

Fylde Local Plan

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Fylde Council

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Quality information

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1. Introduction

Background to the Project

- 1.1 AECOM was appointed to produce a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the potential effects of the Fylde Local Plan on the National Site Network of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. For simplicity these sites are referred to as Habitats sites throughout this report. The objectives of the assessment are to:
- Identify any aspects of the Local Plan that would cause an adverse effect on the integrity of Habitats sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects; and
 - To advise on appropriate policy mechanisms for delivering mitigation where such effects were identified.
- 1.2 The Local Plan sets out a spatial vision, objectives, levels and types of growth and strategic and development management policies. It identifies infrastructure requirements and allocates sites for development in the period up to 2042 to meet the growth needs of Fylde. AECOM has been appointed to undertake the report to inform the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 The Local Plan is a strategy document that provides a positive vision for the future of Fylde. It includes a framework for addressing assessed development needs and environmental and social priorities to make sure future development provides the right kind of jobs, homes and infrastructure in the best and most sustainable locations.
- 1.4 The Local Plan covers the Borough up to 2042 and applies to the administrative boundary of Fylde Council.
- 1.5 Fylde Council is a Competent Authority as defined in Regulation 7 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the Regulations'). Regulation 105 states that '*A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which... is likely to have a significant effect on a European site [a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or, as a matter of Government policy, a Ramsar site] or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) ...must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives*'. The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and subsequent commencement regulations in May 2026 officially extended Habitats Regulations protections directly to Ramsar sites in England. This entire process is called Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Assessment 'in combination'

- 1.6 It is a requirement of the Regulations that the impacts and effects of any land use plan being assessed are not considered in isolation but in combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the Habitats site(s) in question. In practice, 'in combination assessment' is of greatest importance when the policy would otherwise be screened out because the individual contribution is not significant. When undertaking in combination assessment for specific development sites, it is important to avoid double-counting since many housing and employment projects that deliver growth in Fylde will usually already be allocated in the Local Plan for the borough. In these instances, the development of a planning application essentially provides further detail on those aspects of Local Plan growth rather than presenting a new project.
- 1.7 Similarly, where growth is being delivered in surrounding authorities this is captured in the 'in combination' assessment through consideration of the relevant Local Plan that sets out the total amount of growth that will be delivered across that authority during its plan period, based on currently adopted Local Plans.

Legislation

- 1.8 The United Kingdom (UK) left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020 under the terms set out in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 (“the Withdrawal Act”). The Withdrawal Act retains the body of existing EU-derived law within our domestic law. Amendments to the Habitats Regulations – the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – make it clear that the need for HRA continues post-Brexit.
- 1.9 The HRA process applies the ‘Precautionary Principle’¹ to Habitats sites. Plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Habitats site(s) in question. Plans and projects with predicted adverse impacts on Habitats sites may still be permitted if there are no alternatives to them and there are Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest (IROPI) as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation would be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.
- 1.10 The need for Appropriate Assessment is set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

“A competent authority, before deciding to ... give any consent, permission or other authorisation for a plan or project which... is 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) ... must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site’s conservation objectives ... The authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site ...”

Plate 1: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

- 1.11 Over time the phrase ‘Habitats Regulations Assessment’ (HRA) has come into wide currency to describe the overall process set out in the Regulations from screening through to derogation. This has arisen in order to distinguish the process from the individual stage described in the law as an ‘Appropriate Assessment’.
- 1.12 In spring 2018 the ‘Sweetman’ European Court of Justice ruling² clarified that ‘mitigation’ (i.e. measures that are specifically introduced to avoid or reduce a harmful effect on a Habitats site that would otherwise arise) should **not** be taken into account when forming a view on Likely Significant Effects. Mitigation should instead only be considered at the Appropriate Assessment stage. This HRA is cognisant of that ruling.

Geographical Scope

- 1.13 There is no pre-defined guidance that dictates the physical scope of an HRA of a Plan document in all circumstances. Current guidance suggests that the following Habitats sites should be included in the scope of an HRA assessment:

All Habitats sites within the Borough of Fylde;

Habitats sites located within 10km of the Fylde boundary; and

Habitats sites located outside of the Council area boundary shown to be linked to a proposed development site through a known ‘pathway’ (discussed below).

¹ The Precautionary Principle, which is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: “When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis”.

² People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)

- 1.14 Generally, it is uncommon for development plans to be deemed to have significant impacts on Habitats sites situated more than 10km from areas of growth. For example, most core recreational catchments (except for some coastal sites) are under 10km in size and the average vehicle commuting distance of a UK resident is approximately 16km. However, there are exceptions, and it should be noted that the presence of a conceivable impact pathway linking a Plan to a Habitats site does not mean that Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) will occur.
- 1.15 In particular, development impacts can extend beyond 10km, particularly where hydrological pathways and surface water catchments are involved, which is why the source-pathway-receptor concept is also used to help determine whether there are potential pathways connecting development to Habitats sites. In some cases, recreational catchments may extend beyond 10km and therefore a source-pathway-receptor approach has also been applied when determining the physical scope of the assessment.
- 1.16 Briefly defined, impact pathways are routes by which the implementation of a policy within a Local Plan document can lead to an effect upon a Habitats site. An example of this would be new residential development resulting in an increased population and thus increased recreational pressure, which could affect Habitats sites through, for example, disturbance of ground-nesting birds. Guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG, now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) states that the HRA should be 'proportionate to the geographical scope of the [plan policy]' and that 'an AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose' (MHCLG, 2006, p.6).
- 1.17 This basic principle has also been reflected in court rulings. The Court of Appeal³ has ruled that provided the Council (competent authority) was duly satisfied that proposed mitigation could be 'achieved in practice' to satisfy that the proposed development would have no adverse effect, then this would suffice. This ruling has since been applied to planning permissions (rather than a Plan level document)⁴. In this case the High Court ruled that for 'a multistage process, so long as there is sufficient information at any particular stage to enable the authority to be satisfied that the proposed mitigation can be achieved in practice it is not necessary for all matters concerning mitigation to be fully resolved before a decision maker is able to conclude that a development will satisfy the requirements of Reg 61 of the Habitats Regulations'.
- 1.18 Habitats Sites discussed this HRA are shown in Table 1, with details in Appendix

Table 1: Physical Scope of the HRA - Habitats Sites of Interest

Habitat Site	Reasons for Inclusion
Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA	Internationally important populations of wintering and passage waterbirds, including pink-footed goose, whooper swan, Bewick's swan, knot, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, redshank and other estuarine bird interests, together with breeding common tern, ruff and lesser black-backed gull.
Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar	The Ramsar site covers the same estuarine system as the SPA and supports similar ecological interests. Potential pathways include recreational pressure, loss of functionally linked habitat, water quality and atmospheric pollution.
Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA	Allocations at Singleton are located within approximately 300m of the SPA. Due to the bird interest features of the SPA, recreational pressure and loss of

³No Adastral New Town Ltd (NANT) v Suffolk Coastal District Council Court of Appeal, 17th February 2015

⁴High Court case of R (Devon Wildlife Trust) v Teignbridge District Council, 28 July 2015

Habitat Site	Reasons for Inclusion
	functionally linked habitat cannot be ruled out.
Morecambe Bay Ramsar	Internationally important intertidal and estuarine wetland supporting large assemblages of wintering birds and migratory species.
Liverpool Bay SPA	The SPA is located along the Fylde coast and is included on a precautionary basis. Potential pathways requiring consideration include disturbance, recreation and water quality, although further screening may determine that some pathways are not relevant.
Sefton Coast SAC	Included on a precautionary basis because the SAC lies within approximately 10km of the borough boundary. Potential pathways requiring consideration include recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution.

The ‘in Combination’ Scope

- 1.19 It is a requirement of the Habitats Regulations that the effects of a plan are considered both alone and in combination with other plans and projects that may affect the same Habitats Sites.
- 1.20 When undertaking this part of the assessment it is essential to bear in mind the principal intention behind the legislation i.e., to ensure that those projects or plans which in themselves have minor impacts are not simply dismissed on that basis but are evaluated for any cumulative contribution they may make to an overall significant effect. In practice, in combination assessment is therefore of greatest relevance when the plan would otherwise be screened out because its individual contribution is inconsequential. The overall approach is to exclude the risk of there being unassessed likely significant effects in accordance with the precautionary principle. This was first established in the seminal Waddenzee⁵ case.
- 1.21 For the purposes of this HRA, we have determined that the key documents with a potential for in-combination effects are:
- Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted 2016), Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, and any emerging replacement Local Plan;
 - Wyre Local Plan 2011–2031 (incorporating the Partial Update of 2022, adopted January 2023) and any emerging replacement Local Plan;
 - Preston Local Plan 2023–2039 (or most recently adopted development plan framework);
 - South Ribble Local Plan and emerging replacement Local Plan;
 - Central Lancashire Local Plan (Preston, South Ribble, Chorley);
 - Sefton Local Plan 2012–2030 (adopted 2017);
- 1.22 It should be noted that a number of neighbouring authorities are currently reviewing or preparing updated Local Plans. The plans identified above represent the most recent adopted planning policy documents available at the time of preparing this HRA. Where emerging Local Plans contain a greater quantity of growth than existing adopted plans, this will be taken into account where relevant evidence is available.

⁵ Waddenzee case (Case C-127/02, [2004] ECR-I 7405)

- 1.23 The list of in-combination plans is not definitive but includes all relevant broad-scale plans. All individual planning applications for residential and employment growth will be delivered under the umbrella of these strategic plans and, therefore, are included in the listed growth quanta. While the broad potential impacts of these plans will be considered, a full HRA of these documents is not undertaken. Instead, it draws upon existing HRAs that have been carried out on all in-combination plans and projects.

2. Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 This section sets out the approach and methodology for undertaking the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

A Proportionate Assessment

- 2.2 Project-related HRA often requires bespoke survey work and novel data generation in order to accurately determine the significance of effects. In other words, to look beyond the risk of an effect to a justified prediction of the actual likely effect and to the development of avoidance or mitigation measures.

- 2.3 However, the draft MHCLG guidance⁶ (described in greater detail later in this chapter) makes it clear that when implementing HRA of land-use plans, the Appropriate Assessment (AA) should be undertaken at a level of detail that is appropriate and proportional to the level of detail provided within the plan itself:

“The comprehensiveness of the [Appropriate] assessment work undertaken should be proportionate to the geographical scope of the option and the nature and extent of any effects identified. An AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose. It would be inappropriate and impracticable to assess the effects [of a strategic land use plan] in the degree of detail that would normally be required for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a project.”

- 2.4 More recently, the Court of Appeal⁷ ruled that providing the Council (competent authority) was duly satisfied that proposed mitigation could be “*achieved in practice*” then this would suffice to meet the requirements of the Habitat Regulations. This ruling has since been applied to a planning permission (rather than a Plan document)⁸. In this case the High Court ruled that for “*a multistage process, so long as there is sufficient information at any particular stage to enable the authority to be satisfied that the proposed mitigation can be achieved in practice it is not necessary for all matters concerning mitigation to be fully resolved before a decision maker is able to conclude that a development will satisfy the requirements of reg 61 of the Habitats Regulations*”.
- 2.5 In other words, there is a tacit acceptance that AA can be tiered and that all impacts are not necessarily appropriate for consideration to the same degree of detail at all tiers as illustrated in **Plate 2**.

⁶ MHCLG (2006) Planning for the Protection of European Sites, Consultation Paper

⁷ No Adastral New Town Ltd (NANT) v Suffolk Coastal District Council Court of Appeal, 17 February 2015

⁸ High Court case of R (Devon Wildlife Trust) v Teignbridge District Council, 28 July 2015

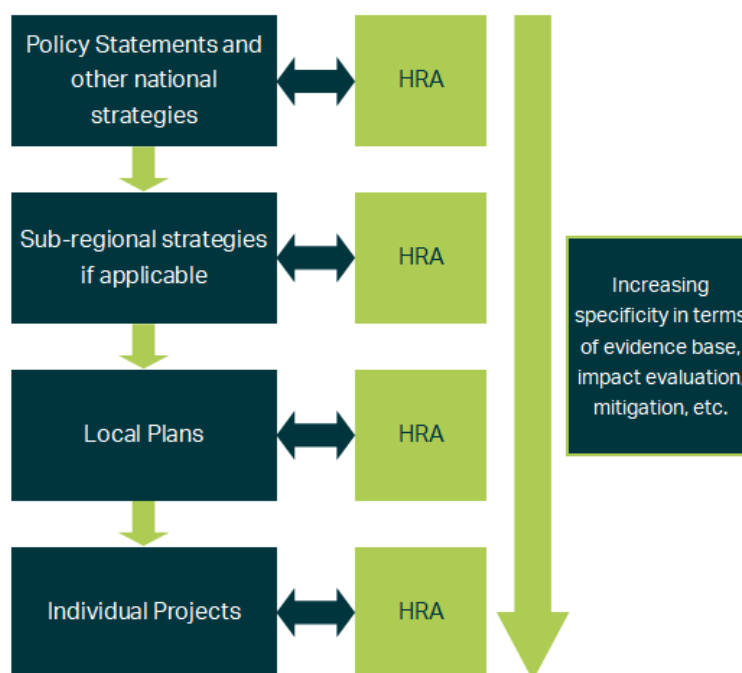


Plate 2: Tiering in HRA of Land Use Plans

- 2.6 At the same time, it is necessary to have confidence that sites allocated in the Local Plan 2042 have a reasonable prospect of being deliverable without fundamental Habitats Regulations Assessment issues.
- 2.7 The most robust and defensible approach to the absence of fine grain detail at this level is to make use of the precautionary principle. In other words, the plan is never given the benefit of the doubt (within the limits of reasonableness); it must be assumed that a policy/measure is likely to have an impact leading to a significant adverse effect upon an internationally designated site unless it can be clearly established otherwise.

The Process of HRA

- 2.8 Central government have released general guidance on appropriate assessment.⁹ **Plate 3** outlines the stages of HRA according to guidance. The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information, recommendations, and any relevant changes to the plan until no likely significant effects remain.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site>

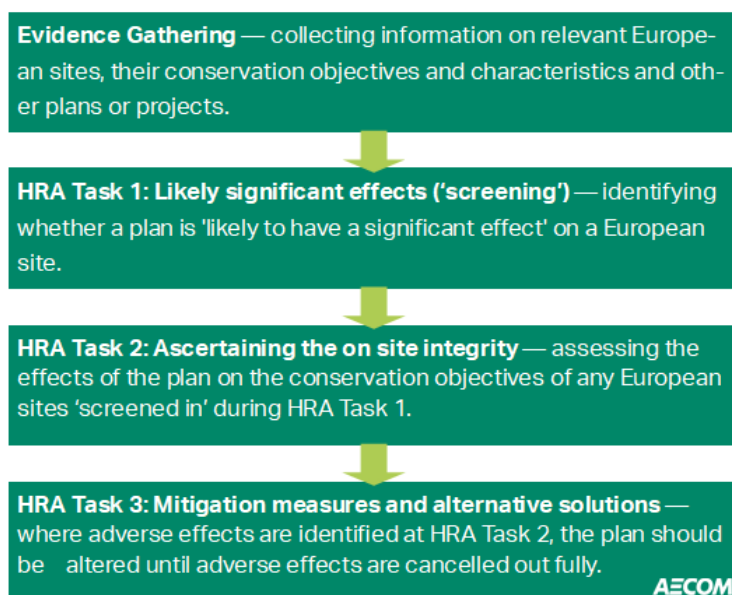


Plate 3: Four-Stage Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.9 The following process has been adopted for carrying out the subsequent stages of the HRA.

Task One: Test of Likely Significant Effects

- 2.10 The first stage of any Habitats Regulations Assessment is a test of Likely Significant Effects - essentially a high-level assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as Appropriate Assessment is required. The essential question is:
- 2.11 *"Is the Plan, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon European sites?"*
- 2.12 In evaluating significance, AECOM have relied on professional judgment and experience of working with the other local authorities on similar issues. The level of detail concerning developments that will be permitted under land use plans is rarely sufficient to make a detailed quantification of effects. Therefore, a precautionary approach has been taken (in the absence of more precise data) assuming as the default position that if a likely significant effect (LSE) cannot be confidently ruled out, then the assessment must be taken to the next level of assessment Task Two: Appropriate Assessment. This is in line with the April 2018 court ruling relating to 'People Over Wind' where mitigation and avoidance measures are to be included at the next stage of assessment.

Task Two: Appropriate Assessment

- 2.13 Habitats site(s) which have been 'screened in' during the previous Task have a detailed assessment undertaken on the effect of the policies on the Habitats site(s) site integrity. Avoidance and mitigation measures to avoid adverse significant effects are taken into account or recommended where necessary.
- 2.14 As established by case law, 'appropriate assessment' is not a technical term; it simply means whatever further assessment is necessary to confirm whether there would be adverse effects on the integrity of any Habitats sites that have not been dismissed at screening. Since it is not a technical term it has no firmly established methodology except that it essentially involves repeating the analysis for the likely significant effects stage, but to a greater level of detail on a smaller number of policies and sites, this time with a view to determining if there would be adverse effects on integrity.

Task Three. Mitigation

One of the key considerations during Appropriate Assessment is whether there is available mitigation that would entirely address the potential effect. In practice, the Appropriate Assessment takes any policies or allocations that could not be dismissed following the high-level Screening analysis and analyse the

potential for an effect in more detail, with a view to concluding whether there would actually be an adverse effect on integrity (in other words, disruption of the coherent structure and function of the Habitats site(s)). There is considerable precedent concerning the level of detail that a Plan document needs to contain regarding mitigation for recreational impacts on Habitats sites, for example. The implication of this precedent is that it is not necessary for all measures that will be deployed to be fully developed prior to adoption of the Plan, but the Plan must provide an adequate policy framework within which these measures can be delivered.

In certain circumstances, a plan-making authority/competent authority can adopt a plan, notwithstanding the fact that the AA concludes it will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Habitats site. This is known as a derogation. A plan must pass each of the following three sequential legal tests for a derogation to be granted:

- There are no feasible alternative solutions that would be less damaging to the Habitats site while still meeting the objective of the plan or proposal.
- The proposal needs to be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest.
- The necessary compensatory measures can be secured.

Since the tests are sequential, a project or plan that cannot meet a given test fails the derogations and therefore does not progress to the later tests.

3. Background to Impact Pathways

- 3.1 In carrying out an HRA it is important to avoid confining oneself to effectively arbitrary boundaries (such as local authority or parish boundaries), but to use an understanding of the various ways in which land use plans can impact Habitats sites to evaluate whether development is connected with Habitats sites, in some cases many kilometres distant. Briefly defined, impact pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a Habitats site. As highlighted earlier, it is also important to bear in mind MHCLG guidance which states that the AA should be '*proportionate to the geographical scope of the [plan policy]*' and that '*an AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose*' (CLG, 2006, p.6¹⁰).
- 3.2 Impacts on Habitats sites are not confined to administrative boundaries and may arise through a range of pathways linking development to sites over varying distances. A pathway-based approach has therefore been adopted in this assessment, consistent with established HRA practice, recognising that effects can occur through mechanisms such as recreational activity, water quality, atmospheric pollution and disturbance.
- 3.3 Based upon Natural England's Site Improvement Plans (SIPs), consideration of Supplementary Advice on the Conservation Objectives, and professional judgement, the following impact pathways require consideration regarding development proposals within the Fylde Local Plan area and the identified Habitats sites:
 - Recreational pressure;
 - Atmospheric pollution;
 - Water quantity, level and flow;
 - Water quality; and
 - Functionally linked land.

Recreational Pressure

- 3.4 Recreational pressure is a key impact pathway for the Fylde Local Plan because several internationally designated coastal and estuarine sites occur within or adjacent to the borough. Increased housing

¹⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government. 2006. *Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment*.

growth can result in increased visitor numbers to sensitive sites through activities such as walking, dog walking, bird watching, cycling and other informal recreation.

3.5 In general, recreational use of a site has the potential to:

- Cause disturbance to sensitive species such as ground-nesting birds and wintering wildfowl;
- Cause damage through erosion, trampling and fragmentation; and
- Cause eutrophication due to dog fouling.

3.6 Types of recreational pressure relevant to the Plan Area are discussed below.

Bird Disturbance

3.7 Disturbance effects can have negative impacts on qualifying birds in various ways, with reduced chick provisioning and increased nest predation due to adults being flushed from the nest and deterred from returning. A literature review on the effects of human disturbance on breeding birds found that 36 out of 40 studies reported reduced breeding success due to disturbance¹¹. The main reasons given for the reduction in breeding success were nest abandonment and increased predation of eggs or young. Studies of other species have shown that birds nest at lower densities in disturbed areas, particularly when there is weekday as well as weekend pressure¹². Recreational disturbance effects on ground-nesting birds are particularly severe, with many studies concluding that urban sites support lower densities of key species, such as stone curlew and nightjar^{13 14}.

3.8 Furthermore, there are numerous parameters (e.g. seasonality, type of recreational activity) that may reduce or exacerbate the magnitude of bird disturbance. For example, disturbance in winter may be more impactful because food shortages make birds more vulnerable at this time of year. In contrast, this may be counterbalanced by fewer recreational users in the winter months and lower overall sensitivity of birds outside the breeding season. Evidence in the literature suggests that the magnitude of disturbance clearly differs between different types of recreational activities. For example, dog walking leads to a significantly higher reduction in bird diversity and abundance compared to hiking¹⁵. Scientific evidence also suggests that key disturbance parameters, such as areas of influence and flush distance, are significantly greater for dog walkers than hikers¹⁶. In addition, dogs, rather than people, tend to be the cause of many management difficulties, notably by worrying grazing animals. A literature review summarised data on the use of semi-natural habitat by dogs¹⁷, indicating that the proportion of dog walkers using sensitive sites tends to be high (54%)

3.9 Evidence from studies such as the Footprint Ecology¹⁸ visitor surveys demonstrates that recreational activities can result in disturbance to waterbirds, particularly within intertidal habitats. Activities such as dog walking and water-based recreation have been shown to result in behavioural responses including flight, alertness and displacement, which can reduce feeding efficiency and increase energy expenditure.

