

**Appropriate Assessment**  
**Screening report for Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revisions to**  
**Westminster's City Plan in relation to Special Protection Areas, Special**  
**Areas of Conservation and wetlands of international importance**

**Introduction**

- 1.1 In October 2005, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that Appropriate Assessments (AA) must be carried out on all land use planning documents in the UK. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC states:-

*“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.”*

- 1.2 Appropriate Assessment is in essence a report which assesses the potential effects of a plan upon a designated European site. The Natura 2000 network is composed of over 600 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and over 240 Special Protection Areas, however, UK government planning policy also extends the same levels of protection to Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention), of which there are currently over 140 in the UK.

**The Local Plan – Westminster’s City Plan**

- 1.3 This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report is for the Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revision to Westminster’s City Plan as set out in Regulation 18 and the Local Development Scheme (March 2015). Once all revisions are adopted Westminster’s City Plan will consist of both strategic and detailed city management policies and will provide a comprehensive source of planning policy for Westminster.
- 1.4 Appropriate Assessment screening reports have previously been submitted to Natural England for the Core Strategy (adopted January 2011) which can be viewed here [here](#) and more recently for the NPPF Revision to the Core Strategy (now referred to as Westminster’s City Plan: Strategic Policies – adopted November 2013) which can be viewed [here](#) with the response from Natural England to this document [here](#).
- 1.5 Appendix 1 attached to this report contains the Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revisions to Westminster’s City Plan. It provides the detailed policy framework for determining planning applications for specialist uses and function of five Special Policy Areas. The proposed revisions to the Policies Map

are either minor amendments, factual updates or reflect policy designations for the Special Policy Areas Revisions.

### **Designated sites**

- 1.6 There are no designated Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within the boundary of the City of Westminster or in neighbouring London Boroughs. There are however two SAC sites within Greater London within a 10 km radius, namely Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common and one site just outside Greater London, which is Epping Forest. There are three other sites considered in this assessment namely the Essex Estuaries SAC, the Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area, which is also a Ramsar, and the Lee Valley Special Protection Area which is also a Ramsar.

### **Evidence Gathering**

- 1.7 Information has been gathered to establish:

1. European sites within and outside the plan area potentially affected
2. Site characteristics and conservation objectives
3. Other relevant plans or projects

#### **1. European sites within and outside the plan area potentially affected**

For this assessment four SACs and two Special Protection Areas have been identified which should be assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. These are:

- Wimbledon Common SAC
- Richmond Park SAC
- Epping Forest SAC
- Essex Estuaries SAC
- Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area and Ramsar
- Lee Valley Special Protection Area and Ramsar

#### **2. Site characteristics and conservation objectives**

The focus of the Appropriate Assessment is on the sites' qualifying features and associated conservation objectives. This information has been derived from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and is presented below.

#### **Wimbledon Common**

<b>Location of Wimbledon Common Special Areas of Conservation</b>	
Country	England
Unitary Authority	Merton; Wandsworth
Grid Ref*	TQ227719

Latitude	51 25 56 N
Longitude	00 14 04 W
SAC EU code	UK0030301
Status	Designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Area (ha)	348.31
* This is the approximate central point of the SAC. In the case of large, linear or composite sites, this may not represent the location where a feature occurs within the SAC.	
<b>General site character</b>	
Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (1%)	
Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (0.5%)	
Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue <i>Phygrana</i> (5%)	
Dry grassland. Steppes (45%)	
Improved grassland (3.5%)	
Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (45%)	
<b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
Not applicable	
<b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
<b>4010</b> Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>	
<b>4030</b> European dry heaths	
<b>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
<b>1083</b> Stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i>	
Wimbledon Common has a large number of old trees and much fallen decaying timber. It is at the heart of the south London centre of distribution for <b>stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i></b> , and a relatively large number of records were received from this site during a recent nationwide survey for the species (Percy <i>et al.</i> 2000). The site supports a number of other scarce invertebrate species associated with decaying timber.	
<b>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</b>	
Not applicable.	

