



NORTHAMPTON
GATEWAY
STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

REPORT ON EUROPEAN SITES

DOCUMENT 6.3A

The Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange Order 201X

Regulation No: 5 (2) (q)

REPORT ON EUROPEAN SITES | AUGUST 2018

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ROXHILL



Roxhill (Junction 15) Limited

Northampton Gateway, Northamptonshire

**REVISED REPORT ON EUROPEAN SITES:
HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT**

Pursuant to Regulation 5(2)(g)

August 2018

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INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 This report has been produced by FPCR Environment & Design Ltd on behalf of Roxhill (Junction 15) Limited. The report accompanies an application made by Roxhill for the Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange Order (DCO) that will authorise the construction of the development described in the draft DCO (the Proposed Development).
- 1.2 The application is being made to the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 and in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedures) Regulations 2009.
- 1.3 Regulation 5(2)(g) of the APFP Regulations requires that the application be accompanied by a report that identifies any site that may be affected by the development to which Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations) applies. These sites, known as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) pursuant to the EC Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) pursuant to the EC Habitats Directive are commonly referred to as European Sites, and form part of the Natura 2000 network of designated sites.
- 1.4 The report duly provides the background information and an assessment of the potential for Likely Significant Effects (LSE) as a result of the Proposed Development. It assesses the potential impacts on the classified features of the only relevant European Site, being:
 - Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar/SSSI – c.5km west of the Main Site and c.7.5km north-east of the Bypass Corridor. The relative location of the SPA/Ramsar and Development Site is indicated on Figure 1.

Site Context

- 1.5 The Proposed Development comprises a SRFI; bound to the north by Collingtree Road, to the east by the M1, to the south by the A508 / Northampton Road and to the west by arable fields (referred to as the 'Main Site'), and associated Highway Mitigation Works (referred to collectively as the 'Highway Mitigation Works'). These works include a bypass to the west of Roade, Northamptonshire (within the Bypass Corridor) and a programme of infrastructure works including modifications to Junction 15 and other local highways infrastructure. The Main Site itself comprises arable fields bisected by hedgerows of varying ages and structures, with areas of woodland, tree belts, grassland, ponds, wet ditches and several abandoned buildings (central grid reference SP 748 547).
- 1.6 The Bypass Corridor is bound to the north by arable fields and woodland, to the east by Roade and to the south and west by a mix of arable and grazed field compartments. The site itself comprises areas of grassland, a mix of arable and grazed fields bound by hedgerows and standard trees, with scrub, grassland, running water, dry ditches. The surrounding landscape consists of arable farmland with woodland blocks, pasture and scattered urban areas.
- 1.7 This assessment provides information to allow the Competent Authority, in this case the Secretary of State for Transport, to complete a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) if necessary and, if a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) is found, an Appropriate Assessment.

- 1.8 The report should be read in conjunction with the Environmental Statement for the Northamptonshire Gateway¹.

Development Proposals

- 1.9 Full details of the Proposed Development are provided separately in Chapter 2: of the Environmental Statement titled 'Application Site and Proposed Development'. In brief, the Proposed Development consists of the following:
- An intermodal freight terminal including container storage and HGV parking, rail sidings to serve individual warehouses, and with the capability to also provide a 'rapid rail freight' facility as part of the intermodal freight terminal;
 - Up to 468,000 sq m (approximately 5 million sq ft) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, with additional floorspace provided in the form of mezzanines;
 - New road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including the provision of a new access and associated works to the A508, a new bypass to the village of Roade, substantial improvements to J15 and to J15A of the M1 motorway, the A45, and other highway improvements at junctions on the local highway network;
 - Strategic landscaping and tree planting, including diverted public rights of way; and
 - Earthworks and demolition of existing structures on the SRFI site.
- 1.10 The DCO Order Limits of the project do not overlap into devolved administrations or other European Economic Area (EEA) states and, by virtue of the location, scale and nature of the project, significant effects are considered to be unlikely in respect of European sites in devolved administrations or within other EEA States.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

Habitats Directive

- 2.1 Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an Appropriate Assessment of any plans or projects that could affect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites (jointly referred to as 'European sites').