3.10 Evidence suggests that different types of recreational activity result in varying levels of disturbance. For example, dog walking and off-lead dogs are frequently associated with higher levels of disturbance compared to other activities. The magnitude of disturbance is influenced by factors such as proximity, frequency of activity and the sensitivity of species present

3.11 However, bird disturbance studies need to be treated with care. For instance, the magnitude of disturbance is not necessarily correlated with the impact of disturbance, i.e., the most easily disturbed

¹¹ Hockin D.M., Oundsted M., Gorman D., Hill V. & Barker M.A. (1992). Examination of the effects of disturbance on birds with reference to its importance in ecological assessments. *Journal of Environmental Management* **36**: 253-286.

¹² Van der Zande A.N., Berkhuisen J.C., van Lestesteijn H.C., ter Keurs W.J. & Poppelaars A.J. (1984). Impact of outdoor recreation on the density of a number of breeding bird species in woods adjacent to urban residential areas. *Biological Conservation* **30**: 1-39.

¹³ Clarke R.T., Liley D., Sharp J.M. & Green R.E. (2013). Building development and roads: Implications for the distribution of stone curlews across the Brecks. *PLOS ONE*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0072984>.

¹⁴ Liley D. & Clarke R.T. (2003). The impact of urban development and human disturbance on the numbers of nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* on heathlands in Dorset, England. *Biological Conservation* **114**: 219-230.

¹⁵ Banks P.B. & Bryant J.Y. (2007). Four-legged friend or foe? Dog walking displaces native birds from natural areas. *Biology Letters* **3**: 14pp.

¹⁶ Miller S.G., Knight R.L. & Miller C.K. (2001). Wildlife responses to pedestrians and dogs. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* **29**: 124-132.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ [Solent Bird Report Cover.psd \(solentems.org.uk\)](https://www.solentems.org.uk/SolentBirdReportCover.psd); Accessed 01/12/2023

species are not necessarily those that will suffer the greatest impacts. For example, it has been shown in some cases, that the most easily disturbed birds simply move to alternative feeding sites, while others remain (likely due to an absence of suitable alternative foraging areas) and thus suffer greater population-level impacts¹⁹. A literature review undertaken for the RSPB²⁰ also urges caution when extrapolating the results of disturbance studies because responses differ between species and may be impacted by local environmental conditions. This should be considered when predicting the potential impacts of future recreational pressure on Habitats sites.

- 3.12 It should also be emphasised that recreational use is not necessarily a problem. Many Habitats sites are also National Nature Reserves or nature reserves managed by Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB. At some of these sites, access is encouraged, and resources are deployed to ensure that recreational use is managed appropriately. Bird abundances in many of these sites remain stable or, in some cases, are increasing despite high visitor numbers.
- 3.13 The Habitats sites relevant to the Fylde Local Plan are primarily designated for internationally important populations of wintering, passage and breeding birds. In particular, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar support extensive assemblages of waders, wildfowl and other waterbirds which are known to be sensitive to recreational disturbance. Recreational activities, particularly walking and dog walking, have the potential to disturb feeding and roosting birds within intertidal habitats, saltmarsh and adjacent supporting habitat.
- 3.14 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA factsheet specifically identifies beach recreation, vehicle use, motorsports, wildlife watching and other recreational activities as disturbance pressures affecting qualifying birds within the estuary.
- 3.15 Similarly, evidence relating to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA identifies disturbance to birds from recreational activity, including activities on both land and water, as an issue affecting important feeding and roosting areas.
- 3.16 It should be recognised that the relationship between disturbance and population impacts is complex and can vary between species, seasons and sites. However, given the qualifying bird interests present within the relevant Habitats sites, recreational disturbance represents a credible pathway requiring assessment within the HRA.

Trampling Damage

- 3.17 Most terrestrial habitats (including heathland, grassland and woodland) can be affected by trampling and other mechanical damage, which dislodges individual plants, leads to soil compaction and erosion. A general effect of trampling on vegetation is reduced species and structural diversity, since only dominant and tolerant plant species persist²¹. However, many parameters (e.g. vegetation type, recreational activity, weather and ground conditions) can have marked impacts on the degree of trampling damage. The following provides a brief overview of the impacts of trampling associated with different recreational activities in different habitats:
 - A study on experimental trampling of different heathland types under varying weather conditions in Brittany (France) showed that dry heath was more resistant to trampling damage than wet heath²². Equally, both heathland habitats showed greater resilience to trampling under dry than wet conditions.
 - Wilson & Seney²³ examined the degree of track erosion caused by hikers, motorcyclists, horse riders and cyclists in 108 plots along tracks in the Gallatin National Forest, Montana. Although the results proved difficult to interpret, it was concluded that horses and hikers disturbed more sediment on wet tracks, and therefore caused more erosion, than motorcycles and bicycles.

¹⁹ Gill et al. (2001). Why behavioural responses may not reflect the population consequences of human disturbance. *Biological Conservation* **97**: 265-268.

²⁰ Woodfield & Langston. (2004). Literature review on the impact on bird population of disturbance due to human access on foot. *RSPB Research Report* No. 9.

²¹ Santoro R. et.al. (2012). Effects of Trampling Limitation on Coastal Dune Plant Communities. *Environmental Management* DOI 10.1007/s00267-012-9809-6.

²² Gallet S. & Roze F. (2002). Long-term effects of trampling on Atlantic heathland in Brittany (France): Influence of vegetation type, season and weather conditions. *Biological Conservation* **103**: 267-275.

²³ Wilson, J.P. & J.P. Seney. (1994). Erosional impact of hikers, horses, motorcycles and off-road bicycles on mountain trails in Montana. *Mountain Research and Development* **14**:77-88.

- Cole et al²⁴ conducted experimental off-track trampling in 18 closed forest, dwarf scrub and meadow & grassland communities (each trampled between 0 – 500 times) over five mountain regions in the US. Vegetation cover was assessed two weeks and one year after trampling, and a negative correlation with trampling intensity was discovered. This relationship was weaker after one year than two weeks, indicating some vegetation recovery. Differences in plant morphology was found to explain more variation in response than soil and topographic factors. Low-growing, mat-forming grasses regained their cover best after two weeks and were considered most resistant to trampling, while tall forbs (non-woody vascular plants other than grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns) were considered least resistant. The cover of hemicryptophytes and geophytes (plants with buds below the soil surface) was heavily reduced after two weeks but had recovered well after one year and as such these were considered most resilient to trampling. Chamaephytes (plants with buds above the soil surface) were considered least tolerant to regular trampling disturbance.
 - Cole²⁵ conducted a follow-up study (across four vegetation types) in which shoe type (trainers or walking boots) and trampling weight were varied. Although immediate damage was greater with walking boots, there was no significant difference after one year. Heavier trampers caused a greater reduction in vegetation height than lighter trampers, but there was no differential impact on vegetation cover.
 - Cole & Spildie²⁶ experimentally compared the effects of off-track trampling by hikers and horse riders (at two intensities – 25 and 150 passes) in two woodland vegetation types (one with an erect forb understorey and one with a low shrub understorey). Generally, it was shown that higher trampling intensities caused greater levels of disturbance. Horse trampling resulted in a larger reduction in vegetation cover than hiking. While the forb-dominated vegetation suffered greater disturbance impacts, it recovered rapidly.
- 3.18 In heathland sites, trampling damage can affect the value of a site to wildlife. For example, heavy use of sandy tracks loosens and continuously disturbs sand particles, reducing the habitat's suitability for invertebrates²⁷. Species that burrow into flat surfaces such as the centres of paths, are likely to be particularly vulnerable, as the loose sediment can no longer maintain their burrow. In some instances, nature conservation bodies and local authorities resort to hardening paths to prevent further erosion. However, this is concomitant with the loss of habitat used by wildlife, such as sand lizards and burrowing invertebrates.
- 3.19 Trampling and erosion can adversely affect habitats through vegetation damage, soil compaction and localised erosion, particularly where visitor activity is concentrated along access routes and within sensitive coastal habitats. Within the context of the Fylde Local Plan, this pathway has been considered in relation to Sefton Coast SAC and coastal habitats associated with the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and Morecambe Bay designations. However, the principal recreational pressure pathway requiring assessment relates to disturbance of qualifying bird species. Consequently, trampling effects are considered as part of the wider recreational pressure pathway.

Nutrient Enrichment

- 3.20 Nutrient enrichment can affect sensitive habitats through the deposition of nitrogen and phosphorus, including that arising from dog fouling associated with recreational use. Dogs tend to defecate shortly after arriving at a site, meaning that nutrient inputs are often concentrated close to access points. Urination occurs more frequently and leads to more diffuse nutrient inputs across sites. Elevated nutrient levels can alter plant community composition, favouring more competitive species and reducing biodiversity.

²⁴ Cole, D.N. (1995a). Experimental trampling of vegetation. I. Relationship between trampling intensity and vegetation response. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **32**: 203-214

Cole, D.N. (1995b). Experimental trampling of vegetation. II. Predictors of resistance and resilience. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **32**: 215-224

²⁵ Cole, D.N. (1995c). Recreational trampling experiments: effects of trampler weight and shoe type. Research Note INT-RN-425. U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station, Utah.

²⁶ Cole, D.N., Spildie, D.R. (1998). Hiker, horse and llama trampling effects on native vegetation in Montana, USA. *Journal of Environmental Management* **53**: 61-71

²⁷ Taylor K., Anderson P., Liley D. & Underhill-Day J.C. (2006). Promoting positive access management to sites of nature conservation value: A guide to good practice. English Nature / Countryside Agency, Peterborough and Cheltenham.

- 3.21 Studies have demonstrated²⁸ that nutrient inputs from dogs can be significant when compared to background nutrient levels, with both nitrogen and phosphorus contributing to changes in soil chemistry and vegetation structure. While the degree of impact depends on local conditions and visitor behaviour, nutrient enrichment is recognised as a potential mechanism of habitat change, particularly where visitor pressure is high and concentrated in sensitive locations.
- 3.22 Within the Fylde context, this pathway is primarily relevant to coastal and estuarine habitats associated with the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar and Sefton Coast SAC. Although nutrient enrichment associated with recreation is generally considered to be a secondary impact when compared to disturbance and trampling, increased visitor pressure resulting from population growth may contribute to localised habitat change where dog walking activity is concentrated.

Summary

- 3.23 Recreational pressure is identified as a key impact pathway for the Fylde Local Plan due to the presence of internationally important coastal and estuarine Habitats Sites within and adjoining the borough. Population growth associated with the Local Plan has the potential to increase visitor activity, particularly walking, dog walking and other informal recreational activities, resulting in disturbance to qualifying bird species and increased pressure on sensitive habitats.
- 3.24 This pathway is particularly relevant to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar and Sefton Coast SAC. The Ribble and Alt Estuaries and Morecambe Bay sites support internationally important populations of wintering and migratory birds that are sensitive to disturbance, while Sefton Coast SAC supports internationally important dune habitats that may be vulnerable to recreational pressures including trampling and erosion.
- 3.25 The magnitude of any recreational effects will depend on factors including the location of new development, accessibility of designated sites, visitor behaviour and the availability of alternative recreational opportunities. These issues are considered further through the screening and, where necessary, Appropriate Assessment stages of this HRA, including consideration of in-combination effects arising from growth proposed within Fylde and neighbouring authorities.

Atmospheric Pollution

- 3.26 The main pollutants of concern for European sites are oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), ammonia (NH₃) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Main sources and effects of air pollutants on habitats and species.

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
Sulphur dioxide (SO ₂)	The main sources of SO₂ are electricity generation, and industrial and domestic fuel combustion. However, total SO₂ emissions in the UK have decreased substantially since the 1980's. Another origin of sulphur dioxide is the shipping industry and high atmospheric concentrations of SO₂ have been documented in busy ports. In future years, shipping is likely to become one of the most important contributors to SO₂ emissions in the UK.	Wet and dry deposition of SO₂ acidifies soils and freshwater and may alter the composition of plant and animal communities. The magnitude of effects depends on levels of deposition, the buffering capacity of soils and the sensitivity of impacted species. However, SO₂ background levels have fallen considerably since the 1980's and are now not regarded a threat to plant communities. For example, decreases in sulphur dioxide concentrations have been linked to returning lichen species and improved tree health in London.
Acid deposition	Leads to acidification of soils and freshwater via atmospheric deposition	Gaseous precursors (e.g., SO ₂) can cause direct damage to sensitive

²⁸ De Frenne P., Cougnon M., Janssens G.P.J. & Vangansbeke P. (2022). Nutrient fertilization by dogs in peri-urban ecosystems. *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* 3, <https://doi.org/10.1002/2688-8319.12128>

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
	of SO₂, NO_x, ammonia and hydrochloric acid. Acid deposition from rain has declined by 85% in the last 20 years, which most of this contributed by lower sulphate levels. Although future trends in sulphate emissions and subsequent deposition to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will continue to decline, increased nitrogen emissions may cancel out any gains produced by reduced sulphate levels.	vegetation, such as lichen, upon deposition. Can affect habitats and species through both wet (acid rain) and dry deposition. The effects of acidification include lowering of soil pH, leaf chlorosis, reduced decomposition rates, and compromised reproduction in birds / plants. Not all sites are equally susceptible to acidification. This varies depending on soil type, bed rock geology, weathering rate and buffering capacity. For example, sites with an underlying geology of granite, gneiss and quartz rich rocks tend to be more susceptible.
Ammonia (NH ₃)	Ammonia is a reactive, soluble alkaline gas that is released following decomposition and volatilisation of animal wastes and from some chemical processes and vehicle exhausts. It is a naturally occurring trace gas, but ammonia concentrations are directly related to the distribution of livestock. Ammonia reacts with acid pollutants such as the products of SO₂ and NO_x emissions to produce fine ammonium (NH₄⁺) - containing aerosol. Due to its significantly longer lifetime, NH₄⁺ may be transferred much longer distances (and can therefore be a significant trans-boundary issue). While ammonia deposition may be estimated from its atmospheric concentration, the deposition rates are strongly influenced by meteorology and ecosystem type.	The negative effect of NH₄⁺ may occur via direct toxicity when uptake exceeds detoxification capacity and via nitrogen accumulation. Its main adverse effect is eutrophication, leading to species assemblages that are dominated by fast-growing and tall species. For example, a shift in dominance from heath species (lichens, mosses) to grasses is often seen. As emissions mostly occur at ground level in the rural environment and NH₃ is rapidly deposited, some of the most acute problems of NH₃ deposition are for small relict nature reserves located in intensive agricultural landscapes.
Nitrogen oxides (NO _x)	Nitrogen oxides are mostly produced in combustion processes. Half of NO_x emissions in the UK derive from motor vehicles, one quarter from power stations and the rest from other industrial and domestic combustion processes.	Direct toxicity effects of gaseous nitrates are likely to be important in areas close to the source (e.g., roadside verges). A critical level of NO_x for all vegetation types has been set to 30 ug/m³. Deposition of nitrogen compounds (nitrates (NO₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and nitric acid (HNO₃)) contributes to the total nitrogen deposition and may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification. In addition, NO_x contributes to the eutrophication of soils and water, altering the species composition of plant communities at the expense of sensitive species.
Nitrogen deposition	The pollutants that contribute to the total nitrogen deposition derive mainly from oxidized (e.g., NO_x) or reduced (e.g. NH₃) nitrogen emissions	All plants require nitrogen compounds to grow, but too much overall nitrogen is regarded as the major driver of biodiversity change globally.

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
	(described separately above). While oxidized nitrogen mainly originates from major conurbations or highways, reduced nitrogen mostly derives from farming practices. The nitrogen pollutants together are a large contributor to acidification (see above).	Species-rich plant communities with high proportions of slow-growing perennial species and bryophytes are most at risk from nitrogen eutrophication. This is because many semi-natural plants cannot assimilate the surplus nitrogen as well as many graminoid (grass) species. Nitrogen deposition can also increase the risk of damage from abiotic factors, e.g., drought and frost.
Ozone (O ₃)	A secondary pollutant generated by photochemical reactions involving NO_x, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sunlight. These precursors are mainly released by the combustion of fossil fuels (as discussed above). Increasing anthropogenic emissions of ozone precursors in the UK have led to an increased number of days when ozone levels rise above 40 parts per billion (ppb) ('episodes' or 'smog'). Reducing ozone pollution is believed to require action at international level to reduce levels of the precursors that form ozone.	Concentrations of O₃ above 40 ppb can be toxic to both humans and wildlife and can affect buildings. High O₃ concentrations are widely documented to cause damage to vegetation, including visible leaf damage, reduction in floral biomass, reduction in crop yield (e.g. cereal grains, tomato, potato), reduction in the number of flowers, decrease in forest production and altered species composition in semi-natural plant communities.

Source: Information summarised from the Air Pollution Information System (<http://www.apis.ac.uk/>)

- 3.27 SO₂ emissions are overwhelmingly influenced by the output of power stations and industrial processes that require the combustion of coal and oil. As such, it is unlikely that material increases in SO₂ emissions will be associated with the Fylde Local Plan. NH₃ emissions are dominated by agriculture, with some chemical processes also making notable contributions.
- 3.28 NH₃ can have a directly toxic effect upon vegetation, particularly at close distances to the source such as near road verges²⁹. NO_x can also be toxic at high concentrations (far above the annual average Critical Level) but generally only in the presence of elevated SO₂ which is very rare in the UK.
- 3.29 NO_x emissions, however, are dominated by the output of vehicle exhausts (more than half of all emissions). Within a 'typical' housing development, by far the largest contribution to NO_x (92%) will be made by the associated road traffic. Other sources, although relevant, are of minor importance (8%) in comparison³⁰. Emissions of NO_x could therefore be reasonably expected to increase as a result of greater vehicle use due to the Fylde Local Plan. High levels of NO_x and NH₃ are likely to increase the total nitrogen deposition to soils, potentially leading to deleterious knock-on effects in resident ecosystems. Increases in nitrogen deposition from the atmosphere can, if sufficiently great, enhance soil fertility and lead to eutrophication. This often has adverse effects on community composition and the quality of semi-natural, nitrogen-limited terrestrial and aquatic habitats^{31, 32}.
- 3.30 According to the Department of Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance, "Beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels *is not significant*"³³ (see Figure 1).

²⁹ http://www.apis.ac.uk/overview/pollutants/overview_NOx.htm.

³⁰ Proportions calculated based upon data presented in Dore CJ et al. 2005. UK Emissions of Air Pollutants 1970 – 2003. UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. <http://www.airquality.co.uk/archive/index.php>

³¹ Wolseley, P. A.; James, P. W.; Theobald, M. R.; Sutton, M. A. 2006. Detecting changes in epiphytic lichen communities at sites affected by atmospheric ammonia from agricultural sources. Lichenologist 38: 161-176

³² Dijk, N. 2011. Dry deposition of ammonia gas drives species change faster than wet deposition of ammonium ions: evidence from a long-term field manipulation Global Change Biology 17: 3589-3607

³³ TAG unit A3 environmental impact appraisal (publishing.service.gov.uk)

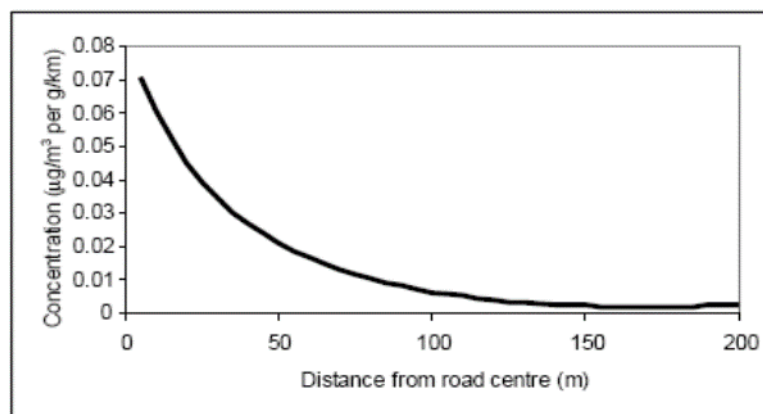


Figure 1: Traffic contribution to concentrations of pollutants at different distances from a road
 (Source: TAG unit A3 environmental impact appraisal (publishing.service.gov.uk) Summary)

- 3.31 There are several Habitats sites within and surrounding Fylde that may be sensitive to atmospheric pollution arising from road traffic emissions. Traffic-related air quality effects are generally considered most relevant within approximately 200m of a road. Habitats Sites containing nitrogen-sensitive habitats and located within this zone may therefore be vulnerable to increased nitrogen deposition and associated changes in vegetation composition and habitat quality. The relevance of this pathway to individual Habitats sites is considered further through the screening and Appropriate Assessment stages of this HRA.