## Richmond Park

Location of Richmond Park Special Areas of Conservation	
Country	England
Unitary Authority	Richmond upon Thames
Grid Ref*	TQ199728
Latitude	51 26 27 N
Longitude	00 16 28 W
SAC EU code	UK0030246
Status	Designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Area (ha)	846.68
* This is the approximate central point of the SAC. In the case of large, linear or composite sites, this may not represent the location where a feature occurs	

within the SAC.
<b>General site character</b>
Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (1.5%)
Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (0.5%)
Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (25%)
Dry grassland. Steppes (18%)
Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (5%)
Improved grassland (20%)
Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (25%)
Mixed woodland (5%)
<b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>
Not applicable
<b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</b>
Not applicable.
<b>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>
<b>1083 Stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i></b>
Richmond Park has a large number of ancient trees with decaying timber. It is at the heart of the south London centre of distribution for <b>stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i></b> , and is a site of national importance for the conservation of the fauna of invertebrates associated with the decaying timber of ancient trees.
<b>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</b>
Not applicable.

## Epping Forest

Location of Epping Forest Special Areas of Conservation	
Country	England
Unitary Authority	Essex
Grid Ref*	TQ399959
Latitude	51 38 39 N
Longitude	00 01 21 E
SAC EU code	UK0012720
Status	Designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Area (ha)	1604.95
* This is the approximate central point of the SAC. In the case of large, linear or composite sites, this may not represent the location where a feature occurs within the SAC.	
<b>General site character</b> Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (6%) Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (0.2%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (3.8%) Dry grassland. Steppes (20%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (70%)	
<b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
<b>9120</b> Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (Quercion robori-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion)  Epping Forest represents Atlantic acidophilous beech forests in the north-eastern part of the habitat's UK range. Although the epiphytes at this site have declined, largely as a result of air pollution, it remains important for a range of rare species, including the moss <i>Zygodon forsteri</i> . The long history of pollarding, and resultant large number of veteran trees, ensures that the site is also rich in fungi and dead-wood invertebrates.	
<b>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
<b>4010</b> Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix	
<b>4030</b> European dry heaths	
<b>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
<b>1083</b> Stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i>  Epping Forest is a large woodland area in which records of <b>stag beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i></b> are widespread and frequent; the site straddles the Essex and east London population centres. Epping Forest is a very important site for fauna associated with decaying timber, and supports many Red Data Book and Nationally Scarce invertebrate species.	
<b>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</b>	
Not applicable.	

## Essex Estuaries

Location of Essex Estuaries Special Areas of Conservation	
Country	England
Unitary Authority	Essex
Grid Ref*	TM103048
Latitude	51 42 06 N <a href="#">51.70166667</a>
Longitude	01 02 37 E <a href="#">1.043611111</a>
SAC EU code	UK0013690
Status	Designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Area (ha)	46140.82
* This is the approximate central point of the SAC. In the case of large, linear or composite sites, this may not represent the location where a feature occurs within the SAC.	
<b>General site character</b> Marine areas. Sea inlets (30%) Tidal rivers. Estuaries. Mud flats. Sand flats. Lagoons (including saltwork basins) (56.5%) Salt marshes. Salt pastures. Salt steppes (11%) Shingle. Sea cliffs. Islets (0.5%) Improved grassland (2%)	
<b>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</b>	
<b>1130 Estuaries</b>	
This is a large estuarine site in south-east England, and is a typical, undeveloped, coastal plain estuarine system with associated open coast mudflats and sandbanks. The site comprises the major estuaries of the Colne, Blackwater, Crouch and Roach rivers and is important as an extensive area of contiguous estuarine habitat. Essex Estuaries contains a very wide range of characteristic marine and estuarine sediment communities and some diverse and unusual marine communities in the lower reaches, including rich sponge communities on mixed, tide-swept substrates. Sublittoral areas have a very rich invertebrate fauna, including the reef-building worm <i>Sabellaria spinulosa</i> , the brittlestar <i>Ophiothrix fragilis</i> , crustaceans and ascidians. The site also has large areas of saltmarsh and other important coastal habitats.	
<b>1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</b>	
Essex Estuaries represents the range of variation of this habitat type found in south-east England and includes the extensive intertidal <b>mudflats and sandflats</b> of the Colne, Blackwater, Roach and Crouch estuaries, Dengie Flats and Maplin Sands. The area includes a wide range of sediment flat communities, from estuarine muds, sands and muddy sands to fully saline, sandy mudflats with extensive growths of eelgrass <i>Zostera</i> spp. on the open coast. The open coast areas of Maplin Sands and Dengie Flats have very extensive mudflats and an unusually undisturbed nature. Maplin Sands is particularly important for its large, nationally-important beds of dwarf eelgrass <i>Zostera noltei</i> and associated animal communities.	
<b>1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</b>	