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of Paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'

- 2.2 Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive discusses alternative solutions, the test of "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" (IROPI) and compensatory measures:

¹ Document 5.2 Chapter []

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

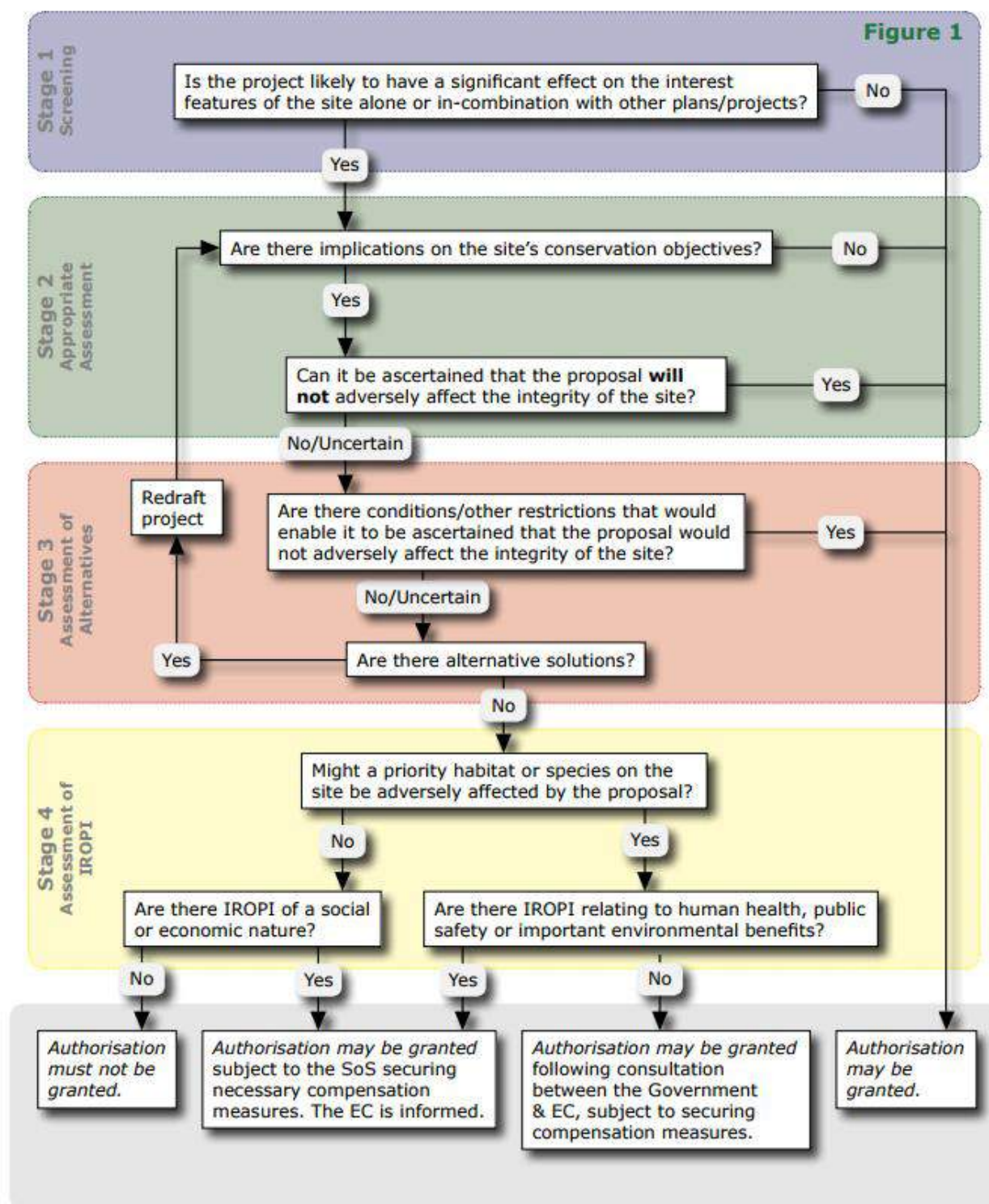
- 2.3 Plans and projects can only be permitted if it can be shown that they will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or if there are no alternatives to them and there are 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest' (IROPI). In determining the likelihood of a significant adverse effects, the Habitats Directive requires the application of the precautionary principle.
- 2.4 A "likely significant effect" is defined as:
- "Any effect that may reasonably be predicted...that may affect the conservation objectives of the features for which the site was designated, but excluding trivial or inconsequential effects."*
- 2.5 The integrity of a site is defined as:
- "The coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and / or the level of populations of the species for which it was classified."*
- 2.6 In addition to the Likely Significant Effects a Proposed Development may have on any European Site alone, it must be recognised that in some instances whilst these potential impacts could be assessed as insignificant, they would be considered significant if in-combination with one or other local schemes if these were to progress concordantly (i.e. potential impacts of the Proposed Development are insignificant alone yet significant cumulatively).
- 2.7 The protection given by the Habitats Directive is transposed into UK legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations). Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are protected under the Habitats Regulations. As a matter of policy the Government also applies the procedures described below to potential SPAs (pSPAs), Ramsar sites, and (in England) possible SACs, proposed Ramsar sites and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on any of the above sites.