Water Quantity, Level and Flow

- 3.32 Water levels, flow rates and hydrological processes are important factors influencing the condition of certain Habitats sites and their qualifying features. Changes to these processes can affect parameters such as water depth, salinity, oxygen levels and sediment transport, which in turn influence habitat quality and species composition.
- 3.33 Development can influence water quantity, level and flow through increased demand for potable water and changes to surface water runoff. Increased water abstraction to meet demand may affect hydrologically sensitive Habitats sites where they are connected to the same water resource system. In addition, the increase in impermeable surfaces associated with development can alter runoff patterns and increase peak flow levels within receiving watercourses.
- 3.34 Future development within Fylde will place additional demand on water resources and associated infrastructure. While water resource management is undertaken strategically through water company planning and regulatory controls, the potential for effects on hydrologically sensitive Habitats Sites must be considered as part of the HRA process.
- 3.35 Within the context of the Fylde Local Plan, this pathway is primarily relevant on a precautionary basis to wetland, estuarine and coastal Habitats Sites, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar and Sefton Coast SAC. Although direct impacts on water levels and flows within these sites are considered unlikely at the plan level, the potential for indirect effects through water resource demand and associated abstraction cannot be excluded without further assessment. Consequently, water quantity, level and flow is considered further within the screening and, where necessary, Appropriate Assessment stages of this HRA.

Water Quality

- 3.36 Increased development can lead to changes in water quality within rivers, estuaries and coastal environments through additional wastewater discharge and surface water runoff. These inputs may contain nutrients, sediments and contaminants which can affect the ecological functioning of Habitats sites.
- 3.37 Water quality is a key determinant of the condition of aquatic and estuarine habitats and the species they support. Changes in water quality can result in a range of impacts, including:

- Elevated nutrient levels (e.g. nitrogen and phosphorus) which may cause eutrophication, leading to algal blooms, increased turbidity and reduced oxygen levels
 - The introduction of toxic substances, including heavy metals and hydrocarbons, which can have direct and indirect effects on aquatic species
 - Changes in water chemistry which can affect species health, behaviour and reproductive success
- 3.38 Development can influence water quality through two primary mechanisms:
- Increased wastewater generation requiring treatment at wastewater treatment works which may result in increased nutrient loading to receiving waterbodies
 - Increased surface water runoff from impermeable surfaces which may carry pollutants into watercourses and estuarine environments
- 3.39 This pathway is particularly relevant to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar. These sites comprise extensive estuarine and coastal environments that receive inputs from surrounding catchments and may therefore be sensitive to changes in water quality arising from increased development and associated wastewater discharges.
- 3.40 Future growth proposed through the Local Plan will increase wastewater generation and place additional demand on wastewater infrastructure. The extent to which this could affect Habitats sites will depend on factors including wastewater treatment capacity, discharge permit requirements, receiving waterbody characteristics and the implementation of sustainable drainage and pollution control measures.
- 3.41 Given the scale of growth proposed by the Fylde Local Plan, and the potential for cumulative effects arising from development in neighbouring authorities, water quality is identified as a potential impact pathway requiring further consideration through the screening and, where necessary, Appropriate Assessment stages of this HRA.

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

- 3.42 While Habitats sites are defined by designated boundaries, many species, particularly mobile waterfowl rely on habitats outside these boundaries to support their life cycle. These areas, known as functionally linked habitat, may be used for activities such as foraging and roosting. Impacts on such habitats must be considered where they may affect the conservation objectives of the designated site, as established in case law including the Holohan ruling.
- 3.43 This pathway is particularly relevant to Habitats sites designated for mobile bird species, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar. These sites support internationally important populations of wintering and migratory birds that may utilise agricultural land, grazing marsh, coastal grassland and other open habitats outside designated boundaries.
- 3.44 The Fylde borough contains extensive areas of agricultural land located in close proximity to internationally designated estuarine habitats. Such land has the potential to provide supporting habitat for qualifying bird species associated with the Ribble Estuary and Morecambe Bay systems. As a result, development proposals located near these designations may result in the direct loss, fragmentation or disturbance of land that is functionally linked to the designated sites.
- 3.45 The potential importance of functionally linked habitat will depend on factors including habitat suitability, proximity to designated sites, known bird usage and the characteristics of the qualifying species. Not all agricultural or open land provides supporting habitat, and site-specific evidence may be required to determine whether functionally linked habitat is present.
- 3.46 Given the proximity of several Local Plan allocations to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar, loss of functionally linked habitat is identified as a key impact pathway requiring further consideration through the screening and, where necessary, Appropriate Assessment stages of this HRA.

Summary of relevant Impact Pathways

- 3.47 Having identified the potential impact pathways discussed in this chapter, Table 3 identifies the Habitats Sites for which a source-pathway-receptor relationship may plausibly exist and which are therefore taken forward to the Test of Likely Significant Effects (TLSE) stage. Inclusion within Table 3 does not indicate that likely significant effects will occur, but rather that the pathway requires further consideration prior to screening conclusions being reached.

Table 3: Impact pathways and relevant Habitats sites

Impact pathway	Habitats site (s) potentially affected
Recreational pressure	Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA Morecambe Bay Ramsar Sefton Coast SAC Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Liverpool Bay SPA (Precautionary)
Functionally Linked Land	Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA Morecambe Bay Ramsar Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar
Atmospheric pollution	Sefton Coast SAC Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar (Precautionary)
Water quantity, level and flow	Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA Morecambe Bay Ramsar Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Sefton Coast SAC
Water quality	Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA Morecambe Bay Ramsar Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Liverpool Bay SPA

4. Test of Likely Significant Effects (LSE)

Introduction

- 4.1 When seeking to identify relevant Habitats sites, consideration has been given primarily to identified impact pathways and the source-pathway-receptor approach, rather than adopting purely a distance-based or 'zones' approach. The source-pathway-receptor approach is a standard tool in

environmental assessment. For an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be present. The absence of one or more elements means there is no potential for an effect. Furthermore, even where an impact pathway exists, it may not result in likely significant effects if it cannot reasonably undermine the Conservation Objectives of the Habitats site.

- 4.2 The Fylde Local Plan proposes a range of housing, employment and mixed-use development across the borough. Potential effects on Habitats sites may therefore arise through increased population, traffic generation, water demand, wastewater generation and the loss or disturbance of supporting habitats.
- 4.3 Based on Natural England's Site Improvement Plans, Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives, published evidence, previous HRA work and professional judgement, the following impact pathways have been identified as requiring consideration. Details of these Habitats sites are provided in Appendix C.

Table 4: Potential Impact Pathways that Could Link the Local Plan to a Habitats Site

Habitats Site	Potential Linking Impact Pathways
Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA	Recreational pressure and disturbance of qualifying bird species
	Loss or disturbance of functionally linked habitat
	Water quality impacts
	Water quantity and hydrological effects
Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar	Recreational pressure and disturbance
	Loss of functionally linked habitat
	Water quality impacts
	Water quantity and hydrological effects
Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA	Recreational pressure and disturbance
	Loss of functionally linked habitat
	Water quality impacts

Morecambe Bay Ramsar	Recreational pressure and disturbance
	Loss of functionally linked habitat
	• Water quality impacts
Liverpool Bay SPA	Recreational pressure and disturbance
	Water quality impacts
Sefton Coast SAC	Recreational pressure
	Atmospheric pollution (nitrogen deposition)

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

- 4.4 Qualifying bird species of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site are known to utilise land outside the boundaries of the designated sites. Habitat used by qualifying species beyond the designated site boundary may form functionally linked habitat where it contributes to the ecological functioning of the site and supports qualifying populations.
- 4.5 Functionally linked habitat can include agricultural land, pasture, grazing marsh, wet grassland and other habitats used by qualifying bird species for feeding, roosting or other ecological functions. The loss, fragmentation or disturbance of such habitat has the potential to adversely affect the conservation objectives of a Habitats site, even where the land lies outside the designated boundary.
- 4.6 The previous Fylde Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment identified loss of functionally linked habitat as one of the principal impact pathways requiring detailed assessment in relation to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar site. The previous assessment identified a number of allocations where functionally linked habitat could not be ruled out and undertook Appropriate Assessment of these sites.
- 4.7 A detailed review of all proposed housing allocations has been undertaken for the current Local Plan. Consideration has been given to the proximity of allocations to designated sites, the nature of existing land use, field size and configuration, openness, degree of enclosure, relationship with the wider agricultural landscape and the potential for ecological connectivity with supporting habitats utilised by qualifying bird species. A detailed allocation-by-allocation assessment of functionally linked habitat potential is provided in Appendix B.
- 4.8 The assessment identified that a number of allocations comprise undeveloped agricultural land located within close proximity to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site or the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar site. In particular, allocations at Singleton (HA22, HA23 and HA24) and a number of allocations at Warton (HA4, HA5, HA6, HA7 and HA9) occur within landscapes that retain characteristics potentially suitable for supporting habitat associated with qualifying bird species.

- 4.9 Whilst a number of allocations are located within settlement-edge environments and are considered unlikely to make a significant contribution to supporting habitat, the absence of detailed bird survey information and the proximity of several allocations to internationally designated estuarine sites means that the potential loss or disturbance of functionally linked habitat cannot be excluded at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage.
- 4.10 Policies within the Local Plan provide safeguards for biodiversity, ecological networks and designated sites, including Policies ENT6 (Protected Coastal and Wetland Assets), ENT9 (Natural Assets on Development Sites) and CCH1 (Flood Alleviation, Water Quality and Water Efficiency). However, these policies do not provide sufficient certainty to conclude that effects on functionally linked habitat can be excluded for all allocations at the screening stage.
- 4.11 Applying the precautionary principle, likely significant effects arising from the loss or disturbance of functionally linked habitat cannot be ruled out. This impact pathway is therefore screened in and taken forward to Appropriate Assessment.

Recreational Pressure

- 4.12 Recreational pressure has been identified as a potential impact pathway for the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Sefton Coast SAC, Liverpool Bay SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site. Increased housing growth can lead to greater recreational use of sensitive coastal and estuarine environments through activities such as walking, dog walking, wildlife watching and informal recreation.^{34 35 36} Recreational activity can affect designated habitats through trampling, erosion and nutrient enrichment, whilst qualifying bird species may be disturbed through increased human presence, resulting in displacement from feeding and roosting areas and increased energy expenditure.^{37 38 39 40 41}
- 4.13 A substantial body of evidence has demonstrated links between housing growth, increased visitor numbers and recreational disturbance at designated nature conservation sites.^{42 43 44} Research has identified that bird species can respond to recreational activity through behavioural changes,

³⁴ Weitowitz D.C., Panter C., Hoskin R. & Liley D. (2019). *The effect of urban development on visitor numbers to nearby protected nature conservation sites*. Journal of Urban Ecology, 5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jue/juz019>

³⁵ Liley D., Clarke R.T., Mallord J.W. & Bullock J.M. (2006). *The effect of urban development and human disturbance on the distribution and abundance of nightjars on the Thames Basin and Dorset Heaths*. Natural England / Footprint Ecology.

³⁶ Liley D., Clarke R.T., Underhill-Day J. & Tyldesley D.T. (2006). *Evidence to support the Appropriate Assessment of development plans and projects in south-east Dorset*. Footprint Ecology.

³⁷ Taylo K., Anderson P., Taylor R.P., Longden K. & Fisher P. (2005). *Dogs, Access and Nature Conservation*. English Nature Research Report.

³⁸³⁸ Barnard A. (2003). Getting the facts – Dog walking and visitor number surveys at Burnham Beeches and their implications for the management process. *Countryside Recreation*, 11, 16-19.

³⁹ Taylor K., Anderson P., Liley D. & Underhill-Day J.C. (2006). *Promoting Positive Access Management to Sites of Nature Conservation Value: A Guide to Good Practice*. English Nature / Countryside Agency.

⁴⁰ Riley J. (2003). *Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland*. Scottish Natural Heritage.

⁴¹ Riddington R. et al. (1996). The impact of disturbance on the behaviour and energy budgets of Brent geese. *Bird Study*, 43, 269-279.

⁴² Weitowitz D.C., Panter C., Hoskin R. & Liley D. (2019). *The effect of urban development on visitor numbers to nearby protected nature conservation sites*. Journal of Urban Ecology, 5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jue/juz019>

⁴³ Liley D., Clarke R.T., Mallord J.W. & Bullock J.M. (2006). *The effect of urban development and human disturbance on the distribution and abundance of nightjars on the Thames Basin and Dorset Heaths*. Natural England / Footprint Ecology.

⁴⁴ Liley D., Clarke R.T., Underhill-Day J. & Tyldesley D.T. (2006). *Evidence to support the Appropriate Assessment of development plans and projects in south-east Dorset*. Footprint Ecology.

reduced feeding opportunities and displacement from important habitats.⁴⁵⁴⁶⁴⁷ Disturbance effects can be particularly significant where dog walking occurs in close proximity to sensitive bird assemblages or supporting habitats.^{48 49}

- 4.14 Previous HRA work prepared for the Fylde Local Plan considered recreational disturbance as a potential impact pathway.⁵⁰ That assessment referenced a Footprint Ecology visitor study undertaken for the Morecambe Bay Partnership, which found that visitors undertaking day trips or short visits from home travelled a median distance of approximately 3.454km to reach Morecambe Bay.⁵¹ The assessment concluded that recreational pressure was primarily a concern for developments located in close proximity to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site, together with areas of supporting habitat used by qualifying bird species.
- 4.15 More recently, Lancaster City Council, Westmorland and Furness Council and Wyre Borough Council commissioned a further visitor survey across Morecambe Bay to improve understanding of visitor origins, travel distances and recreational behaviour.⁵² The survey is intended to inform Local Plans and Habitats Regulations Assessments across the Morecambe Bay area and reflects ongoing recognition that recreational activity is an important consideration for the management of the internationally designated sites around the Bay.
- 4.16 In view of the available evidence, residential allocations located within approximately 3.5km of the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site, together with allocations where a plausible recreational pathway exists, have been screened in for further assessment. Allocations beyond this distance are considered unlikely to generate recreational activity of a scale sufficient to result in likely significant effects, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
- 4.17 Liverpool Bay SPA extends along the Fylde coastline and overlaps coastal waters adjacent to the Borough. The site has therefore been considered on a precautionary basis. However, the qualifying features are predominantly marine species and no direct pathways have been identified linking Local Plan development to the conservation objectives of the SPA. Accordingly, the likely significant effects can be ruled out and the site is screened out from further assessment.
- 4.18 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar are identified as vulnerable to recreational pressure within work undertaken for the Liverpool City Region authorities, including the Recreation Mitigation Strategy evidence base prepared by Footprint Ecology. This work identifies a core recreational catchment of approximately 5km and recognises the sensitivity of qualifying bird features to recreational disturbance. A number of allocations within Fylde occur within this broader catchment and, taking a precautionary approach, recreational pressure on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar cannot be ruled out at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage.

⁴⁵⁴⁵ Riley J. (2003). Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage.

⁴⁶ Riddington R. et al. (1996). The impact of disturbance on the behaviour and energy budgets of Brent geese. Bird Study, 43, 269-279.

⁴⁷ Gill J.A., Sutherland W.J. & Norris K. (1998). The consequences of human disturbance for estuarine birds. RSPB Conservation Review, 12, 67-72.

⁴⁸ Banks P.B. & Bryant J.V. (2007). Four-legged friend or foe? Dog walking displaces native birds from natural areas. Biology Letters, 3.

⁴⁹ Miller S.G., Knight R.L. & Miller C.K. (2001). Wildlife responses to pedestrians and dogs. Wildlife Society Bulletin, 29, 124-132.

⁵⁰ Arcadis (2018). Habitats Regulations Assessment: Fylde Local Plan to 2032 – HRA Report. Prepared for Fylde Council. July 2018.

⁵¹ Liley D., Underhill-Day J., Panter C., Marsh P. & Roberts J. (2015). Morecambe Bay Bird Disturbance and Access Management Report. Footprint Ecology for the Morecambe Bay Partnership.

⁵² Lancaster City Council, Westmorland and Furness Council and Wyre Borough Council (2025). *Morecambe Bay Visitor Survey Project*.

- 4.19 The studies for the Liverpool City Region have led to the development of an Interim Approach to recreation management whilst development of a longer-term Recreational Management Strategy (RMS). The Interim Approach includes both the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). These are fully costed, with the SAMM including additional staffing, public information and site infrastructure.
- 4.20 The Sefton Coast SAC has also been considered in relation to recreational pressure. Whilst the Liverpool City Region evidence base identifies both the Sefton Coast SAC and Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar as vulnerable to recreational pressure, the Sefton Coast SAC lies at a substantially greater distance from Fylde's proposed allocations and is separated from the Borough by the Ribble Estuary. Accordingly, whilst the evidence is relevant to understanding recreational pressure within the wider Liverpool City Region, it does not identify a credible recreational pathway between Local Plan growth in Fylde and the Sefton Coast SAC. Sefton Coast SAC is therefore screened out from further assessment in relation to recreational pressure.
- 4.21 Applying the precautionary principle, likely significant effects arising from recreational pressure cannot be ruled out for those allocations screened in. Recreational pressure in relation to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site is therefore taken forward for further consideration within the Appropriate Assessment. Liverpool Bay SPA has been screened out from further assessment because no credible recreational pathway has been identified.

Table 5: Allocation Screening for Recreational Pressure

Allocation	Relevant Habitats Site	Distance	Screening Outcome
HA22	Morecambe Bay Ramsar / Morecambe Bay & Duddon Estuary SPA	91m	Screened In
HA23	Morecambe Bay Ramsar / Morecambe Bay & Duddon Estuary SPA	274m	Screened In
HA24	Morecambe Bay Ramsar / Morecambe Bay & Duddon Estuary SPA	314m	Screened In
HA14	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	560m	Screened In
HA7	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	737m	Screened In

Allocation	Relevant Habitats Site	Distance	Screening Outcome
HA3	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	923m	Screened In
HA9	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1.63km	Screened In
HA8	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1.75km	Screened In
HA6	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1.82km	Screened In
HA5	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1.96km	Screened In
HA4	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1.98km	Screened In
MA1	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2.35km	Screened In
HA21	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2.63km	Screened In
HA20	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2.79km	Screened In
HA19	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3.10km	Screened In
HA18	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3.24km	Screened In
HA17	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3.28km	Screened In
HA2	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3.75km	Precautionary Screen In

Allocation	Relevant Habitats Site	Distance	Screening Outcome
HA1	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.00km	Precautionary Screen In
HA15	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.38km	Screened In
MA2	Liverpool Bay SPA	4.62km	Screened Out
HA11	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.71km	Screened In
MA3	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.14km	Screened Out
HA16	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.11km	Screened Out
HA13	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.26km	Screened Out
HA12	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.79km	Screened Out
HA10	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.96km	Screened Out

Atmospheric Pollution

- 4.22 Air pollution can affect Habitat sites through the deposition of atmospheric pollutants, principally oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), ammonia (NH₃) and associated nitrogen deposition. Elevated levels of these pollutants can result in eutrophication and acidification, potentially altering habitat composition and reducing ecological quality within sensitive habitats. Natural England and the Air Pollution Information System identify atmospheric nitrogen deposition as a key mechanism through which road traffic can affect certain terrestrial habitats.⁵³
- 4.23 Road traffic is the principal source of local NO_x emissions. As such, air quality effects associated with Local Plans are generally considered where growth would result in substantial increases in traffic flows on roads located close to air pollution-sensitive Habitats Sites.
- 4.24 Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA105 advises that beyond 200 metres from a road, the contribution of vehicle emissions to local pollutant concentrations becomes insignificant.

⁵³ Air Pollution Information System (APIS). Air Pollution and Environmental Impacts Overview. Available at: <https://www.apis.ac.uk/>

Consequently, air quality assessment within Habitats Regulations Assessment generally focuses on European sites located within 200 metres of affected road links.⁵⁴

- 4.25 The previous Fylde Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment considered atmospheric pollution as a potential impact pathway for Habitats sites within and surrounding the Borough. The assessment identified Bowland Fells SPA as the only European site with a theoretical sensitivity to air quality effects arising from Local Plan growth. However, as the SPA was located more than 15km from the nearest allocation site, the HRA concluded that any increases in atmospheric pollutant deposition would be negligible and screened the pathway out of further assessment. No likely significant effects were identified in relation to air quality. No evidence has been identified to indicate a materially different situation in relation to the current Local Plan.
- 4.26 A review of the proposed allocations and identified Habitats sites has been undertaken for the current Local Plan. The designated sites considered within this HRA comprise predominantly coastal and estuarine SPAs and Ramsar sites designated principally for their supporting habitats and internationally important bird populations. The allocations are not expected to generate traffic increases on road links where qualifying habitats occur within 200 metres and where significant changes in pollutant concentrations could arise. Furthermore, no evidence has been identified to indicate that implementation of the Local Plan would result in material changes in air quality capable of undermining the conservation objectives of the designated sites.
- 4.27 While allocations HA22, HA23 and HA24 lie in relatively close proximity to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, no strategic road links adjacent to pollution-sensitive qualifying habitats have been identified and implementation of the Local Plan is not expected to result in traffic increases of a magnitude capable of causing significant changes in pollutant concentrations at the designated site. Consistent with the findings of the previous Fylde Local Plan HRA, likely significant effects arising from atmospheric pollution can therefore be objectively ruled out.
- 4.28 In view of the above, and applying the precautionary principle, likely significant effects resulting from atmospheric pollution can be excluded, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects. Atmospheric pollution is therefore screened out from further assessment.