Glasswort *Salicornia* spp. saltmarsh in the Essex estuaries on the east coast of England forms an integral part of the transition from the extensive and varied intertidal mud and sandflats through to upper saltmeadows. Although the saltmarshes in this area are generally eroding, secondary pioneer communities appear as a precursor to erosion on the seaward edge of degraded mid-marsh communities. The area of pioneer marsh includes gradation into extensive cord-grass *Spartina* spp. swards.

**1320** *Spartina* swards (*Spartinion maritimae*)

The most extensive remaining stand of the native small cord-grass *Spartina maritima* in the UK and possibly in Europe is found in the Essex Estuaries. The stand is located at Foulness Point and covers approximately 0.17 ha. Other smaller stands are found elsewhere in the estuary complex, notably in the Colne estuary, where it forms a major component of the upper marsh areas.

**1330** Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

Although the saltmarshes in this area are generally eroding, extensive salt meadows remain and Essex Estuaries represents **Atlantic salt meadows** in south-east England, with floristic features typical of this part of the UK. Golden samphire *Inula crithmoides* is a characteristic species of these marshes, occurring both on the lower marsh and on the drift-line. It represents a community of south-east England also found to the south in mainland Europe.

**1420** Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (*Sarcocornetea fruticosi*)

In this complex of estuarine marshes on the east coast of England the occurrence of **Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs** is currently artificially restricted by sea-walls. It now occurs principally as a strandline community or at the foot of sea-walls. Recent managed retreat schemes offer the prospect of future expansion of the habitat type. The local variant of this vegetation, which features sea-lavenders *Limonium* spp. and sea-heath *Frankenia laevis*, occurs at one location, Colne Point.

**Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site**

**1110** Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time

**Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site**

Not applicable.

**Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection**

Not applicable.

## Thames Estuary and Marshes

Location Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area and Ramsar	
Country	England
Unitary Authority	Essex (10%) Kent (90%)
Latitude	51 29 08 N
Longitude	00 35 47 E
Special Protection Area EU code	UK9012021

Ramsar EU code	UK11069
Status	Special Protection Area Wetland of international importance (Ramsar)
Area (ha)	4838.94
<b>General site character</b> Tidal rivers. Estuaries. Mud flats. Sand flats. Lagoons (including saltwork basins) (57.3%) Salt marshes. Salt pastures. Salt steppes (1.5%) Shingle. Sea cliffs. Islets (0.9%) Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (5.6%) Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (3.7%) Dry grassland. Steppes (1.9%) Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (29.1%)	
<b>Article 4.1 qualification under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)</b> Over winter the area regularly supports <i>Circus cyaneus</i> 1% of the population in Great Britain, Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98, <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (Western Europe/Western Mediterranean -breeding) 28.3% of the population in Great Britain Five year peak mean for 1993/93 to 1997/98	
<b>Article 4.2 qualification under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)</b> Over winter the area regularly supports <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> , (Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa) 2.1% of the population Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98 <i>Calidris canutus</i> , (North-eastern Canada/Greenland/Iceland/Northwestern Europe) 1.4% of the population Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98 <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> (Iceland - breeding) 2.4% of the population Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98 <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> , (Eastern Atlantic - wintering) 1.7% of the population Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98 <i>Tringa totanus</i> (Eastern Atlantic - wintering) 2.2% of the population Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98 On passage the area regularly supports waterfowl including <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> , (Europe/Northern Africa - wintering) 2.6% of the population Five year peak mean for 1993/94 to 1997/98, <i>Circus cyaneus</i> , <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> ,	
<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the Special Protection Area and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change; 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.

