation status: unlikely . Therefore, significant negative impacts: unlikely .	Best practice measures to reduce the possibilities of accidents.	Negligible.
Provision of services and utilities.	Installation of water, gas, and electric services.	Negative effect on conservation status: unlikely . Therefore significant negative impacts:	Best practice measures in line with Construction Environment Management Plan and full consultation with	Negligible.

		unlikely.	Environment Agency.	
Removal or demolition of structures and other habitats used by protected species.	Including bats, birds and reptiles.	Negative effect on conservation status: unlikely. Therefore significant negative impacts: unlikely.	Protected species surveys have been carried out in the site and will be updated where appropriate. A detailed mitigation strategy will be developed to reflect the planning proposals.	Negligible.
Occupational / operational activities				
Installation of new drainage facilities.	There is no hydrological connection between Wilton Park and Burnham Beeches. Potential for changes to the flow rate and chemical composition of receiving watercourses.	Negative effect on conservation status: unlikely. Therefore significant negative impacts: unlikely.	Implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to manage/control flow rates and control nutrient outputs.	Negligible.
Increase in visitors to the European site from new residents (i.e. access and recreational pressures).	Fires, trampling around trees, noise, car emissions affecting air quality.	Negative effect on conservation status: unlikely alone, or in combination with other projects within 5km. Therefore significant negative impacts unlikely.	Creation of new public open space within the Wilton Park site, encouraging new residents and other nearby residents to use the area for recreational purposes, in preference to Burnham Beeches. Provision of walks and open spaces that would divert recreation from Burnham Beeches.	Unlikely to cause significant negative effects on Burnham Beeches. Therefore, effects are considered to be negligible providing new open space is delivered.

Table 2: Summary impacts table.

Consideration of effects

- 6.5 As a precautionary and best practice measure, all construction activities should be carried out in line with a carefully designed Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), which will set out in detail the contractors approach to construction activities in the site and throughout the site's constructional phase. The CEMP will specify how the environmental impacts will be managed, which include air quality management (including dust management), noise and vibration management, waste management, contaminated land management, water management, in addition to any specific potential issues identified in ecological reports or an Environmental Statement (ES) should such a report be required.
- 6.6 The South Bucks Core Strategy HRA Screening Statement (March 2010) states that the quantity and spatial distribution of residential development set out by the Core Strategy is not expected to significantly increase the number of people visiting Burnham Beeches providing compensatory open space is included particularly in the two opportunity sites of Mill Lane, Taplow and Wilton Park. The Core Strategy limits development in Farnham Common, the nearest settlement to Burnham Beeches.
- 6.7 Liley et al (2014) found that visitor rates decline with distance from Burnham Beeches. However, development within 5km is likely to result in changes in visitor levels. Within that 5km radius, there is a marked change with distance. A development of 100 dwellings at 5km would have the same impact (in terms of access to Burnham Beeches SAC) as 76.9 dwellings at 4km; as 35.7 dwellings at 3km; as 11 dwellings at 2km; as 2.7 dwellings at 1km from the SAC boundary and as 1.3 dwellings within 500m. In terms of spatial planning and impacts to Burnham Beeches SAC, the results would suggest that consideration needs to focus on all development in areas directly adjacent to the SAC, and that large developments within 5km are also of relevance. The report by Liley et al (2014) estimated that an additional 110 visitors per annum could be expected to visit Burnham Beeches as a result of 300 new dwellings being built at Wilton Park.
- 6.8 When the proposed development is considered alone (in the absence of other developments), the development is unlikely to cause any significant effects, given the management procedures that are already in place within Burnham Beeches to control impacts. The provision of high quality open space at Wilton

Park will divert a certain amount of visitors away from the SAC. However, even if high quality open space is provided at Wilton Park, it is likely that a small proportion of people from Wilton Park, will visit Burnham Beeches.

- 6.9 In consideration of combination effects of other plans, Table 24 of the 2013 visitor survey (Liley, et al 2014) predicts a total of 11,940 additional visitors per annum, or a 2.07% change. These figures include the 110 additional visitors from Wilton Park. For Slough, Table 24 predicts 1,220 additional visitors per annum, or a 0.69% change. For South Bucks and Slough combined, this amounts to less than a 3% overall increase in annual visits to Burnham Beeches. The South Bucks Core Strategy and the Slough Core Strategy were both subject to HRA; both of which concluded no likely significant effects on Burnham Beeches SAC. The other opportunity site at Mill Lane, Taplow provides over 9 Ha of new public open space on a significantly smaller site which is over 6km from Burnham Beeches.
- 6.10 Given the findings of the Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Statement for the South Bucks Core Strategy, the recent visitor survey work, and hydrological study, significant in-combination effects from other plans and projects are unlikely, given the level of proposed housing in the District and predicted visitor levels.

7.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

- 7.1 Given that the potential impacts from the regeneration at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield are related to an increase in visitor numbers (i.e. visitor pressure) it is pertinent for any mitigation measures to address such potential impacts.
- 7.2 In terms of on-site management, Liley, *et al.* (2012) states that because large-scale changes have already been made on site, there are relatively few management options that are available and those which may be viable would be small-scale. However, it is anticipated that with a long-term increase in visitor numbers, additional resources (for example wardens) may be required to contribute to the on-site management.
- 7.3 The proposals for Wilton Park include approximately 17 hectares of parkland, open space, and play areas, all linked to existing woodlands (approximately 8 hectares), which will provide a circular route of approximately 4-5km. The open space includes a range of high quality semi-natural habitats including woodland, grassland and ponds. It is considered that the provision of this type of high quality, informal open space represents a suitable approach to alleviating any increase in visitor pressure from the proposed development at Wilton Park on Burnham Beeches SAC. If the currently outlined extent and type of open space including accessible woodland and improved links to surrounding countryside is delivered at Wilton Park, it is likely that no further mitigation would be needed (i.e. there would be no need for Section 106 contributions for off-site mitigation in this regard).

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

Likelihood of significant effects

- 8.1 It is concluded that the Wilton Park Opportunity Site, alone or in combination with other projects, is unlikely to cause significant adverse effects upon the European Site (Burnham Beeches SAC). With the implementation of mitigation measures, including the creation of new high-quality public open space, it is considered that the proposals are unlikely to have a significant effect on the interest features of Burnham Beeches SAC and therefore do not require appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 8.2 Therefore, the residual impacts of regeneration of land at Wilton Park, Beaconsfield, are considered to be **negligible**, with a **likely** confidence value, and this HRA screening report is a finding of no significant effects report.
- 8.3 Any works should be carried out in accordance with a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), and in accordance with any specific mitigation measures outlined in ecological reports.



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