Water Quality

- 4.29 The quality of water supporting Habitats sites is an important determinant of the condition of qualifying habitats and species. Poor water quality can result in a range of environmental effects, including nutrient enrichment, reduced dissolved oxygen concentrations, increased turbidity and contamination from pollutants. Such effects can adversely affect aquatic and estuarine habitats and the species dependent upon them.
- 4.30 Development delivered through the Local Plan will increase wastewater generation and surface water runoff. Where receiving watercourses are hydrologically connected to Habitats sites, there is potential for impacts on water quality through increased nutrient loading, contaminated runoff and pressures on wastewater infrastructure.
- 4.31 The previous Fylde Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment identified potential hydrological linkages between watercourses within Fylde and a number of Habitats sites, including Morecambe Bay SAC, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site. The HRA concluded that adverse impacts on water quality were unlikely due to existing pollution prevention controls and development management measures and screened the pathway out of detailed assessment.⁵⁵
- 4.32 For the current Local Plan, water quality effects have been reviewed in relation to the scale of planned housing and employment growth, wastewater generation, foul drainage infrastructure, surface water management and the potential hydrological connectivity between development and designated sites. Given the increase in development proposed through the Plan and the

⁵⁴ National Highways (2024). *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges LA105: Air Quality*.

⁵⁵ Arcadis (2018). *Habitats Regulations Assessment: Fylde Local Plan to 2032 – HRA Report*. Prepared for Fylde Council.

precautionary approach required under the Habitats Regulations, likely significant effects on hydrologically connected Habitats Sites cannot be excluded at this stage.

- 4.33 The Local Plan contains a number of embedded safeguards that are relevant to this pathway. Policy CCH1 (Flood Alleviation, Water Quality and Water Efficiency) requires development to protect and improve water quality, safeguard watercourses and groundwater resources, promote water efficiency and incorporate appropriate flood risk and water management measures. Policy CCH2 (Surface Water Run-Off and Sustainable Drainage) requires the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), application of the drainage hierarchy, management of surface water runoff and measures to minimise pollution risks. In addition, Policy IFR1 requires development to be supported by appropriate drainage and utility infrastructure, whilst Policy IFR2 provides mechanisms for securing infrastructure and environmental mitigation where required.
- 4.34 While these policies provide important safeguards and are likely to reduce the risk of adverse effects on water quality, they do not remove uncertainty regarding the effects of increased wastewater generation and drainage demands arising from growth proposed by the Local Plan. Accordingly, likely significant effects cannot be ruled out at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage.
- 4.35 Water quality is therefore screened in and taken forward to Appropriate Assessment.

Water Quantity, Level and Flow

- 4.36 Water level, flow rates and hydrological processes are important determinants of the condition of Habitats sites and their qualifying features. Hydrological conditions influence habitat extent, salinity, water depth, dissolved oxygen concentrations and ecological functioning. In turn, these factors affect the suitability of habitats for qualifying plant and animal species and contribute to the maintenance of site integrity.
- 4.37 Development delivered through the Local Plan will increase demand for potable water and may influence drainage patterns through the introduction of additional areas of built development and associated infrastructure. Potential effects on Habitats sites could arise through increased abstraction for public water supply or through changes to hydrological regimes, including surface water runoff and flow patterns.
- 4.38 The previous Fylde Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment considered whether increased demand for public water supply could affect hydrologically sensitive Habitats sites. The assessment concluded that Fylde forms part of United Utilities' Integrated Water Resource Zone and that public water supply for the Borough is not dependent upon local abstraction sources directly connected to Habitats sites. The HRA therefore concluded that significant effects arising from water abstraction were unlikely and screened the pathway out of further assessment.
- 4.39 The previous HRA also considered hydrological linkages between development within Fylde and nearby Habitats sites and concluded that significant effects on groundwater and hydrological processes were unlikely due to the nature of local water supply infrastructure and the absence of significant abstraction pressures affecting designated sites.
- 4.40 For the current Local Plan, potential effects relating to water quantity, water levels and hydrological processes have been reviewed in relation to the proposed scale of housing and employment growth. Whilst no evidence has been identified indicating that implementation of the Plan would result in significant abstraction pressures affecting designated sites, the increased demand for water resources and associated drainage infrastructure warrants further consideration at the plan level.
- 4.41 The Local Plan contains a number of embedded safeguards relevant to this impact pathway. Policy CCH1 (Flood Alleviation, Water Quality and Water Efficiency) promotes water efficiency, sustainable water management and the protection of water resources. Policy CCH2 (Surface Water Run-Off and Sustainable Drainage) requires the use of sustainable drainage systems and appropriate management of surface water runoff. Policy ENT9 (Natural Assets on Development Sites) seeks to protect and retain watercourses, ponds and other natural assets that contribute to local hydrological function. In addition, Policy IFR1 requires development to be supported by appropriate utility and drainage infrastructure, while Policy IFR2 provides mechanisms for securing infrastructure improvements and environmental mitigation where required.

- 4.42 While these policies reduce the likelihood of adverse effects, uncertainty remains regarding future water supply demand and supporting infrastructure requirements associated with the scale of growth proposed through the Local Plan. Applying the precautionary principle, likely significant effects on Habitats Sites arising from water quantity, level and flow cannot be excluded at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage.
- 4.43 Water quantity, level and flow is therefore screened in and taken forward to Appropriate Assessment.

Summary

- 4.44 In summary, the following impact pathways will be the focus of the HRA:
- Recreational pressure affecting the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site;
 - Loss of functionally linked habitat associated with the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site;
 - Water quality effects on hydrologically connected Habitats Sites, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site and Morecambe Bay SAC;
 - Water quantity, level and flow effects on hydrologically connected Habitats Sites, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site and Morecambe Bay SAC.
- 4.45 Atmospheric pollution has been considered as a potential impact pathway. However, having regard to the findings of the previous Fylde Local Plan HRA, the nature and location of the identified Habitats Sites, the absence of strategic road links adjacent to pollution-sensitive qualifying habitats and the location of proposed allocations, likely significant effects arising from atmospheric pollution can be objectively ruled out. Consequently, atmospheric pollution is screened out from further assessment.
- 4.46 The full Test of Likely Significant Effects for Local Plan policies and site allocations is provided in Appendix A.
- 4.47 Liverpool Bay SPA and Sefton Coast SAC have been screened out at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage because no credible impact pathways have been identified that could undermine their conservation objectives.
- 4.48 The Local Plan contains a number of strategic policies that give rise to likely significant effects because they establish the scale, distribution and location of housing, employment, tourism and infrastructure development within the borough. These policies are:
- DST1: The Development Strategy;
 - SLD1: St Annes (including Squires Gate) Strategic Location for Development;
 - SLD2: Whitehills and Whyndyke Strategic Location for Development;
 - SLD3: Warton Strategic Location for Development;
 - SLD4: Kirkham and Wesham Strategic Location for Development;
 - SLD5: Non-Strategic Locations for Development;
 - HOU1: Housing Requirement and Supply;
 - HOU8: Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's Sites;
 - ECD1: BAE Systems, Warton;
 - ECD2: Westinghouse Springfields;
 - ECD3: Blackpool Airport and Enterprise Zone;
 - ECD4: New Employment Land Provision;
 - ECD8: Leisure, Culture and Tourism Development;

- ECD9: Tourism Accommodation;
 - IFR4: Transport Infrastructure Projects;
 - CCH3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation – Excluding Onshore Wind Turbines.
- 4.49 These policies have been screened in because they either facilitate housing growth, employment development, tourism development, infrastructure provision or other forms of development capable of generating impact pathways to Habitats Sites. The principal impact pathways identified comprise recreational pressure, loss of functionally linked habitat, water quality and water quantity, level and flow. These pathways are therefore taken forward to Appropriate Assessment.

5. Appropriate Assessment

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Ramsar

- 5.1 The qualifying bird species of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site are known to utilise habitat beyond the designated site boundaries. Such habitat may comprise functionally linked habitat where it contributes to the ecological functioning of the designated site and supports qualifying bird populations.
- 5.2 Functionally linked habitat associated with estuarine bird assemblages commonly comprises agricultural land, pasture, grazing marsh, wet grassland and other open habitats utilised for feeding, roosting and loafing. The loss or disturbance of such habitat has the potential to adversely affect the integrity of a Habitats Site where that habitat provides an important ecological function.
- 5.3 The Test of Likely Significant Effects identified loss of functionally linked habitat as a potential impact pathway for the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Morecambe Bay Ramsar site. A detailed allocation-by-allocation review was therefore undertaken, taking account of field size, openness, fragmentation, settlement influence, ecological connectivity and proximity to designated sites. The results of this assessment are presented in Appendix B.
- 5.4 The detailed review identified that the majority of allocations comprise settlement-edge sites, fragmented agricultural land or landscapes subject to a significant degree of urban influence. Whilst a number of allocations retain an agricultural character, many are relatively small field parcels, occur within fragmented landscapes or lack a clear ecological relationship with the wider estuarine environments associated with the designated sites.
- 5.5 The strongest candidates for functionally linked habitat were identified at the Singleton allocations (HA22, HA23 and HA24) and a number of allocations located on the northern edge of Warton (particularly HA7 and HA9). These allocations comprise larger areas of agricultural land, retain a greater degree of openness and countryside connectivity and occur within landscapes that exhibit characteristics potentially suitable for supporting habitat utilised by qualifying bird species.
- 5.6 Allocations HA14, HA5, HA6 and MA1 were also identified as retaining some potential to provide supporting habitat. However, these sites are more strongly influenced by nearby development, are generally smaller in scale and do not exhibit the same degree of ecological connectivity as the most suitable candidate sites. MA2 was also identified as retaining some limited potential due to its scale and the extent of agricultural land present, although its urban fringe context and lack of a clear relationship with estuarine habitats substantially reduces its suitability.
- 5.7 The remaining allocations assessed in Appendix B are considered unlikely to provide important functionally linked habitat. These allocations are generally characterised by one or more of the following:

- Strong settlement-edge influence;
 - Proximity to existing residential, commercial or employment development
 - Fragmented field structure;
 - Reduced ecological connectivity with estuarine environments;
 - Significant separation from the designated sites.
- 5.8 The assessment undertaken at the Local Plan stage has relied upon aerial imagery, site context and professional judgement. Detailed field survey information is not currently available for all allocations. Consequently, whilst the assessment identifies allocations that may warrant further consideration, it cannot definitively establish whether qualifying bird species utilise individual sites or determine the relative importance of any supporting habitat that may be present.
- 5.9 The Local Plan contains a number of embedded safeguards relevant to this pathway. Policy ENT6 (Protected Coastal and Wetland Assets) provides protection for internationally designated sites and their supporting ecological features. Policy ENT9 (Natural Assets on Development Sites) requires the protection and integration of existing natural assets, whilst Policy CCH1 (Flood Alleviation, Water Quality and Water Efficiency) supports the protection and enhancement of environmental assets associated with development.
- 5.10 In addition, individual planning applications will remain subject to project-level ecological assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment where required. Where suitable habitat is present, detailed wintering bird surveys and supporting ecological evidence can be secured through the development management process to determine whether qualifying species utilise a site and whether any mitigation or avoidance measures are necessary. The surveys of areas with the potential to be significant functionally-linked land should comprise a minimum of two seasons of non-breeding bird surveys to confirm whether or not they are significant (such as supporting at least 1% of the SPA population of qualifying species on a regular basis). If the land is functionally-linked then measures should be put in place to either preserve those areas or to enhance the foraging value of other habitat. The habitats in question are common and widespread, and it is common to mitigate loss of functionally linked land by enhancing other areas, as such, there is a high level of confidence that such mitigation would be possible. We recommend that the Local Plan supporting text to Policy ENT6 Protected Coastal and Wetland Assets is amended to reflect these requirements.
- 5.11 Where functionally linked habitat is identified at the project level, appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures can be secured through the planning process. Such measures may include retention of habitat, layout amendments, buffering, timing restrictions, habitat management or, where necessary, compensatory habitat provision.

Conclusion

- 5.12 AECOM recommends that the supporting text to Policy ENT6 is amended by adding the following as a precautionary measure: ***‘To be compliant with the Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), applicants are required to provide evidence that their development will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of Habitats Sites regarding the loss of functionally linked habitat for birds. To demonstrate this, a habitat survey should first be undertaken to confirm whether the habitats are suitable to be functionally-linked habitat. If so, non-breeding bird surveys covering autumn, winter and spring (typically constituting at least two survey seasons) will be required to determine if the development boundary supports close to, or reaching, 1% of the qualifying population of a species (of individually cited species, as well as those contributing to the wintering waterbird assemblage). If a development boundary is shown to be functionally linked to Habitats Sites, mitigation and avoidance measures will be required as part of project-level Habitats Regulations Assessments to ensure that developments do not result in adverse effects on site integrity.’***
- 5.13 Taking into account:
- The above recommendation;
- The detailed allocation-by-allocation review presented in Appendix B;

- The finding that the majority of allocations do not exhibit the characteristics typically associated with important functionally linked habitat;
 - The limited number of allocations identified as retaining moderate or higher potential suitability;
 - The embedded safeguards contained within Policies ENT6, ENT9 and CCH1;
 - The ability to identify, assess and mitigate any site-specific impacts through the development management process.
- 5.14 It can be concluded that the Fylde Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA or Morecambe Bay Ramsar site as a result of the loss of functionally linked habitat, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Recreational Pressure

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA/Ramsar

Background Evidence Base

- 5.15 The Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site support internationally important assemblages of overwintering, passage and breeding bird species that are sensitive to disturbance arising from recreational activities. Recreational pressure may arise from activities including walking, dog walking, wildlife watching and other informal recreational uses of coastal and estuarine environments. Disturbance can result in displacement from feeding and roosting areas, increased energy expenditure and reduced feeding opportunities for qualifying bird species.⁵⁶⁵⁷⁵⁸
- 5.16 Previous Habitats Regulations Assessment work undertaken for the Fylde Local Plan identified recreational pressure as one of the principal impact pathways affecting internationally designated coastal sites within and surrounding the Borough. The previous HRA referenced visitor survey work undertaken for the Morecambe Bay Partnership, which identified a median visitor travel distance of approximately 3.454km for visitors travelling from home to Morecambe Bay.⁵⁹ More recently, studies for the Liverpool City Region have identified a 5km core catchment in respect of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar sites.
- 5.17 More recently, local authorities surrounding Morecambe Bay have commissioned further visitor survey work to improve understanding of visitor origins, travel patterns and recreational behaviour. The continuation of visitor survey work reflects the recognised importance of recreational activity as a management issue for the designated sites and their qualifying features.⁶⁰
- 5.18 The evidence available therefore demonstrates that residential growth has the potential to contribute to recreational pressure where development is located sufficiently close to designated coastal sites and where suitable access opportunities exist. Recreational pressure was therefore screened in at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage and taken forward to Appropriate Assessment.

⁵⁶ Weitowitz, D.C., Panter, C., Hoskin, R. & Liley, D. (2019). *The effect of urban development on visitor numbers to nearby protected nature conservation sites.*

Riley, J. (2003). *Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland.*

⁵⁷ Riley, J. (2003). *Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland.*

⁵⁸ Gill, J.A., Sutherland, W.J. & Norris, K. (1998). *The consequences of human disturbance for estuarine birds.*

⁵⁹ Arcadis (2018). *Habitats Regulations Assessment: Fylde Local Plan to 2032 – HRA Report.*

⁶⁰ Lancaster City Council, Westmorland and Furness Council and Wyre Borough Council. *Morecambe Bay Visitor Survey Project.*

Assessment of Local Plan Growth

- 5.19 The Local Plan provides for housing and employment growth across a number of settlements within Fylde. A review of the proposed allocations identified that several allocations, particularly those located at Singleton, occur in relatively close proximity to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site. Other allocations within the Borough have the potential to contribute to recreational visits to the internationally designated sites through day-to-day recreational activities.
- 5.20 However, the available evidence indicates that recreational activity associated with new residential development is primarily influenced by proximity, accessibility and the availability of alternative recreational opportunities. The previous Fylde HRA concluded that recreational effects were principally associated with development located relatively close to the designated sites and supporting habitats.
- 5.21 Whilst the Local Plan will contribute to population growth within the Borough, the majority of allocations are not located immediately adjacent to the designated sites and many are associated with existing settlements that already provide access to a range of recreational opportunities. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of day-to-day recreational activity generated by new residents is likely to occur within existing public open space, parks, recreational facilities, public rights of way and other green infrastructure resources within the Borough.
- 5.22 A number of allocations, particularly HA22, HA23, HA24 and MA1, are located in close proximity to the Morecambe Bay designations, whilst allocations HA11 and HA15 are within 5km of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. However, the Local Plan does not in itself determine the design, access arrangements or recreational functionality of these developments. Any allocation progressing to planning application stage will remain subject to project-level HRA where a recreational pathway exists.

Policy Framework and Site-Level Safeguards

- 5.23 The Local Plan contains a number of policies that are relevant to the management of recreational impacts, although these policies are not relied upon as mitigation for the purposes of this Appropriate Assessment.
- 5.24 Policy ENT4 (Provision of New or Enhanced Open Space and Sports Facilities) requires qualifying development to provide recreational infrastructure and open space. Whilst not specifically designed as Habitats Regulations Assessment mitigation, this policy assists in ensuring that recreational opportunities are available within or close to new development.
- 5.25 Policy ENT6 (Protected Coastal and Wetland Assets) affords protection to internationally designated sites and their qualifying features, whilst Policy ENT9 (Natural Assets on Development Sites) supports the retention and enhancement of green infrastructure and natural assets within development sites.
- 5.26 It is acknowledged that Fylde is likely to contribute less to recreational pressure on the Morecambe Bay area given the very rural nature of the authority around the SPA/Ramsar site, and the fact that the main urban centres close to the SPA/Ramsar site are in other authorities. However, AECOM considers that, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, there is still a potential for harm to the integrity of the Morecambe Bay & Duddon Estuary SPA/Ramsar⁶¹ and Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. With regard to Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar these are identified as vulnerable to recreational pressure in work undertaken for the Liverpool City Region authorities ([Recreation Mitigation Strategy – Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service](#) and [LCR RMS EvidenceReport v24 Optv2.pdf](#)) which identified a 5km recreational catchment for all these sites including Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and the key urban centres of Fylde are close to this SPA/Ramsar site.
- 5.27 This has led to a developing Recreation Management Strategy and a current Interim Approach to recreation management being developed by each Liverpool City Region local authority, including costed strategic access management measures (e.g. wardening). West Lancashire Council has

⁶¹ [LCR RMS EvidenceReport v24 Optv2.pdf](#)

committed to working with the Liverpool City Region authorities to input to recreation management at the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site ([Recreation Mitigation Strategy - West Lancashire Borough Council](#))) and it is recommended that Fylde Council takes a similar approach.

- 5.28 Regarding Morecambe Bay & Duddon Estuary SPA/Ramsar it is noted that Lancaster City Council, Westmorland and Furness Council and Wyre Borough Council have undertaken visitor surveys to inform their Local Plan HRAs and potentially inform a mitigation strategy for recreational pressure. It is understood that this work is in its early stages and it is recognised that in contrast to those authorities the area of Fylde near to the SPA/Ramsar site is very rural with little housing and that the area of SPA/Ramsar in Fylde is not particularly accessible for recreation. Nonetheless, Fylde Council should maintain a watching brief regarding the emerging Morecambe Bay visitor survey evidence and any future strategic approaches to recreation management being developed by neighbouring authorities. It is recognised that Fylde is likely to make a relatively limited contribution to recreational pressure at Morecambe Bay when compared with the neighbouring authorities immediately adjoining the SPA/Ramsar.
- 5.29 Regarding the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar site, recreational pressure has been identified as a potential concern by the Liverpool City Region⁶² authorities and West Lancashire Council⁶³. These authorities have developed strategic approaches to recreation management for the SPA/Ramsar based on their respective evidence bases. These involve the local authorities developing a management plan (involving public education, additional facilities at Habitats sites, and additional staffing or signage) that is funded by developer financial contributions within 5km of the SPA/Ramsar. It is recognised that Natural England have identified that there is no current evidence that Fylde contributes significant visitors to the SPA requiring mitigation, but Natural England has also observed that this could be a result of limited survey coverage of the north bank of the Ribble Estuary. Given that Lytham St Annes is adjacent to the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, and Warton and Freckleton are within walking distance, it is quite possible that growth in Fylde will be a source of additional visitors in combination with West Lancashire and the Liverpool City Region authorities, although on a smaller scale than those authorities.
- 5.30 **Therefore, Fylde Council should produce a similar management plan for the SPA/Ramsar within Fylde. Fylde Council should produce a similar strategic recreation management measures for the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, unless updated visitor survey evidence, including coverage of the north bank of the Ribble Estuary, demonstrates little use of the SPA/Ramsar by Fylde residents. This may include the provision of SAMM such as public education, additional facilities at Habitats sites, and additional staffing or signage similar to those adopted in the Liverpool City Region⁶⁴.**
- 5.31 Development proposals within close proximity to Habitats Sites will remain subject to project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment where recreational pathways have the potential to arise. Policies ENT6 and ENT9 provide further protection for designated sites and supporting habitat, ensuring that site-specific mitigation can be secured where required.

Conclusion

- 5.32 Taking into account the findings of the existing evidence base, the location of proposed allocations, the availability of alternative recreational opportunities within the Borough and the wider policy framework protecting internationally designated sites, it is concluded that the Fylde Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar site, Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA or Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site as a result of recreational pressure.