## Lee Valley

Location Lee Valley Special Protection Area	
Country	England
Unitary Authority	Hertfordshire (51%), Greater London (44%), Essex (5%)
Latitude	51 34 51 N
Longitude	00 02 58 W
Special Protection Area EU code	UK9012111
UK Ramsar Code	UK11034
Status	Special Protection Area Wetland of international importance (Ramsar)
Area (ha)	447.87
<b>General site character</b>	
Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (97%)	
Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (4%)	
Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (8%)	
Improved grassland (10%)	
Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (10%)	
Other land (including towns, villages, roads, waste places, mines, industrial sites) (1%)	
<b>Article 4.1 qualification under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)</b>	
This site qualifies under <b>Article 4.1</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:	
<b>Over winter;</b>	
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i> , 6 individuals representing at least 6.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean, 1992/3-1995/6)	
<b>Article 4.2 qualification under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)</b>	
This site also qualifies under <b>Article 4.2</b> of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:	
<b>Over winter;</b>	
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> , 515 individuals representing at least 1.7% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)	
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> , 748 individuals representing at least 1.9% of the wintering Northwestern/Central Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)	

### **Conservation Objectives**

With regard to the Special Protection Area and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

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.

### **Role of other relevant plans or projects**

- 1.8 Other key plans and projects, the implementation of which may contribute to deteriorating air and water quality include: the Mayor of London's London Plan and Local Plans from other authorities.

### **Results of the Screening exercise**

- 1.9 There is a great deal of difficulty and uncertainty in predicting how every potential policy scenario might affect the conservation objectives of the European sites. However, taking Westminster as a single authority area, and even taking account of cumulative effects over a 10-15 year plan period, the effects of the Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revision to Westminster's City Plan are considered negligible. Furthermore, establishing causal links would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.
- 1.10 It is recognised that there are a number of interlocking and very complex factors constantly taking place in London as a whole – population change, travel patterns, larger-scale redevelopments, resource use and climate change, for example. The most obvious influences on the European sites, considering London as whole, will be changes to air quality, water resources, and increase in recreational use from growing visitor numbers as the population of the South-east grows further.
- 1.11 Air pollution associated with growth arising from Special Policy Area policies and Policies Map updates would be primarily be as a result of increases in traffic and construction activity and any associated plant and machinery associated with any new buildings. However, [Westminster's Air Quality Action Plan 2013-2016 \(published April 2013\)](#) seeks to redress these matters alongside emerging policies for sustainable development including those in later revisions to Westminster's City Plan. Westminster has limited opportunities for large scale growth and the majority of development is on sites with existing

development and involves relatively small change. In addition, Westminster is well served by public transport and this is likely to improve with the arrival of Cross Rail in 2018.

- 1.12 It is considered that the Westminster's policies, in conjunction with those from other authorities and NPPF requirements for sustainable development will contribute to improving air quality over time in the South-East over time and that any changes arising from the Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revision are not likely to affect the Natura 2000 sites.

### **Conclusions**

- 1.13 It is considered that the Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revisions to Westminster's City Plan do not change the conclusions set out in Appropriate Assessment screening reports have previously been submitted to Natural England for the Core Strategy (adopted January 2011) and more recently for the NPPF Revision to the Core Strategy (now referred to as Westminster's City Plan: Strategic Policies – adopted November 2013).
- 1.14 These alterations do not envisage any significant changes to growth levels and seek, in line with the NPPF, a more sustainable outcome for all development. A comprehensive Appropriate Assessment is therefore not considered necessary.

## **Appendix 1: Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revisions to Westminster's City Plan**

*Please refer to Appendix 1 of Cabinet Member Report*