⁶² [Recreation Mitigation Strategy – Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service](#)

⁶³ [Recreation Mitigation Strategy - West Lancashire Borough Council](#)

Water Quality

Impact Pathway

- 5.33 Implementation of the Fylde Local Plan will result in additional residential, employment and mixed-use development across the Borough over the plan period. Such development will increase foul wastewater generation and may increase the volume of surface water runoff entering the drainage network.
- 5.34 In the absence of appropriate wastewater treatment and drainage infrastructure, increased wastewater flows have the potential to adversely affect water quality within hydrologically connected watercourses and coastal waterbodies. Changes to water quality could subsequently affect the qualifying habitats and species of internationally designated sites.
- 5.35 A potential pathway therefore exists between development growth, wastewater generation, receiving waterbodies and the following Habitats Sites:
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA;
 - Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar Site;
 - Morecambe Bay SAC;
 - Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA;
 - Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site
- 5.36 The potential for adverse effects through water quality has therefore been considered through Appropriate Assessment.

Baseline Conditions

- 5.37 Water Framework Directive (WFD) evidence indicates that a number of waterbodies within the wider area currently experience water quality pressures.
- 5.38 The Ribble transitional waterbody is currently classified as having Bad Ecological Status. Continuous sewage discharges associated with the water industry are identified as a reason for not achieving Good Ecological Status and are linked to elevated dissolved inorganic nitrogen concentrations.⁶⁵
- 5.39 The Wyre transitional waterbody is classified as having Poor Ecological Status, with wastewater discharges also identified as a contributing pressure.⁶⁶
- 5.40 The Morecambe Bay coastal waterbody is classified as having Moderate Ecological Status. Water industry discharges, including continuous and intermittent sewage discharges, are identified among the factors contributing to the waterbody failing to achieve Good Ecological Status.⁶⁷
- 5.41 These classifications indicate that wastewater management remains an important consideration within the wider catchment and reinforce the need for future growth to be supported by appropriate wastewater infrastructure and surface water management measures.

Wastewater Infrastructure

- 5.42 The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies wastewater infrastructure as a key requirement for supporting planned growth within the Borough and recognises the need for ongoing liaison with infrastructure providers.

⁶⁵ [RIBBLE | Catchment Data Explorer | Catchment Data Explorer](#)

⁶⁶ [WYRE | Catchment Data Explorer | Catchment Data Explorer](#)

⁶⁷ [Morecambe Bay | Catchment Data Explorer | Catchment Data Explorer](#)

- 5.43 Evidence available from United Utilities indicates that wastewater generated from parts of Fylde, including Kirkham, is conveyed through the sewer network to Freckleton Pumping Station before being transferred to Clifton Marsh Wastewater Treatment Works.
- 5.44 United Utilities is currently delivering a £5.5 million infrastructure improvement scheme in Kirkham involving larger sewer pipes and a new underground storage tunnel capable of holding approximately two million litres of wastewater.⁶⁸ The purpose of the scheme is to provide additional network capacity during periods of heavy rainfall, reduce storm overflow discharges and improve receiving water quality.
- 5.45 The available evidence therefore demonstrates that wastewater infrastructure requirements are actively monitored and that investment is being delivered where network constraints or environmental pressures are identified.⁶⁹
- 5.46 In addition, United Utilities' Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) ⁷⁰process incorporates forecasts of population growth, housing delivery and climate change when planning future wastewater infrastructure requirements. The DWMP identifies a range of mechanisms for addressing future pressures including:
- Wastewater treatment upgrades;
 - Sewer capacity improvements;
 - Storage provision;
 - Surface water separation;
 - Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
 - Network management measures.
- 5.47 Consequently, there is an established strategic framework through which wastewater requirements are actively monitored and that mechanisms exist through which future infrastructure requirements can be identified and delivered.
- 5.48 United Utilities consultation responses on planning applications within Fylde consistently require development proposals to follow the drainage hierarchy, separate foul and surface water systems, manage sewer surcharge risks and utilise sustainable drainage systems wherever feasible. United Utilities identifies unnecessary surface water inputs to the sewer network as a key contributor to sewer flooding and storm overflow operation and continues to invest in improvements to wastewater infrastructure performance.

Mitigations and Safeguards

- 5.49 The Local Plan contains several safeguards relevant to water quality.
- 5.50 Strategic Policy IFR1 requires development to contribute towards infrastructure provision and mitigation where necessary.
- 5.51 Strategic Policy CCH1 requires sustainable water management, protection of water quality and the use of sustainable drainage systems.
- 5.52 The Flooding, Water Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems SPD further promotes sustainable drainage, minimisation of surface water inputs to combined sewer systems and protection of water quality.
- 5.53 No evidence has been identified that the relevant Habitats sites are subject to nutrient neutrality requirements. Furthermore, no evidence has been identified that Natural England has raised strategic concerns regarding wastewater infrastructure or nutrient impacts associated with

⁶⁸ United Utilities (2025). *£5.5 million investment in Kirkham to reduce storm overflows and improve water quality in the River Ribble*. News Release, 6 August 2025.

⁶⁹ United Utilities (2023). *Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2023*. United Utilities Water Ltd.

⁷⁰ United Utilities (2023). *Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2023*.

development within Fylde Borough. Recent consultation responses reviewed in support of this assessment have not raised objections relating to wastewater infrastructure or water quality effects on designated sites.

- 5.54 In addition, wastewater discharges remain regulated through the Environment Agency permitting regime and wastewater infrastructure planning is undertaken by United Utilities through statutory investment and planning processes.

Conclusion

- 5.55 The assessment identifies a pathway through which additional development could increase wastewater generation and potentially affect internationally designated sites via water quality impacts.
- 5.56 However, no evidence has been identified to indicate that the scale of growth proposed by the Local Plan would result in adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant Habitats Sites. Wastewater infrastructure planning is undertaken through established statutory processes, investment in wastewater infrastructure is currently being delivered within the Borough, and the Local Plan contains a robust framework of policies relating to infrastructure provision, sustainable drainage and water quality protection.
- 5.57 Taking these safeguards into account, it can be concluded that the Fylde Local Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay SAC, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA or Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, as a result of water quality effects.

Water Quantity, Level and Flow

Impact Pathway

- 5.58 Implementation of the Fylde Local Plan will result in additional residential, employment and mixed-use development throughout the Borough. Development has the potential to alter surface water runoff rates, increase pressure on drainage infrastructure and affect the movement and storage of water within hydrologically connected catchments.
- 5.59 In the absence of appropriate drainage and flood risk management measures, increased runoff and alterations to hydrological processes could potentially affect water-dependent habitats and species associated with internationally designated sites.
- 5.60 A potential pathway therefore exists between development, changes in runoff and drainage characteristics, and the following Habitats Sites:
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA;
 - Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar Site;
 - Morecambe Bay SAC;
 - Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA;
 - Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site.
- 5.61 Accordingly, the potential for effects on water quantity, hydrology and flood risk has been considered through Appropriate Assessment.

Baseline Conditions

- 5.62 Fylde Borough is characterised by low-lying topography and a number of areas are susceptible to flood risk from a combination of tidal, fluvial and surface water sources. The Council's evidence base recognises that climate change is likely to increase both the frequency and severity of heavy rainfall events during the plan period.

- 5.63 The Borough is served by an extensive drainage and wastewater network. Existing evidence identifies surface water entering combined sewer systems as an important issue in parts of the Borough, as excess surface water can increase pressure on drainage infrastructure and contribute to sewer surcharge and storm overflow operation.
- 5.64 The Council's evidence base recognises the importance of limiting unnecessary discharge to sewer infrastructure and reducing runoff rates in order to minimise flood risk and support the effective operation of drainage systems.

Drainage and Surface Water Management

- 5.65 United Utilities consistently requires development proposals to follow the national drainage hierarchy and to avoid the discharge of surface water to the public sewer wherever practicable. Surface water connections to combined sewers are regarded as a last resort and applicants are expected to demonstrate that more sustainable options have been fully investigated before sewer connections are considered.
- 5.66 United Utilities further requires foul water and surface water to be drained through separate systems and requires development proposals to incorporate measures to manage sewer surcharge risks where appropriate.⁷¹
- 5.67 The Flooding, Water Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems SPD similarly promotes the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and seeks to minimise unnecessary surface water inputs into combined sewer systems. The SPD identifies the importance of sustainable drainage for managing flood risk, protecting water quality and reducing pressure on wastewater infrastructure.
- 5.68 Strategic Policy CCH1 requires development proposals to:
- Minimise flood risk;
 - Incorporate sustainable drainage systems;
 - Manage surface water effectively;
 - Protect groundwater resources;
 - Protect and improve water quality.
- 5.69 These measures provide a robust framework for managing runoff associated with future development.

Infrastructure and Strategic Planning

- 5.70 United Utilities' Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) incorporates forecasts of population growth, housing delivery and climate change when assessing future infrastructure requirements. The DWMP identifies a range of potential interventions including sewer capacity improvements, surface water separation, storage provision and sustainable drainage measures where required to address future pressures.
- 5.71 The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies water and wastewater infrastructure as a key component of supporting future growth and recognises the need for continued coordination between development delivery and infrastructure provision.
- 5.72 Strategic Policy IFR1 requires development to provide or contribute towards the infrastructure necessary to support growth and enables infrastructure requirements to be addressed alongside development proposals where necessary.

⁷¹ United Utilities (2024). *Water Resources Management Plan 2024*.

Mitigation and Safeguards

- 5.73 Several safeguards exist within the Local Plan and wider regulatory framework which reduce the potential for hydrological and flood risk impacts.
- 5.74 These include:
- Strategic Policy IFR1;
 - Strategic Policy CCH1;
 - The Flooding, Water Management and SuDS SPD;
 - The national drainage hierarchy;
 - Requirements for sustainable drainage systems;
 - The requirement for separate foul and surface water systems;
 - Site-specific drainage assessments where required;
 - Environment Agency and Local Flood Authority oversight.
- 5.75 In addition, individual development proposals remain subject to site-specific flood risk and drainage assessment where necessary and can be required to incorporate further mitigation measures if local circumstances warrant additional controls.

Conclusion

- 5.76 The Local Plan contains a comprehensive framework of safeguards relating to flood risk management, drainage design, sustainable drainage systems and infrastructure provision. United Utilities requires development proposals to follow the drainage hierarchy, minimise surface water discharge to sewer systems and manage drainage through sustainable methods wherever feasible.
- 5.77 No evidence has been identified to indicate that the scale of growth proposed by the Local Plan would result in adverse effects on the integrity of the identified Habitats Sites as a result of changes in hydrology, water quantity or flood risk.
- 5.78 Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Fylde Local Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Site, Morecambe Bay SAC, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA or Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, as a result of water quantity, drainage or flood risk effects.

In-Combination Effects

Introduction

- 5.79 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires the effects of the Local Plan to be considered both alone and in combination with other plans and projects.
- 5.80 The purpose of the in-combination assessment is to determine whether the Fylde Local Plan could contribute to adverse effects on the integrity of Habitats Sites when considered alongside growth and development proposed elsewhere within the wider region.
- 5.81 In undertaking this assessment, regard has been had to relevant neighbouring Local Plans and supporting Habitats Regulations Assessments, together with strategic infrastructure planning undertaken by United Utilities through its Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) and Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP).

Plans and Projects Considered

- 5.82 The following plans and programmes have been identified as having potential to contribute to cumulative effects on Habitats Sites either through increased recreational pressure, wastewater generation, water resource demand or other growth-related pathways:
- Fylde Local Plan;
 - Wyre Local Plan⁷²;
 - Blackpool Local Plan;
 - Central Lancashire Local Plan (Chorley, Preston and South Ribble)⁷³;
 - Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan⁷⁴;
 - Other plans and projects previously identified through earlier Habitats Regulations Assessment work undertaken within Fylde Borough.
- 5.83 The principal impact pathways through which cumulative effects could arise are considered to be:
- Recreational disturbance;
- Water quality;
- Water quantity, level and flow;
- Loss or disturbance of functionally linked habitat.

Recreation

- 5.84 The potential for increased recreational pressure upon the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Site and Morecambe Bay European sites represents the principal in-combination pathway arising from population growth across Lancashire.
- 5.85 Neighbouring authorities are similarly assessing recreational effects through their own Habitats Regulations Assessments. Recent HRA work prepared for the Central Lancashire Local Plan identifies recreation pressure as a key pathway requiring consideration and recognises ongoing strategic work relating to recreational impacts at both Morecambe Bay and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries.
- 5.86 Blackpool and Wyre have also undertaken HRA of their Local Plans and no adverse effects on integrity were concluded subject to identified safeguards.
- 5.87 The Fylde Local Plan contains a range of measures which assist in reducing recreational pressure, including the provision of open space, green infrastructure and sustainable communities. In addition, any strategic recreational mitigation measures identified by Natural England or through cross-boundary working can be incorporated through future development management processes where required.
- 5.88 Having regard to the mitigation framework within the Local Plan, together with the HRA conclusions reached by neighbouring authorities, and with implementation of the recommendation made in this HRA regarding Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, no adverse effects on the integrity of the identified Habitats sites are anticipated in combination with other plans and projects.

⁷² Wyre Council (2021). *Wyre Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment*.

⁷³ Central Lancashire Authorities (2025). *Central Lancashire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Report: Screening and Appropriate Assessment*.

⁷⁴ Lancashire County Council. *Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment*.

Water Quality

- 5.89 Implementation of the Fylde Local Plan, together with growth proposed in neighbouring authorities, will increase wastewater generation across the wider catchment.
- 5.90 The potential for cumulative effects on water quality has therefore been considered in combination with growth proposed through neighbouring Local Plans, particularly within Wyre, Blackpool, Preston and South Ribble.
- 5.91 Wastewater infrastructure and treatment requirements across the area are planned and managed through United Utilities' statutory planning processes. The United Utilities DWMP incorporates housing and population growth forecasts and identifies infrastructure interventions required to meet future demand. The accompanying Habitats Regulations Assessment for the DWMP concluded that no adverse effects on the integrity of Habitats sites would arise, subject to appropriate consideration at subsequent project stages.
- 5.92 Similarly, the United Utilities Water Resources Management Plan incorporates local authority growth forecasts and its accompanying HRA concluded that no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites would occur either alone or in combination.
- 5.93 The Fylde Local Plan further contains safeguards through Strategic Policies IFR1 and CCH1, together with the Flooding, Water Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems SPD, which seek to ensure that development is supported by appropriate infrastructure provision and sustainable drainage measures.
- 5.94 Taking account of these safeguards and the strategic infrastructure planning framework provided by United Utilities, no adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant Habitats sites are anticipated in combination with other plans and projects as a result of water quality effects.

Water Quantity, Level and Flow

- 5.95 Growth proposed across Lancashire has the potential to increase demand for potable water resources and place additional pressure on drainage infrastructure.
- 5.96 United Utilities' Water Resources Management Plan has been prepared specifically to account for future growth, climate change and changes in water demand and confirms that growth forecasts prepared by local authorities are incorporated into water resource planning. The accompanying HRA concluded that implementation of the WRMP would not adversely affect the integrity of European sites either alone or in combination.
- 5.97 The Fylde Local Plan includes policies relating to sustainable water management, drainage, flood risk mitigation and infrastructure delivery. These measures, alongside statutory water resource planning processes, provide confidence that cumulative water quantity effects can be appropriately managed.
- 5.98 Accordingly, no adverse effects on the integrity of Habitats Sites are anticipated in combination with other plans and projects as a result of water quantity impacts.

Loss or Disturbance of Functionally Linked Habitat

- 5.99 Recent HRA work undertaken for the Central Lancashire Local Plan identified potential pathways associated with functionally linked land used by qualifying bird species of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Site, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site and Martin Mere SPA/Ramsar Site. Appropriate safeguards and mitigation measures were incorporated into that plan to address these pathways.
- 5.100 The Fylde Local Plan does not identify any strategic allocations within internationally designated sites and contains policies requiring protection of biodiversity, designated sites and ecological networks. Project-level assessment remains available where future development proposals have the potential to affect functionally linked habitat.

- 5.101 Consequently, no adverse effects on integrity are anticipated in combination with other plans and projects in relation to habitat loss, disturbance or functionally linked land.

Conclusion

- 5.102 The assessment has considered the Fylde Local Plan in combination with neighbouring development plans, strategic growth proposals and relevant water company plans and programmes.
- 5.103 Whilst cumulative growth will increase population, wastewater generation and recreational use of the wider environment, no evidence has been identified that these cumulative effects would result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Site, Morecambe Bay SAC, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA or Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site, provided that the recommendations made in this report are implemented regarding recreational pressure.
- 5.104 Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Fylde Local Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar Site, Morecambe Bay SAC, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA or Morecambe Bay Ramsar Site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Appendix A Likely Significant Effects (LSE) Screening

Table 6: Policy Screening

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
SET1: The Settlement Hierarchy	This policy establishes Fylde's settlement hierarchy comprising Key Service Centres, Local Service Centres, Tier 1 Larger Rural Settlements and Tier 2 Smaller Rural Settlements. The policy identifies the role and function of settlements across the borough and provides a framework for directing development in accordance with the wider Development Strategy.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy establishes a settlement hierarchy to guide the broad distribution of development and the role of individual settlements within the borough. It does not allocate development, establish a housing or employment requirement, or identify specific development sites. The policy is strategic and descriptive in nature and does not itself introduce any impact pathways to Habitats Sites.
DST1: The Development Strategy	This policy establishes the overall spatial strategy for growth within Fylde to 2042. It provides for a minimum of 6,656 new homes and 24.49 hectares of additional employment land and directs the majority of growth to four Strategic Locations for Development: St Annes (including Squires Gate), Whitehills and Whyndyke, Warton, and Kirkham and Wesham. The policy also provides for development in non-strategic locations and includes a windfall housing allowance.	Likely Significant Effects This policy establishes the overall scale and distribution of housing and employment growth within the borough and therefore has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
DST2: Settlement Boundaries	This policy defines settlement boundaries for settlements within Fylde and establishes the basis on which development proposals inside and outside settlement boundaries will be assessed. Development within settlement boundaries will be assessed against relevant Local Plan policies, whilst development outside settlement boundaries will be determined in accordance with policies relating to the Green Belt, Areas of Separation and Countryside.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy identifies settlement boundaries and provides a framework for directing how development proposals are assessed in different locations. The policy does not allocate development, establish a housing or employment requirement, or introduce additional growth beyond that provided through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. It functions as a spatial and development management policy and does not itself introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
DST3: Green Belt	This policy identifies the Green Belt within Fylde, as shown on the Policies Map, and confirms that development proposals within the designated Green Belt will be determined in accordance with national Green Belt policy.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy identifies and safeguards Green Belt land within the borough and does not allocate development or facilitate additional growth. The policy is protective in nature and seeks to restrict inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites and may assist in limiting development pressure on undeveloped land.
DST4: Areas of Separation	This policy designates Areas of Separation between Kirkham and Newton, and Wrea Green and Kirkham, in order to maintain settlement identity and prevent coalescence. The policy restricts development that would compromise the effectiveness of the designated gaps and establishes criteria for assessing proposals within Areas of Separation, whilst supporting appropriate rural uses, biodiversity enhancement, green infrastructure and recreation where these maintain the function of the designation.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is protective in nature and seeks to maintain settlement separation, openness and rural character between neighbouring settlements. It does not allocate development, increase the scale of growth or establish new development locations. The policy primarily restricts development and supports the conservation and enhancement of green infrastructure and biodiversity. No credible impact pathways

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		to Habitats sites are identified.
DST5: The Countryside	This policy identifies land outside settlement boundaries that is not designated as Green Belt or Areas of Separation as Countryside. The policy restricts development to specified forms of development that are appropriate to a rural location, including agriculture, forestry, rural businesses, tourism, re-use of existing buildings, rural exception housing and development associated with identified existing developed sites. The policy seeks to prevent urban sprawl whilst supporting sustainable rural communities and the rural economy.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is primarily a restrictive countryside policy that controls the types of development that may be permitted outside settlement boundaries. This is a criteria-based countryside policy that limits development outside defined settlements to specified rural uses and other forms of development appropriate to a countryside location. The policy does not allocate land, establish a quantum of development or direct strategic growth. Any development proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required. Therefore, no impact pathways to Habitats sites are identified.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
SLD1: St Annes (including Squires Gate) Strategic Location for Development	This policy allocates housing, employment and mixed-use development within the St Annes (including Squires Gate) Strategic Location for Development. The policy allocates land for approximately 389 dwellings, commercial development and employment uses, including land at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone and Queensway Industrial Estate, and identifies site-specific infrastructure, access, connectivity and environmental requirements.	Likely Significant Effects This policy allocates housing, employment and mixed-use development and therefore has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
SLD2: Whitehills and Whyndyke Strategic Location for Development	This policy allocates a range of residential, mixed-use and employment sites within the Whitehills and Whyndyke Strategic Location for Development. The policy provides for approximately 778 dwellings, commercial development and significant employment growth, including allocations at Peel Hill Farm, Whyndyke Farm, Whitehills Business Park, Peel Park and Blackpool and Fylde Industrial Estate. The policy also identifies site-specific requirements relating to infrastructure, connectivity, design, landscaping and environmental considerations.	Likely Significant Effects This policy allocates housing, employment and mixed-use development and therefore has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		• Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
SLD3: Warton Strategic Location for Development	This policy allocates a series of residential development sites within the Warton Strategic Location for Development. The policy provides for approximately 446 dwellings across seven housing allocations and identifies site-specific requirements relating to design, landscaping, pedestrian and cycle connectivity, green infrastructure, public open space and transport improvements.	Likely Significant Effects This policy allocates residential development within the Warton Strategic Location for Development and therefore has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
SLD4: Kirkham and Wesham Strategic Location for Development	This policy allocates a range of residential and employment sites within the Kirkham and Wesham Strategic Location for Development. The policy provides for approximately 1,038 dwellings and 4.49 hectares of employment land across a number of housing and employment allocations and identifies site-specific requirements relating to design, landscaping, green infrastructure, biodiversity, transport connectivity, drainage and supporting infrastructure.	Likely Significant Effects This policy allocates housing and employment development and therefore has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites. The following impact pathways are present:

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
SLD5: Non-Strategic Locations for Development	This policy allocates a number of housing and employment sites within the non-strategic locations identified in the settlement hierarchy, including Lytham, Freckleton, Staining, Weeton, Wrea Green, Newton and Singleton. The policy provides for residential and employment development and identifies site-specific requirements relating to design, landscaping, green infrastructure, biodiversity, transport connectivity, drainage and public open space.	• Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
		Likely Significant Effects This policy allocates housing and employment development across a number of locations within the borough and therefore has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites. The policy allocates development in a number of locations, including allocations at Singleton that are in close proximity to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Water quantity, level and flow
HOU1: Housing Requirement and Supply	This policy establishes the borough-wide housing requirement for the plan period 2026–2042 and provides for the delivery of a minimum of 6,656 net additional homes. The requirement will be met through existing commitments, allocated sites, and windfall development. The policy also commits the Council to maintaining a five-year housing land supply based on an annual requirement of 416 dwellings.	Likely Significant Effects This policy establishes the overall housing requirement for Fylde and provides the framework for the delivery of at least 6,656 additional dwellings throughout the plan period. As the policy directly facilitates population growth and housing delivery across the borough, it has the potential to result in impact pathways affecting Habitats stes. The following impact pathways are present: - Recreational pressure - Atmospheric pollution - Loss of functionally linked habitat - Water quality - Water quantity, level and flow
HOU2: Density and Mix of Housing	This policy establishes requirements relating to housing density, housing mix and the provision of housing for specific groups. It requires efficient use of land, sets expectations regarding the proportion of smaller dwellings, and establishes requirements for affordable housing, specialist housing for older people and self-build and custom-build housing within larger residential developments.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is concerned with the density, size, tenure and type of housing delivered

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		within residential developments already provided for through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. It does not allocate land, increase the overall quantity of housing development or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. The policy influences the form and composition of development rather than the scale of growth and therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Effects associated with housing growth are considered through Strategic Policy DST1 and Policies SLD1–SLD5.
HOU3: Affordable Housing	This policy requires qualifying residential developments to provide affordable housing, establishes affordable housing targets, tenure requirements and dwelling size expectations, and provides guidance regarding viability, off-site provision and delivery mechanisms. The policy seeks to ensure that new residential development contributes towards meeting identified affordable housing needs across the borough.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy relates to the provision, tenure, type and delivery of affordable housing within residential developments already provided for through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. The policy does not allocate land, increase the quantity of housing development, or alter

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. It influences the composition and affordability of housing rather than the scale of development and therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Effects associated with housing growth are considered through Strategic Policy DST1, Strategic Policy HOU1 and Policies SLD1–SLD5.
HOU4: Housing for Older People	This policy supports the provision of housing specifically designed for older people, including care homes, extra-care accommodation and specialist housing. It requires larger residential developments to provide a proportion of accommodation designed for older people and supports the delivery of specialist accommodation within accessible locations across the borough.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy relates to the type and form of housing delivered within residential developments already provided for through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. The policy does not allocate land, increase the overall quantity of housing development, or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. Instead, it seeks to ensure that a proportion of housing delivered is suitable for older people and supports independent living. The policy influences the composition of

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		development rather than the scale of growth and therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Effects associated with housing growth are considered through Strategic Policy DST1, Strategic Policy HOU1 and Policies SLD1–SLD5.
HOU5: Housing for Looked-After Children	This policy establishes criteria for the provision of accommodation for looked-after children. It seeks to ensure that new children's care accommodation meets identified needs within Lancashire, avoids harmful concentrations of similar facilities and does not adversely affect residential amenity or the character of the surrounding area.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is a criteria-based development management policy relating to a specific form of residential accommodation. It does not allocate land, establish a housing requirement, increase the quantity of development or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. The policy controls the circumstances in which proposals for children's care accommodation may be permitted and therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.
HOU6: Housing for Adults Requiring Care, Support or Management	This policy supports the provision of supported housing and specialist accommodation for adults requiring care, support or management where it can be demonstrated that there is an identified need arising from Fylde and where support is provided by the relevant care commissioning authority. The policy does not identify specific sites or establish a requirement for a particular quantity of development.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is a criteria-based policy supporting the provision of specialist accommodation for adults requiring care, support or management. It does not allocate land, establish a housing requirement, increase the overall quantity of development or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. Instead, it provides support in principle for specialist accommodation where an identified need is demonstrated and where proposals comply with other policies of the Local Plan. The policy therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
HOU7: Weeton Barracks Service Accommodation	This policy supports the enhancement, replacement and provision of accommodation and associated facilities for military personnel and their families within the Weeton Barracks site. It also seeks to ensure that development in the vicinity of the Barracks does not prejudice military operations or future expansion of the facility.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy relates to the management, enhancement and operation of an existing military facility and associated accommodation. It does not allocate land for general housing growth, establish a housing requirement, or alter the distribution of development provided for through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. The policy is primarily supportive of operational defence requirements and protective of the continued functioning of the Barracks. Consequently, it does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any future development proposals associated with the site would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.
HOU8: Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's Sites	This policy identifies existing Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's sites within the borough and supports the provision of additional pitches within existing sites where need is demonstrated. The policy also establishes criteria for new sites and supports the incorporation of Gypsy and Traveller or	Likely Significant Effects This policy supports the delivery of additional Gypsy

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
	Travelling Showpeople provision within allocated development sites where this assists in meeting identified needs.	and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation to meet identified needs within the borough. As the policy facilitates additional residential development, impact pathways associated with population growth cannot be ruled out. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
HOU9: HM Prison Kirkham	This policy supports development required for the continued operation of HM Prison Kirkham, recognising its role within the national prison estate. It supports operational development within the prison site, subject to Green Belt policy where applicable.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy relates to the continued operation and maintenance of an existing institutional facility. It does not allocate land, establish a housing requirement, increase the quantity of residential development, or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. The policy provides support for operational development

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		associated with an existing prison and any proposals would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required. Therefore, no impact pathways to Habitats sites are identified.
HOU10: Custom and Self-Build Homes	This policy requires larger residential developments to provide a proportion of serviced plots for custom and self-build housing and establishes requirements relating to delivery, infrastructure provision, occupancy and long-term implementation. The policy also supports the provision of custom and self-build plots on smaller sites where these are located in accordance with the Development Strategy and comply with other Local Plan policies.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy relates to the method and form of housing delivery within residential development already provided for through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. The policy does not allocate land, increase the quantity of housing development, or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. Instead, it requires a proportion of dwellings within existing allocations to be delivered through custom and self-build mechanisms. The policy therefore influences how housing is delivered rather than the scale or location of growth and does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Effects associated with residential growth are considered through Strategic Policy DST1, Strategic Policy HOU1 and Policies SLD1–SLD5.
HOU11: Rural Workers Homes	This policy establishes criteria for the provision of new homes in the countryside to meet the essential needs of rural workers. The policy requires applicants to demonstrate an essential functional need, a lack of suitable alternative accommodation, the long-term viability of the enterprise and that the scale and location of the dwelling are appropriate. Temporary accommodation may be permitted in connection with new rural enterprises.	No Likely Significant Effects This is a criteria-based development management policy relating to isolated rural workers' dwellings. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing requirement, increase the quantity of development planned within the borough, or alter the spatial distribution of growth set out elsewhere in the Local Plan. It allows development only in exceptional circumstances where a specific functional need can be demonstrated and therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
HOU12: Replacement of, and Extensions to, Existing Homes in the Countryside	This policy establishes criteria controlling the replacement and extension of existing dwellings in the countryside. It seeks to ensure that replacement dwellings and extensions remain proportionate, respect rural character and prevent the loss of smaller rural dwellings through excessive enlargement or redevelopment. The policy also restricts the replacement of dwellings previously converted from traditional rural buildings.	No Likely Significant Effects This is a criteria-based development management policy relating to alterations, extensions and replacement dwellings associated with existing residential properties in the countryside. The policy does not allocate land, increase the quantity of housing development, establish a housing requirement or alter the spatial distribution of growth provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan. Instead, it seeks to control the scale and design of development associated with existing dwellings and protect rural character. Consequently, the policy does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
HOU13: Conversions and Change of Use to Residential	This policy establishes criteria for the conversion of buildings and changes of use to residential accommodation. It requires proposals to demonstrate acceptable impacts relating to residential amenity, character, accessibility, parking provision, amenity space and design quality.	No Likely Significant Effects This is a criteria-based development management policy relating to the conversion of existing buildings to residential use. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing requirement, increase the scale of housing growth or alter the spatial distribution of development provided through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. It provides guidance on the assessment of proposals for conversion to residential use and seeks to ensure that such development is of an appropriate standard. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required. Therefore, no impact pathways to Habitats sites are identified.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
HOU14: Houses in Multiple Occupancy	This policy establishes criteria for the conversion of existing buildings into Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The policy seeks to ensure that HMO proposals do not adversely affect residential amenity, local character, parking provision, outdoor amenity space or waste management arrangements.	No Likely Significant Effects This is a criteria-based development management policy relating to the conversion and management of existing buildings as Houses in Multiple Occupation. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing requirement, increase the quantity of housing growth or alter the spatial distribution of development provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan. Instead, it controls the circumstances in which HMO development may be permitted and seeks to mitigate potential amenity impacts associated with such uses. Therefore, the policy does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
ECD1: BAE Systems, Warton	This policy supports the continued operation, development and expansion of the BAE Systems Warton site and the Lancashire Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Enterprise Zone. The policy supports development associated with advanced engineering, manufacturing and aerospace activities and seeks to safeguard the operational, security and aviation requirements of the site.	Likely Significant Effects This policy supports the expansion and continued development of a strategically important employment location and Enterprise Zone. The policy facilitates additional employment development and associated infrastructure at a site located in close proximity to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. Therefore, impact pathways to Habitats sites cannot be ruled out at the screening stage. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
ECD2: Westinghouse Springfields	This policy supports the retention and expansion of specialist advanced chemical processing and related activities at the nationally significant Westinghouse Springfields site. The policy also seeks to protect the continued operation and future growth potential of the site by restricting nearby development that could adversely affect its operation.	Likely Significant Effects This policy supports the retention and expansion of specialist advanced chemical processing and associated activities at the nationally significant Westinghouse

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Springfields site. As the policy facilitates further employment development and operational growth, impact pathways affecting Habitats sites cannot be ruled out at the screening stage. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
ECD3: Blackpool Airport and Enterprise Zone	This policy supports the continued operation and sustainable development of Blackpool Airport and the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. The policy supports the delivery of the Silicon Sands data and technology campus, the expansion of airport-related activity and the protection of existing employment uses within the Enterprise Zone.	Likely Significant Effects This policy supports significant employment growth within the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, including the development of the Silicon Sands data and technology campus and associated employment-generating uses. The policy facilitates additional commercial development and job creation within a strategically important employment location and therefore has the potential to

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		result in impact pathways affecting Habitats sites. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
ECD4: New Employment Land Provision	This policy establishes the employment land requirement for the period to 2042 and allocates a minimum of 24.49 hectares of employment land to meet identified needs. The policy allocates a series of employment sites throughout the borough and safeguards those sites for employment uses over the plan period.	Likely Significant Effects This policy establishes the borough-wide employment land requirement and allocates employment development sites across Fylde. The delivery of employment development may result in increased traffic movements, additional demand for water supply and wastewater infrastructure and, in combination with residential growth provided elsewhere in the Plan, may contribute to increased recreational activity. Therefore, likely significant effects on Habitats sites cannot be ruled out at the screening stage.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
ECD5: Protection of Existing Employment Areas	This policy identifies and safeguards existing employment areas within the borough for employment-generating uses. It seeks to retain existing employment land and premises by resisting their loss to alternative uses unless it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of continued employment use and the requirements of Policy ECD10 are satisfied.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is a safeguarding policy which seeks to protect existing employment areas from loss to alternative uses. It does not allocate additional employment land, establish an employment growth target, increase the scale of development, or identify new development locations. The policy concerns the retention and management of existing employment land and therefore does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any redevelopment or expansion proposals within existing employment areas would be subject to project-level assessment, including

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.
ECD6: Employment Opportunities and Commercial/ Employment Premises	This policy seeks to retain existing commercial and employment premises and supports the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses across the borough. The policy establishes criteria for the retention of employment uses and supports business growth where proposals are consistent with other policies of the Local Plan.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is primarily concerned with safeguarding existing employment premises and supporting the sustainable growth of businesses on a criteria basis. It does not allocate employment land, establish an employment growth requirement, identify specific development sites or direct strategic growth to particular locations. The policy functions as a development management and safeguarding policy rather than a development allocation or growth policy. Any development proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required. Therefore, no new impact pathways to Habitats sites are identified.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
ECD7: Town, District, Local and Neighbourhood Centres	This policy establishes Fylde's retail hierarchy, defines town, district, local and neighbourhood centres and primary shopping areas, and sets out the framework for assessing retail, leisure, office and other town centre uses. The policy seeks to support the vitality and viability of existing centres, promote a town-centre-first approach to development, safeguard retail frontages and support public realm improvements.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is primarily concerned with the protection, enhancement and management of existing centres within the borough. It does not allocate land for strategic growth, establish a housing or employment requirement, or identify a significant quantum of development. The policy directs development towards sustainable locations and seeks to protect the vitality and viability of existing centres through the application of sequential and impact tests. While the policy supports retail, leisure, office and commercial development in appropriate locations, it does not itself allocate development sites or increase the scale of growth planned for the borough. Consequently, no impact pathways to Habitats sites are identified. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Regulations Assessment where required.
ECD8: Leisure, Culture and Tourism Development	This policy supports leisure, culture and tourism development across the borough, including tourism infrastructure, coastal tourism, recreation, visitor accommodation, regeneration projects, rural holiday parks, public realm improvements and tourism-related facilities. The policy also supports development associated with the St Annes Masterplan, the Island Sea Front Area and major rural holiday parks.	Likely Significant Effects This policy actively promotes leisure, tourism and recreational development throughout the borough, including development associated with the coast, visitor attractions, holiday accommodation, recreation facilities and tourism infrastructure. Tourism and recreational development has the potential to increase visitor activity at coastal and estuarine environments and may contribute to recreational disturbance and other effects on Habitats sites. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
ECD9: Tourism Accommodation	This policy supports the retention and provision of tourism accommodation within the borough, including serviced tourist accommodation, short-term holiday lets, holiday caravans and camping pitches. The policy seeks to protect key holiday accommodation areas, support tourist accommodation in sustainable locations and maintain the tourism function of existing holiday sites.	Likely Significant Effects This policy supports tourism accommodation and visitor-related development within the borough. Increased tourism accommodation has the potential to contribute to additional visitor activity at coastal and estuarine locations and may increase recreational pressure on Habitats sites. The policy also supports limited expansion of holiday caravan and camping provision and therefore may contribute to cumulative visitor growth within the borough. The following impact pathways are present: • Recreational pressure • Atmospheric pollution • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
ECD10: Demonstrating Viability	This policy establishes the evidential requirements and assessment criteria that must be satisfied where proposals seek the loss of existing employment, commercial, retail, leisure or tourism uses. The policy requires applicants to demonstrate that existing uses are no longer viable, suitable or in demand and sets out detailed marketing requirements where these are relied upon as justification for a change of use.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is a criteria-based safeguarding policy which seeks to retain existing

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		employment, commercial, leisure and tourism uses unless robust evidence demonstrates that continued use is no longer viable or appropriate. The policy does not allocate development, establish a housing or employment requirement, increase the scale of growth, or identify new development locations. Instead, it acts as a restrictive policy controlling the circumstances under which changes of use may occur. The policy therefore does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.
ENT1: Historic Environment	This policy seeks to conserve, protect and where appropriate enhance Fylde's designated and non-designated heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens, locally important heritage assets and archaeological remains. The policy establishes a framework for assessing development proposals affecting heritage assets and seeks to safeguard their significance, setting and character.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is a protective policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. It does not allocate land, establish a

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		housing or employment requirement, identify development sites or facilitate additional growth within the borough. Instead, it seeks to restrict development that would adversely affect heritage assets and provides criteria for assessing proposals affecting the historic environment. The policy is therefore protective in nature and does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Development proposals brought forward under the policy would remain subject to the requirements of the wider Local Plan and, where necessary, project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment.
ENT2: Local Green Space	This policy identifies and designates a number of strategically important Local Green Spaces within the borough, including Lowther Gardens, Lytham Green, Fairhaven Lake and Gardens, Memorial Park and The Green at Wrea Green. The policy seeks to protect these areas from development that would result in their loss, harm their important features or undermine the purposes of their designation.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is protective in nature and seeks to preserve and enhance important areas of green infrastructure and public open space. It does not allocate land for development, establish a housing or employment

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		requirement, facilitate growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it restricts development that would adversely affect designated Local Green Spaces and contributes to the protection of environmental assets within the borough. The policy therefore does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites and no likely significant effects are identified.
ENT3: Protecting Existing Open Space and Sports Facilities	This policy seeks to prevent unacceptable noise, vibration and odour impacts arising from development. It requires development to protect sensitive receptors, including residential communities, designated nature conservation sites, National Landscapes and heritage assets, apply the agent of change principle where relevant, and demonstrate that potential impacts can be avoided, reduced or mitigated through appropriate assessment and mitigation measures.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is protective in nature and seeks to safeguard existing open space, sports facilities, allotments and green infrastructure assets from loss or inappropriate development. It does not allocate land for development, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it seeks to retain and enhance open space provision, recreational

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		assets and public access networks across the borough. The policy therefore does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitatssites and no likely significant effects are identified. Furthermore, the protection and enhancement of open space may assist in supporting recreational opportunities within the borough and contribute positively to green infrastructure provision.
ENT4: Provision of New or Enhanced Open Space and Sports Facilities	This policy requires the provision of open space within qualifying residential developments and supports the delivery of new and enhanced sports facilities. It establishes minimum open space standards for housing developments, enables financial contributions towards off-site provision and enhancement where appropriate, and supports the provision of sports facilities in accessible locations.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy relates to the provision, enhancement and maintenance of open space and sports facilities associated with development already provided for through the Development Strategy and site allocation policies. The policy does not allocate land, increase the quantity of housing or employment development, or alter the spatial distribution of growth within the borough. Instead, it seeks to ensure that new development is supported by appropriate open space and recreation infrastructure.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
ENT5: Loss of Community, Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Services	This policy seeks to protect existing community, health, leisure and cultural facilities and services from loss to alternative uses. The policy requires applicants to demonstrate that a facility is no longer needed and to undertake marketing in accordance with Policy ECD10 before alternative uses can be considered.	The policy is considered likely to have a neutral or potentially beneficial effect in HRA terms because the provision of accessible open space and recreational opportunities within development sites may help to reduce recreational pressure on sensitive Habitats sites. The policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats Sites and therefore no likely significant effects are identified. No Likely Significant Effects This policy is a safeguarding policy that seeks to retain community, health, leisure and cultural facilities within the borough. It does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate growth or identify new development locations. Instead, the policy resists the loss of existing facilities and requires evidence that continued use is no longer viable before alternative uses can be considered.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		The policy is therefore protective in nature and does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals brought forward under this policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required.
ENT6: Protected Coastal and Wetland Assets	This policy identifies and protects internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites within Fylde, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, Morecambe Bay Ramsar, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the Lytham St Annes Dunes Local Nature Reserve and Biological Heritage Sites. The policy seeks to conserve these ecological assets and ensure they are afforded the appropriate level of protection. The policy includes specific requirements relating to the assessment of functionally linked habitat and project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment where relevant.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is protective in nature and seeks to safeguard internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites and their ecological interest features. The policy does not allocate development, facilitate growth, establish a housing or employment requirement, or identify new development locations within the borough. Instead, it provides protection for habitats and species that are already subject to statutory and policy safeguards. The policy is therefore likely to have a neutral or beneficial effect in relation to Habitats sites and does not introduce any new impact pathways. No

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
ENT7: Coastal Change Management Areas	This policy identifies Coastal Change Management Areas and restricts development within them to proposals that require a coastal location, are appropriate to the open character of the coast, support coastal conservation and enhancement, and accord with the Development Strategy. The policy also seeks to protect coastal processes, support habitat creation and enhancement, and secure developer contributions towards the management of coastal habitats and Local Nature Reserves.	likely significant effects are identified. No Likely Significant Effects This policy is principally protective in nature and seeks to manage development within environmentally sensitive coastal areas. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate strategic growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it restricts development and requires proposals to demonstrate compatibility with coastal conservation objectives, including compliance with the Habitats Regulations where relevant. The policy also promotes habitat conservation, habitat creation and enhancement measures and requires project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment for relevant proposals. As such, the policy is expected to have a neutral or beneficial effect with respect to Habitats sites and does not introduce any new impact pathways.

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
ENT8: Landscape	This policy seeks to protect and enhance the landscape character of Fylde. It requires development to respond appropriately to its landscape context, retain and enhance existing landscape features, provide landscaping and buffer planting where appropriate, and ensure the long-term management of landscape features and planting schemes.	Therefore, no likely significant effects are identified. No Likely Significant Effects This policy is protective in nature and seeks to conserve and enhance landscape character, existing landscape features and green infrastructure. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it requires development already provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan to incorporate landscaping, retain existing features and minimise visual impacts on the countryside. The policy therefore does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Furthermore, the retention and enhancement of landscape features, including hedgerows, trees, ponds and green infrastructure, may provide ecological benefits and contribute to wider environmental enhancement. Accordingly, no likely

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		significant effects on Habitats sites are identified.
ENT9: Natural Assets on Development Sites	This policy seeks to protect, retain and enhance natural assets within development sites, including trees, woodland, hedgerows, ponds and watercourses. The policy requires these features to inform site design from the outset and promotes their long-term protection, management and integration into green infrastructure and public open space provision.	No Likely Significant Effects. This policy is protective in nature and seeks to conserve and enhance existing natural features within development sites. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it requires development already provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan to retain and integrate natural assets, protect biodiversity features and avoid unnecessary impacts on watercourses and other ecological resources. The policy is expected to have a neutral or beneficial effect in relation to Habitats sites as it promotes the retention and enhancement of ecological features, biodiversity corridors and green infrastructure. Consequently, the policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		and no likely significant effects are identified.
IFR1: Service Accessibility and Infrastructure	This policy supports the provision of infrastructure required to serve new development and requires development proposals to demonstrate how necessary infrastructure, services and facilities will be delivered. The policy seeks to ensure that development is supported by appropriate transport, communications, drainage, utility and community infrastructure and promotes sustainable access to services.	No Likely Significant Effects This policy is an infrastructure delivery and development management policy that seeks to ensure that development already provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan is supported by appropriate infrastructure. It does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it requires development proposals to provide or contribute towards necessary infrastructure and services and promotes sustainable accessibility. The policy is therefore supportive and mitigatory in nature and does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any infrastructure proposals brought forward under the policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		Regulations Assessment where required.
IFR2: Developer Contributions	This policy requires development to contribute towards the mitigation of its impacts on infrastructure, services, the environment and community facilities through planning obligations where appropriate. It identifies the range of infrastructure and community facilities that may require developer contributions and sets out the approach to viability assessments where contributions may affect development deliverability.	No likely significant effects This policy is a mitigation and infrastructure delivery policy that seeks to ensure development contributes towards the provision of infrastructure, services and environmental improvements required to support growth already identified elsewhere in the Local Plan. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, the policy provides a mechanism for securing infrastructure, environmental mitigation and community benefits associated with development. In particular, the policy supports contributions towards green infrastructure, biodiversity enhancement, flood management and environmentally sensitive areas. Consequently, the policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites and may assist

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		in mitigating effects arising from development. No likely significant effects are identified.
IFR3: Protection of Strategic National Infrastructure	This policy seeks to safeguard strategically important national infrastructure within Fylde, including MOD Inskip, Weeton Barracks, National Gas Pipelines, the Shell North Western Ethylene Pipeline, Warton Aerodrome, Blackpool Airport, Westinghouse Springfields and HM Prison Kirkham. The policy resists development that would prejudice the safety, operation or future functioning of these facilities.	No likely significant effects This policy is a safeguarding policy intended to protect nationally important infrastructure from inappropriate development that could compromise its operation or safety. It does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it restricts development that could adversely affect the operation of strategic infrastructure. The policy is therefore protective in nature and does not introduce any impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any proposals associated with the infrastructure identified in the policy would be subject to project-level assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment where required. Consequently, no likely

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		significant effects are identified.
IFR4: Transport Infrastructure Projects	This policy supports the delivery of strategic transport infrastructure projects within Fylde, including the T5 Link Road, improvements to the South Fylde Railway Line, parking provision at Kirkham and Wesham Railway Station, accessibility improvements at Squires Gate Railway Station and measures to improve the A585 and M55 Junction 3. The policy also safeguards land required for the delivery of these schemes and supports developer contributions where appropriate.	Likely Significant Effects This policy supports the delivery of strategic transport infrastructure projects which have the potential to influence traffic flows, accessibility and travel patterns across the borough. Transport infrastructure schemes may result in changes to vehicle movements and associated air quality effects and may facilitate development and growth provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan. The following impact pathways are present: • Atmospheric pollution • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow
IFR5: Enhancing Sustainable Transport Choice	This policy promotes sustainable transport and active travel by requiring developments to incorporate pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, improve access to public transport, provide links to rights of way, support travel planning and contribute towards transport mitigation where necessary.	No likely significant effects This policy seeks to encourage sustainable travel choices and reduce reliance on private vehicles associated with development already provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it requires development to incorporate measures that promote walking, cycling and public transport use, together with appropriate transport mitigation. The policy is mitigatory in nature and is intended to reduce transport-related impacts arising from development. It does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites and may contribute to reducing traffic-related effects through encouraging sustainable modes of transport. Therefore, no likely significant effects on Habitats Sites are identified.
IFR6: Parking Provision	This policy establishes the approach to parking provision for new development within Fylde. It requires development to comply with adopted parking standards, promotes on-site parking where possible, allows flexibility based on location and accessibility, and seeks to avoid adverse impacts on highway safety and residential amenity.	No likely significant effects This policy is a development management policy relating to the provision and design of parking associated with development already provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it provides criteria for assessing parking provision and seeks to ensure development does not adversely affect highway safety or amenity. The policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites. Any development proposals subject to the policy would be assessed through the wider planning process and, where necessary, project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment. Therefore, no likely significant effects are identified.
DSA1: Achieving Good Design in Development	This policy establishes design principles and development management criteria relating to the design, layout, appearance, accessibility, amenity, public realm, landscaping, climate change adaptation, transport, parking, flood risk and waste management of new development. The policy seeks to ensure that development is of a high quality design and responds appropriately to its context.	No likely significant effects This policy is a criteria-based design and development management policy that applies to development permitted through other policies of the Local Plan. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it seeks to ensure that development is designed and implemented to

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		a high standard and minimises adverse impacts on the environment, amenity, heritage assets and green infrastructure. The policy is primarily protective and mitigatory in nature and includes provisions relating to sustainable transport, protection of natural assets, green infrastructure, climate change adaptation and flood risk. Consequently, the policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites and no likely significant effects are identified.
CCH1: Flood Alleviation, Water Quality and Water Efficiency	This policy seeks to minimise flood risk, protect and improve water quality, promote water efficiency and support climate change adaptation. It requires development to apply the sequential approach to flood risk, incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), protect watercourses and groundwater resources, manage surface water appropriately and avoid adverse effects on water quality.	No likely significant effects This policy is a protective and mitigatory policy intended to reduce flood risk, safeguard water resources and improve water quality. It does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, the policy seeks to ensure that development delivered through other Local Plan policies incorporates appropriate measures to manage flood risk, protect

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		water environments and improve resilience to climate change. The policy is likely to have a neutral or beneficial effect in relation to Habitats sites. In particular, it seeks to protect surface water and groundwater quality, reduce pollution risks, retain water efficiency and support sustainable drainage solutions. Consequently, the policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites and no likely significant effects are identified.
CCH2: Surface Water Run-Off and Sustainable Drainage	This policy requires development to manage surface water through sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), apply the drainage hierarchy, minimise surface water run-off, avoid discharge to combined sewers and secure the long-term management and maintenance of drainage infrastructure. It seeks to reduce flood risk, improve water quality and ensure that development does not increase downstream flooding or place additional pressure on drainage infrastructure.	No likely significant effects. This policy is a flood risk and water management policy that seeks to reduce surface water run-off, improve water quality and minimise pressure on drainage and sewerage infrastructure. The policy does not allocate land, establish a housing or employment requirement, facilitate additional growth or identify new development locations. Instead, it requires development already

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		provided for elsewhere in the Local Plan to incorporate sustainable drainage measures and manage surface water appropriately. The policy is protective and mitigatory in nature and is likely to have a neutral or beneficial effect in relation to Habitats sites through reducing pollution risks, managing run-off and protecting receiving water environments. Consequently, the policy does not introduce any new impact pathways to Habitats sites and no likely significant effects are identified.
CCH3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation – Excluding Onshore Wind Turbines	This policy supports renewable and low carbon energy development within Fylde and establishes criteria against which proposals will be assessed. The policy supports the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure, whilst requiring consideration of environmental, landscape, heritage, ecological, aviation, transport and flood risk impacts.	Likely significant effects This policy supports renewable and low carbon energy development within the borough. Whilst proposals are subject to environmental safeguards and detailed assessment, the policy facilitates development that may affect habitats, species, functionally linked land and ecological networks associated with Habitats sites. The policy explicitly recognises the potential for impacts on Habitats sites and

Policy	Policy Description	Screening Outcome
		functionally linked habitat and requires project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment where appropriate. Plan. The following impact pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water quality • Water quantity, level and flow

Table 7: Screening of Site Allocations

The screening presented in Table 7 represents a Test of Likely Significant Effects (TLSE) assessment. The purpose of this stage is to identify allocations for which a potential source-pathway-receptor relationship cannot be excluded at a precautionary level and which therefore require further consideration through subsequent stages of the HRA. The presence of a pathway at this stage does not indicate that likely significant effects will occur or that an allocation will result in adverse effects on site integrity.

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA1	Blackpool South Caravan & Motorhome Club, Whitehills	48	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3,996m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA2	Madhuban, Cropper Road, Whitehills	30	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3,748m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA3	258 Lytham Road, Warton	19	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	923m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA4	Pickforal Kennels, Hillock Lane, Warton	14	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1,977m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA5	Off Hillock Lane, Warton	40	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1,957m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA6	Hill House, Hillock Lane, Warton	44	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1,824m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA7	Land North of Ennerdale Avenue, Warton	106	Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	737m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA8	Snowdrop Grove, Warton	3	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1,752m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA9	Land North of Hillock Lane, Warton	182	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	1,630m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA10	East of Fleetwood Road, Wesham	281	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5,956m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA11	South of Mowbreck Lane, Wesham	229	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4,709m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA12	Land East of Fleetwood Road and North of Sanderling Way, Wesham	61	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5,793m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA13	Land at Weeton Road, Wesham	467	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5,256m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA14	Land at Naze Lane East & Green Lane, Freckleton	12	Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	560m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA15	Land to the Rear of Showmans Park Campsite, Chain Lane, Staining	77	Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA / Morecambe Bay Ramsar	4,381m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA16	East of Church Road and South of Kirkham Road, Weeton	163	Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA / Morecambe Bay Ramsar	5,108m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA17	Land West of Bryning Lane, Wrea Green	36	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3,280m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA18	Land Off Moss Side Lane, Wrea Green	69	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3,240m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA19	Land East of Bryning Lane, Wrea Green	38	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	3,096m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA20	Land South of Blackpool Road, Newton	118	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2,786m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA21	Newton Hall, Newton	96	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2,628m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA22	Land West of Poolfoot Farm, Singleton	69	Morecambe Bay Ramsar; Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA	91m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
HA23	South of Garstang Road, Singleton	76	Morecambe Bay Ramsar; Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA	274m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
HA24	Lodge Lane, Singleton	71	Morecambe Bay Ramsar; Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA	314m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
MA1	Land adjacent Lytham St Annes Way (B5410), St Annes	389 dwellings, 2.06 ha commercial	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2.35km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
MA2	Whyndyke Farm, Preston New Road	Residential, Storage / distribution / industry, Retail, Open space / sport / community use 20 ha employment	Liverpool Bay SPA	4.62km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
MA3	Land at Peel Hill Farm, Whitehills	700 dwellings, 0.1ha retail	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.14km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow • Recreational Pressure
EA2	Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, Squires Gate	14.14ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	678m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow
EA1	Queensway Industrial Estate, Snowden Road, St Annes	3.81ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	2.4km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
EA3	Whitehills Business Park, Whitehills	3.59ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.43km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow
EA4	Land adjacent to Whitehills Business Park	2.08ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.35km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow
EA5	Peel Park, Brunel Way, Whitehills	8.95ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.20km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
EA6	Blackpool and Fylde Industrial Estate, Whitehills	2.42ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	4.14km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow
EA7	Land south of Bradkirk Business Park, Weeton Road, Wesham	4.49ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	5.47km	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow
EA8	Dock Road, Lytham	0.16ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	154m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow

Allocation Reference	Site	Number of Dwellings / Employment Land Allocated	Nearest Habitats Site(s)	Distance	HRA Screening Conclusion
EA9	Boundary Road, Lytham	0.29ha employment land	Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar	294m	Likely Significant Effects. The following pathways are present: • Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat • Water Quality • Water Quantity Level and Flow

Appendix B : Functionally Linked Habitat Screening for Allocated Sites

Table 8: Functionally Linked Habitat Screening

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA22	Land West of Poolfoot Farm, Singleton	High Potential	Large open agricultural field situated immediately adjacent to the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA and Morecambe Bay Ramsar. The field retains open sightlines, limited subdivision, little internal fragmentation and direct landscape connectivity with agricultural land adjoining the designated site. The site does not appear heavily influenced by urban development and is separated from the SPA/Ramsar only by a relatively narrow strip of intervening land. The site therefore has characteristics commonly associated with supporting habitat used by qualifying estuarine bird species.	Screened in for AA	Very close to SPA/Ramsar (~91m). Large open field parcel. Strong visual connectivity with estuary hinterland. Limited fragmentation. Agricultural land use. No obvious dense woodland barriers. No major urban separation.	Proximity to existing settlement edge. Presence of local road corridor south of the site.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA23	South of Garstang Road, Singleton	Moderate to High Potential	Large agricultural field located approximately 274m from Morecambe Bay Ramsar and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA. The site forms part of a wider agricultural landscape and retains connectivity with surrounding farmland. However, it is located further from the European site than HA22 and is separated from the estuary by Garstang Road and the intervening HA22 allocation. The site nevertheless comprises an open field parcel with limited subdivision and could potentially provide supporting habitat for qualifying bird species.	Screened in for AA	Large open agricultural field. Limited fragmentation. Connectivity with surrounding farmland. Located close to SPA/Ramsar. Suitable landscape context for mobile waterbirds.	Further from the estuary than HA22. Separation by Garstang Road. Increased settlement influence from Singleton.
HA24	Lodge Lane, Singleton	Moderate Potential	Agricultural field approximately 314m from Morecambe Bay Ramsar and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA. The site is relatively open but is more closely associated with the existing settlement edge than HA22 and experiences greater urban influence. Whilst supporting habitat cannot be ruled out, the site's relationship with existing development slightly reduces its suitability compared with HA22.	Screened in for AA	Agricultural land. Open field structure. Limited internal fragmentation. Located close to SPA/Ramsar.	Greater settlement edge influence. Further from the estuary than HA22. Separated from the SPA/Ramsar by intervening land and development.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA14	Land at Naze Lane East & Green Lane, Freckleton	Moderate Potential	Small agricultural field located approximately 560m from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. Although the wider surrounding landscape comprises extensive open grazing land that may provide supporting habitat for SPA birds, the allocation itself is a relatively small field parcel situated directly adjacent to the settlement edge and associated urban influences. The site is not isolated from disturbance and forms only a small component of the wider agricultural landscape. However, given its proximity to the SPA/Ramsar and the presence of potentially suitable habitat in the surrounding area, supporting habitat cannot be ruled out at the plan level.	Screened in for AA	Close proximity to Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar (~560m). Located within a wider open agricultural landscape. Extensive potentially suitable habitat occurs immediately south and east of the site. Strong visual and ecological connectivity with estuary hinterland.	Small field size. Directly adjacent to existing settlement edge. Greater disturbance and urban influence. Lacks the scale and openness evident in the wider surrounding marshland landscape.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA15	Land to the Rear of Showmans Park Campsite, Chain Lane, Staining	Low to Moderate Potential	Agricultural field on the edge of an existing settlement. The site is bounded by existing housing on multiple sides and forms part of a fragmented, disturbed settlement-edge landscape. While the site retains an agricultural character and some connectivity to surrounding countryside, it lacks the openness, scale and strong estuarine connectivity evident at the Singleton allocations. Nevertheless, in the absence of survey evidence and given the precautionary approach adopted at TLSE stage, functionally linked habitat cannot currently be ruled out.	Screened in for AA	Retains agricultural land use. Connected to some surrounding countryside. Greenfield site.	Strong settlement-edge influence. Residential development on multiple sides. Fragmented landscape pattern. Limited apparent connectivity with estuarine environments. Lacks large open-field characteristics. Greater levels of disturbance than the Singleton and Warton sites.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA16	East of Church Road and South of Kirkham Road, Weeton	Low Potential	Large agricultural field on the edge of an existing settlement. Although the site is undeveloped and forms part of the wider agricultural landscape, it is located approximately 5.1km from the nearest European site and appears physically disconnected from the estuarine environments associated with the SPA/Ramsar designations. The landscape exhibits fragmentation from roads, farmsteads and settlement development. The site lacks the strong estuarine connectivity and proximity evident at the Singleton and Warton allocations.	Screened out for AA	Greenfield agricultural land. Part of a wider rural landscape. Limited built development within the site itself.	Approximately 5.1km from the nearest Habitats Site. No direct estuarine connectivity. Settlement-edge location. Major road corridor adjacent to the site. Fragmented agricultural landscape. Scattered development and farmsteads within the surrounding area.
HA17	Land West of Bryning Lane, Wrea Green	Low Potential	Small settlement-edge field surrounded by existing housing and development on multiple sides. The site forms part of a fragmented urban fringe landscape and lacks the scale, openness and connectivity typically associated with supporting habitat for SPA bird species.	Screened out for AA	Greenfield land. Some connection to surrounding open space.	Strong settlement influence. Extensive surrounding housing. Small field size. Fragmented landscape.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA18	Land Off Moss Side Lane, Wrea Green	Low to Moderate Potential	Largest and least enclosed of the three Wrea Green allocations. Retains some connection with adjoining countryside and open land to the west. However, it remains strongly influenced by the settlement edge and is located within a fragmented landscape characterised by development, roads and recreational land uses.	Screened out for AA	Largest allocation in the Wrea Green group. Retains some countryside connectivity. Open agricultural character.	Settlement-edge location. Fragmented landscape context. Limited relationship with estuarine habitats.
HA19	Land East of Bryning Lane, Wrea Green	Low Potential	Relatively small field parcel enclosed by existing development and adjoining residential areas. Limited openness and reduced connectivity to wider agricultural landscapes lowers suitability as supporting habitat.	Screened out for AA	Agricultural land use. Greenfield site.	Enclosed by development. Small field parcel. Limited openness. Reduced connectivity.
HA20	Land South of Blackpool Road, Newton	Low Potential	Large settlement-edge site adjoining existing development. Although agricultural in character, the site is closely associated with the urban edge and sits within a fragmented landscape. The site lacks strong ecological connectivity with the Ribble Estuary and does not appear to form part of a wider open estuarine hinterland.	Screened out for AA	Agricultural land use. Greenfield allocation. Some connectivity with surrounding farmland. Undeveloped field parcel.	Strong settlement-edge influence. Fragmented landscape. No obvious estuarine connectivity. Surrounded by development and infrastructure. Distance from designated sites.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA21	Newton Hall, Newton	Low Potential	Large agricultural field south of the settlement. The site remains undeveloped but is surrounded by housing, recreational land and other settlement-edge uses. Whilst some countryside connectivity remains, the site lacks the openness and estuarine association evident in higher-risk allocations.	Screened out for AA	Large agricultural field. Greenfield allocation. Retains some countryside connectivity. Open field structure.	Settlement-edge location. Limited relationship with SPA/Ramsar habitats. Influenced by surrounding development. Lacks extensive open wet grassland characteristics. Significant distance from designated sites.
HA1	Blackpool South Caravan & Motorhome Club, Whitehills	Low Potential	Greenfield site located within a highly modified landscape containing major road infrastructure, commercial development, industrial uses and urban fringe influences. The site lacks a clear functional relationship with the Ribble Estuary and does not form part of an extensive open agricultural landscape capable of supporting significant concentrations of SPA bird species.	Screened out for AA	Greenfield land. Some surrounding open land. Agricultural character retained in parts of the site.	Strong urban fringe influence. Commercial and employment uses nearby. Major road infrastructure present. Fragmented landscape. No clear estuarine connectivity.
HA2	Madhuban, Cropper Road, Whitehills	Low Potential	Small agricultural parcel embedded within a fragmented urban fringe landscape. The site is constrained by surrounding roads, commercial activity and built development. Limited scale and reduced ecological connectivity lower its suitability as supporting habitat.	Screened out for AA	Agricultural land use. Greenfield site. Some openness remains.	Small site area. Surrounded by roads and development. Limited ecological connectivity. Urban fringe setting. Weak relationship with estuarine habitats.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA3	258 Lytham Road, Warton	Low Potential	Small infill-type allocation within the developed area of Warton. Strong urban influence and limited ecological connectivity reduce its potential as functionally linked habitat.	Screened out for AA	Located relatively close to SPA/Ramsar. Greenfield character. Some connectivity with surrounding countryside.	Small site size. Strong settlement influence. Fragmented landscape context. Limited openness. Reduced suitability compared with larger Warton allocations.
HA4	Pickforal Kennels, Warton	Low to Moderate Potential	Relatively small field parcel embedded within the northern settlement edge of Warton. Limited size reduces suitability although supporting habitat cannot be ruled out given proximity to the estuary.	Screened in for AA	Agricultural land. Close proximity to SPA/Ramsar. Some countryside connectivity. Open field character.	Relatively small field parcel. Settlement-edge influence. Existing development nearby. Limited scale compared with more suitable Warton sites.
HA5	Off Hillock Lane, Warton	Moderate Potential	Agricultural land with some countryside connectivity and proximity to the estuary hinterland. However, the site is increasingly influenced by surrounding housing and roads.	Screened in for AA	Agricultural land use. Countryside connectivity. Open landscape context. Relatively close to SPA/Ramsar. Part of the wider agricultural hinterland.	Existing development nearby. Settlement-edge influence. Some fragmentation. Less extensive than HA7 and HA9.
HA6	Hill House, Warton	Moderate Potential	Agricultural field adjoining the northern settlement edge of Warton. The site retains some openness but is increasingly associated with existing development.	Screened in for AA	Agricultural character. Open field structure. Close proximity to SPA/Ramsar. Part of the wider countryside landscape.	Increased settlement influence. Existing development nearby. Reduced openness compared with HA7 and HA9. Some fragmentation of the surrounding landscape.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA7	Land North of Ennerdale Avenue, Warton	Moderate to High Potential	Large field parcel on the western edge of Warton. Open agricultural character with strong countryside connectivity, limited enclosure and a landscape context capable of supporting SPA bird species.	Screened in for AA	Large field size. Open agricultural landscape. Strong countryside connectivity. Limited enclosure. Proximity to Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. Suitable landscape context for SPA bird species.	Settlement-edge location. Some existing disturbance sources. Separated from the SPA by intervening land.
HA8	Snowdrop Grove, Warton	Low Potential	Very small site within the settlement envelope. Limited scale and strong disturbance make it unlikely to function as meaningful supporting habitat.	Screened out for AA	Close proximity to SPA/Ramsar. Greenfield land.	Very small site size. Strong settlement influence. Development on surrounding sides. Limited openness. Fragmented landscape context.
HA9	Land North of Hillock Lane, Warton	High Potential	Large open agricultural field directly adjoining extensive countryside north of Warton. Strong connectivity with surrounding farmland, limited fragmentation and close relationship with the Ribble Estuary hinterland.	Screened in for AA	Large open field parcel. Strong countryside connectivity. Limited fragmentation. Agricultural land use. Part of the wider estuarine hinterland landscape. Suitable landscape context for SPA bird species.	Some settlement-edge influence. Greater distance from the SPA than the Singleton allocations.
HA10	East of Fleetwood Road, Wesham	Low Potential	Large agricultural field but located almost 6km from the nearest Habitats Site within a heavily modified inland agricultural landscape.	Screened out for AA	Large site area. Agricultural land use. Greenfield character.	Significant separation from Habitats Sites. No direct estuarine relationship. Settlement-edge influence. Fragmented inland landscape. Limited ecological connectivity.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
HA11	South of Mowbreck Lane, Wesham	Low Potential	Large agricultural field adjoining existing development but lacking strong ecological connectivity to the estuarine environment.	Screened out for AA	Agricultural land use. Open rural setting. Greenfield site.	Inland location. Settlement proximity. Weak estuarine connectivity. Significant distance from designated sites. Influenced by surrounding development.
HA12	Fleetwood Road / Sanderling Way, Wesham	Low Potential	Small settlement-edge allocation immediately adjacent to existing housing and larger allocations. Limited scale and strong urban influence reduce suitability.	Screened out for AA	Greenfield site. Some remaining agricultural character.	Small site size. Existing development nearby. Fragmented setting. Significant separation from Habitats Sites. Weak ecological connectivity.
HA13	Weeton Road, Wesham	Low to Moderate Potential	Largest allocation within the Wesham cluster. Benefits from scale and agricultural character but lacks a clear ecological relationship with the estuarine system.	Screened out for AA	Large site area. Agricultural land use. Countryside connectivity. Open field character.	More than 5km from Habitats Sites. No clear estuarine relationship. Settlement-edge influence. Lacks direct connectivity with supporting habitat used by qualifying bird species.
MA1	Land adjacent Lytham St Annes Way	Moderate Potential	Large agricultural allocation located approximately 2.35km from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. The site comprises an	Screened in for AA	The site comprises a large agricultural field parcel that retains a predominantly open countryside character and forms part of a wider agricultural landscape	The site is located immediately adjacent to the urban edge of St Annes and is influenced by existing residential development, associated infrastructure

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
	(B5410), St Annes		extensive open field parcel forming part of a wider agricultural landscape that extends eastwards beyond the allocation boundary. Whilst the site is influenced by the adjacent urban edge of St Annes and is separated from the estuary by intervening development and infrastructure, it retains openness and connectivity with surrounding farmland. In the absence of site-specific bird survey evidence, the potential for supporting habitat associated with qualifying SPA bird species cannot be ruled out at the plan level.		extending beyond the allocation boundary. The allocation exhibits limited internal fragmentation and retains connectivity with surrounding farmland. In addition, the site is located approximately 2.35km from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and occupies a landscape context that could potentially be utilised by mobile qualifying bird species associated with the wider estuarine hinterland.	and recreational activity. It is separated from the Ribble Estuary by intervening development, road infrastructure and a substantial distance of agricultural land. The site also lacks the direct visual and ecological relationship with estuarine habitats that characterises higher sensitivity allocations at Singleton and parts of Warton.
MA2	Whyndyke Farm, Preston New Road	Low to Moderate Potential	Large mixed-use allocation comprising predominantly agricultural land situated on the eastern edge of the Blackpool urban area. Whilst the site is influenced by adjacent urban development and major transport infrastructure, extensive areas of agricultural land remain present both within the allocation and immediately beyond its eastern boundary. The site therefore retains a degree of connectivity with the wider countryside landscape. Although the allocation lacks a clear functional relationship with estuarine habitats and does not display the strong estuarine character evident at higher sensitivity allocations, the scale of the site and its agricultural character mean that supporting habitat for qualifying bird species cannot be entirely ruled out at the plan level. In the absence of site-specific bird survey information, a precautionary approach has been applied.	Screened in for AA	The site comprises a substantial area of undeveloped agricultural land and retains connectivity with extensive farmland located immediately to the north and east. Large parts of the allocation remain open and relatively unfragmented and the site forms part of a wider agricultural landscape extending beyond the allocation boundary. The scale of the allocation provides greater potential for utilisation by mobile bird species than many smaller settlement-edge sites.	The site is influenced by its location adjacent to the urban edge of Blackpool and is associated with existing residential development, commercial uses and major transport infrastructure. A significant road corridor forms the southern boundary of the site and the allocation lacks direct ecological connectivity with estuarine habitats. The surrounding landscape does not display the strong estuarine relationship or apparent supporting habitat function evident at the higher sensitivity allocations located at Singleton and Warton.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential	
MA3	Land at Peel Hill Farm, Whitehills	Low Potential	Large mixed-use allocation located within a predominantly urban fringe landscape associated with the Whitehills employment area. Although the site comprises agricultural land and retains some connectivity with surrounding farmland to the east and south, it is strongly influenced by adjacent commercial development, major transport infrastructure and the wider developed landscape. The allocation lacks a clear ecological relationship with the Ribble Estuary and does not form part of an obvious estuarine hinterland landscape. Whilst supporting habitat cannot be entirely ruled out in the absence of survey evidence, the site appears substantially less suitable than the higher sensitivity allocations identified at Singleton and Warton.	Screened out for AA	most of its extent. Connections remain with surrounding farmland beyond the eastern and southern boundaries, and the scale of the allocation means that relatively large open field parcels are present within the site.	The site is heavily influenced by the surrounding urban fringe environment and lies adjacent to established employment and commercial development. Major transport infrastructure forms a substantial boundary to the site and contributes to fragmentation of the wider landscape. The allocation is located over 5km from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and lacks the openness, estuarine connectivity and supporting habitat characteristics associated with higher sensitivity allocations elsewhere in the Borough.	
EA2	Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, Squires Gate	Low Potential	Employment allocation situated within an extensively modified landscape associated with Blackpool Airport, existing employment uses and surrounding urban development. Although the site lies relatively close to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, the allocation is separated from the estuary by substantial areas of development, infrastructure and operational airport land. The site lacks the open agricultural character and ecological connectivity associated with supporting habitat used by qualifying SPA bird species. Consequently, the potential for functionally linked habitat is considered low.	Screened out for AA	The allocation is located within approximately 678m of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and contains some undeveloped land within the wider airport landscape. Its proximity to the designated site means that a potential pathway requires consideration.	The site is strongly influenced by operational airport infrastructure, surrounding employment uses, roads and urban development. The allocation lacks the open agricultural character typically associated with supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species and exhibits limited ecological connectivity with the estuarine environment. Disturbance levels are likely to be substantially higher than at agricultural allocations elsewhere within the Borough.	
EA1	Queensway Industrial	Low Potential	Small employment allocation located within an established industrial and	Screened out for AA	The allocation lies within approximately 2.4km of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries	The site forms part of an established industrial estate and is heavily	

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
	Estate, Snowden Road, St Annes		urban-edge landscape on the eastern side of St Annes. The allocation is surrounded by existing development and employment uses and lacks any clear ecological relationship with estuarine habitats. Whilst the site is located within approximately 2.4km of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, the allocation does not exhibit the characteristics typically associated with supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species.		SPA/Ramsar and is located within a broader landscape that includes some remaining areas of open land and agricultural fields.	influenced by surrounding employment uses, infrastructure and urban development. The allocation lacks open agricultural character, exhibits limited countryside connectivity and does not display the landscape characteristics associated with supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species.
EA3	Whitehills Business Park, Whitehills	Low Potential	Employment allocation located within the established Whitehills Business Park. The site forms part of a heavily modified commercial landscape characterised by existing employment uses, extensive road infrastructure and urban fringe influences. Whilst the site lies within the broader agricultural landscape of Fylde, it lacks the openness, ecological connectivity and estuarine relationship typically associated with supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species.	Screened out for AA	The allocation lies within the wider countryside setting of eastern Fylde and remains relatively close to areas of agricultural land beyond the business park. The site also occurs within the broader landscape used by mobile bird species associated with designated estuarine sites.	The site forms part of an established employment area and is heavily influenced by existing commercial development, associated disturbance and major transport infrastructure. The allocation lacks open agricultural habitat and exhibits little ecological connectivity with the Ribble Estuary hinterland.
EA4	Land adjacent to Whitehills Business Park	Low Potential	Small employment allocation located adjacent to existing commercial development within the Whitehills employment area. Although some undeveloped land remains present, the allocation is strongly influenced by surrounding employment uses and transport infrastructure. The site does not exhibit a clear ecological relationship with estuarine habitats and appears unlikely to provide supporting habitat of significance to qualifying SPA bird species.	Screened out for AA	The site retains some undeveloped land and lies within a wider rural landscape that extends eastwards beyond the allocation area.	The allocation is closely associated with existing business park development and road infrastructure. It lacks the scale, openness and countryside connectivity typically associated with functionally linked habitat and does not display an obvious relationship with the Ribble Estuary.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
EA5	Peel Park, Brunel Way, Whitehills	Low Potential	Large employment allocation located within the Whitehills commercial area. The allocation is surrounded by existing employment development, infrastructure and associated urban fringe land uses. Although relatively extensive in area, the site lacks the habitat characteristics and landscape context typically associated with supporting habitat used by qualifying SPA bird species.	Screened out for AA	The site includes undeveloped land and remains connected to some areas of open countryside beyond the immediate employment area.	The allocation is embedded within an established employment landscape and operates within a strongly modified urban fringe environment. Existing development, roads and employment activity reduce ecological connectivity and limit the likelihood of the site functioning as supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species.
EA6	Blackpool and Fylde Industrial Estate, Whitehills	Low Potential	Employment allocation located within the established Whitehills employment area. The site forms part of a heavily modified commercial landscape characterised by existing industrial and employment uses, road infrastructure and associated urban fringe development. Although the allocation lies within the wider agricultural landscape of Fylde and is relatively close to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, it lacks the openness, habitat characteristics and estuarine connectivity typically associated with supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species. Consequently, the potential for the site to function as functionally linked habitat is considered low.	Screened out for AA	The allocation lies within the broader countryside landscape of Fylde and is located within approximately 4.14km of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. Some undeveloped land remains present within the wider surrounding landscape and a theoretical supporting habitat pathway cannot be completely excluded at the initial screening stage.	The allocation forms part of an established industrial estate and is strongly influenced by existing commercial development, associated disturbance and extensive transport infrastructure. The site lacks open agricultural habitat and displays little ecological connectivity with the Ribble Estuary hinterland. The surrounding landscape is dominated by employment development and urban fringe land uses rather than habitats typically associated with supporting SPA bird populations.
EA7	Land south of Brackirk Business Park, Weeton Road, Wesham	Low to Moderate Potential	Employment allocation located on the edge of Wesham comprising predominantly undeveloped agricultural land. The allocation forms part of a wider agricultural landscape extending to the west and north-west and retains a degree of openness and countryside connectivity. However, the site is situated approximately 5.47km from	Screened out for AA	The allocation comprises open agricultural land and retains connectivity with the surrounding countryside. The site forms part of a wider farmland landscape and exhibits substantially fewer urban influences than many of the Whitehills employment allocations. The undeveloped character of the site means that a precautionary consideration of functionally linked habitat is appropriate.	The site is located over 5km from the nearest SPA/Ramsar and lacks a clear ecological relationship with estuarine habitats. The allocation is associated with the edge of Wesham and adjoins existing business and settlement development. The landscape does not display the open estuarine hinterland characteristics evident at the higher

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
			the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and lacks a direct ecological relationship with estuarine habitats. Whilst supporting habitat for qualifying SPA bird species cannot be entirely ruled out at the plan level, the site's distance from the designated site and absence of obvious estuarine connectivity reduces its overall suitability.			sensitivity allocations in Singleton and Warton.
EA8	Dock Road, Lytham	Low to Moderate Potential	Small employment allocation located immediately adjacent to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. The site lies within a coastal setting and is located very close to habitats associated with the designated site. However, the allocation is small in scale and forms part of an already developed employment and industrial landscape. Whilst the site's proximity to the SPA/Ramsar means a potential functionally linked habitat pathway cannot be dismissed at the screening stage, the existing developed character of the allocation substantially reduces its suitability as supporting habitat for qualifying bird species.	Screened out for AA	The allocation lies approximately 154m from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and is situated within a coastal landscape associated with the estuary. The close proximity to designated habitats means that a precautionary consideration of functionally linked habitat is appropriate.	The site is very small in scale and forms part of an established employment area. The allocation lacks open agricultural habitat and is strongly influenced by existing industrial, commercial and urban land uses. Habitat suitability for qualifying SPA bird species is therefore considered limited.
EA9	Boundary Road, Lytham	Low to Moderate Potential	Small employment allocation located within the urban edge of Lytham approximately 294m from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar. The allocation occurs within an area containing a mixture of employment uses, roads and surrounding residential development. Whilst the site's proximity to the designated site means that supporting habitat cannot be entirely ruled out at the initial screening stage, the allocation lacks the openness, scale and habitat characteristics typically	Screened out for AA	The allocation lies within approximately 294m of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar and occurs within a landscape that retains some relationship with the wider coastal fringe environment. The proximity of the site to designated habitats means that potential functionally linked habitat requires consideration as a precautionary measure.	The allocation is small and forms part of an existing developed employment area. The surrounding landscape is heavily influenced by urban and commercial uses and the site lacks the open habitat, scale and ecological connectivity usually associated with supporting habitat for qualifying bird species.

Site Ref	Description	FLH Suitability	Key Reasoning	Screening Outcome	Factors increasing FLH potential	Factors reducing FLH potential
			associated with functionally linked habitat used by qualifying SPA bird species.			

Appendix C Habitats sites

Liverpool Bay SPA

Introduction

The Liverpool Bay SPA is a maritime site that is approx. 252,800ha in size and lies in the east of the Irish Sea, bordering northern England and north Wales. The site comprises exposed mudflats and sandbanks in places, but extends up to 20km from the shoreline. Most of this distant area from the coast is relatively shallow water up to 20m deep. The SPA is contiguous with several other European sites, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA / Ramsar, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA / Ramsar, and the Mersey Estuary SPA / Ramsar. It is primarily classified for the protection of red-throated diver, common scoter and little gull outside the breeding season, as well as for breeding common tern and little tern. Furthermore, the SPA harbours a waterbird assemblage of European importance.

In 2017, the UK and Welsh Governments extended the SPA to its north and west (approximately 825km² of marine habitat was added) in response to the latest bird survey data. These indicated the occurrence of little gull, little tern and common tern at levels of international importance. The area that was included in the SPA designation is particularly important for the terns, as much of the sea around their breeding colonies is the ideal habitat for plunge diving for food. Additionally, cormorant and red-breasted merganser were also added to the waterbird assemblage as component species.

Qualifying Features⁷²

The site is designated as an SPA for the following qualifying features:

- Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata* (non-breeding)
- Common scoter *Melanitta nigra* (non-breeding)
- Little gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* (non-breeding)
- Common tern *Sterna Hirundo* (breeding)
- Little tern *Sterna albifrons* (breeding)
- Waterbird assemblage; regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl in the non-breeding season, including red-throated diver, common scoter, little gull, red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* and cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*.

Conservation Objectives⁷³

With regard to the SPA 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.

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity⁷⁴

- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Transportation and service corridors
- Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine
- Extraction: Non-living resources
- Siltation
- Water pollution

Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA / Ramsar is approximately 12,361ha in size, and is located in north-west England. It comprises two estuaries with the Ribble Estuary being the much larger one of the two. It forms part of a system of marine European sites along the western coastline of the UK, which provides a migratory route for non-breeding birds. There is significant movement of birds between these designated sites and it is, therefore, important to maintain this functional network of Habitats Sites.

The site comprises extensive sand- and mudflats and, particularly in the Ribble Estuary, large areas of saltmarsh. There are also areas of coastal grazing marsh located behind the sea embankments. The saltmarshes, coastal grazing marshes, and intertidal sand- and mudflats all support high densities of grazing wildfowl and are used as high-tide roosts. Important populations of waterbirds occur in winter, including swans, geese, ducks and waders. The highest densities of feeding birds are on the muddier substrates of the Ribble.

The SPA / Ramsar is also of major importance during the spring and autumn migration periods, especially for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain. The saltmarsh and areas of coastal grazing marsh support breeding birds during the summer, including large numbers of gulls and terns. These seabirds feed both offshore and inland, both within and outwith the SPA / Ramsar boundary. Several species, most notably pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, utilise feeding areas on functionally linked land.

SPA Qualifying Features⁷⁵

The site is designated as an SPA for the following qualifying features:

- Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* (non-breeding)
- Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus* (non-breeding)
- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* (non-breeding)
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (non-breeding)
- Wigeon *Anas penelope* (non-breeding)
- Teal *Anas crecca* (non-breeding)
- Pintail *Anas acuta* (non-breeding)
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (non-breeding)
- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (non-breeding)
- Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (non-breeding)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (non-breeding)
- Knot *Calidris canutus* (non-breeding)
- Sanderling *Calidris alba* (non-breeding)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina* (non-breeding)
- Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (breeding)
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica* (non-breeding)
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* (non-breeding)

- Redshank *Tringa totanus* (non-breeding)
- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* (breeding)
- Common tern *Sterna hirundo* (breeding)
- Waterbird assemblage; regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl in the non-breeding season, including grey plover, whooper swan, golden plover, bar-tailed godwit, pink-footed goose, shelduck, wigeon, teal, Bewick's swan, oystercatcher, curlew *Numenius arquata*, knot, sanderling, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, redshank, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, common scoter *Melanitta nigra*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and pintail.
- Seabird assemblage; regularly supporting at least 20,000 seabirds in the non-breeding season, including black-headed gull *Larus ridibundus*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* and common tern.

Ramsar Qualifying Features⁷⁶

The Ribble & Alt Estuaries is designated as a Ramsar site under the following criteria:

Criterion 2:

- The site supports up to 40% of the Great Britain population of natterjack toads *Bufo calamita*

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance

- Species with peak counts in winter: 222,038 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)

Criterion 6: Species / populations occurring at levels of international importance

Species regularly supported during the breeding season

- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*, 4,108 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 2.7% of the breeding W Europe / Mediterranean / W Africa population (Seabird 2000 Census)

Species with peak counts in spring / autumn

- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 3,761 individuals, representing an average of 5.1% of the Europe / Northwest Africa population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 11,021 individuals, representing an average of 4.4% of the E Atlantic / W Africa wintering population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
- Red knot *Calidris canutus islandica*, 42,692 individuals, representing an average of 9.4% of the W & Southern Africa population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

- Sanderling *Calidris alba*, 7,401 individuals, representing an average of 6% of the Eastern Atlantic population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3 - spring peak)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, 38,196 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the W Siberia / W Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 3,323 individuals, representing an average of 9.4% of the Iceland / W Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus totanus*, 4,465 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*, 1,747 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species with peak counts in winter

- Tundra swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, 230 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
- Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Iceland/UK/Ireland 211 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the Iceland / UK / Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, 6,552 individuals, representing an average of 2.7% of the Greenland / Iceland / UK population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, 2,944 individuals, representing an average of 3.7% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*, 69,841 individuals, representing an average of 4.6% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*, 5,107 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*, 1,497 individuals, representing an average of 2.4% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus*, 18,926 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the Europe & NW wintering Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica lapponica*, 13,935 individuals, representing an average of 11.6% of the W Palearctic population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

SPA Conservation Objectives⁷⁷

With regard to the SPA 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.

Threats / Pressures to Integrity of SPA⁷⁸

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA / Ramsar have been identified in Natural England's SIP:

- Coastal squeeze
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Public access / disturbance
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Change to site conditions
- Shooting / scaring
- Invasive species

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