Appropriate Assessment

- 2.8 Where the potential likely impacts of a Proposed Development are considered together with an assessment of any potential likely in-combination impacts and likely potential significant impacts upon a European site cannot be 'screened out', (i.e. it cannot be ruled out that the Proposed Development would not undermine the conservation objectives of a European site) then further assessment is necessary. This takes the form of an Appropriate Assessment.

Planning Act process and HRA

- 2.9 European guidance describes a four-stage process to HRA. Figure 1 of *Advice note ten: Habitat Regulations Assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects* summarises this process:



Extract from: *Advice note ten: Habitat Regulations Assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects*²

2.10 The steps in carrying out this HRA Stage 1 (Screening) report are as follows:

- Gather the evidence base about the European Sites, their vulnerabilities and the effects that could act upon International Sites;

² <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Advice-note-10-HRA.pdf> (accessed 01.05.2018)

- Screen the development proposals for likelihood of significant effect on those European Sites; and
- Introduce measures to avoid any identified Likely Significant Effect.

2.11 The Advice Note states there is no prescribed format for the NSER or for the reporting of the outcomes of the screening stage. However, Applicants are expected to include within the NSER the information requested in the advice note and complete screening matrices. Table 1 (below) sets out the information requested and identifies where it can be found within this report. The screening matrices summarise the screening exercise for LSE of the project on the European sites and qualifying features considered. Completed screening matrices are provided at Appendix C.

Table 1: NSER Screening Information and location reference

Information Required	Location reference
a detailed description of the development, processes, timings, and method of work proposed as part of the NSIP	Chapter 2 of Environmental Statement and Paras 6.5 to 6.24
details of the methodology used to determine which European sites should be included within the assessment. A definition of and justification for the scope of the assessment should be provided	Para 3.1 to 3.4 & 4.1 to 4.4
a plan and description of the European site(s) potentially affected, including a description of all qualifying features (a copy of the site data sheet is useful to include)	Figure 1 and Para 4.5 to 4.10. Site data sheet at Appendix A
an appraisal of the potential effects resulting from the construction and operation of the project (e.g. noise) and the likely significant effect on the European site(s) and qualifying features (e.g. disturbance to bird species);	Paras 4.3 and 4.4
an outline and interpretation of the baseline data collected to inform the findings	Para 5.1 to 5.11
an appraisal of the effects of any other plans or projects which, in combination with the Proposed Development, might be likely to have a significant effect on the European site(s). The scope of that appraisal should be well-defined and agreed with the local authorities and SNCBs	Para 6.34 to 6.42
an evaluation of the potential for the scheme to require other consents requiring consideration of LSE by different competent authorities (e.g. where a Marine Licence is required separate from development consent)	Para 6.3
a statement which specifies where the DCO boundary of the project overlaps into devolved administrations or other European Economic Area (EEA)20 States and map(s), as appropriate;	Para 1.10
a statement which identifies (with reasons) whether significant effects are considered to be likely in respect of European sites in devolved administrations or within other EEA States; and	Para 1.10

Information Required	Location reference
evidence (such as copies of correspondence or SoCG) of agreement between the Applicant and all relevant SNCBs (including those in devolved administrations) and/or relevant bodies in other EEA States on the scope, methodologies, interpretation, and conclusions of the screening assessment	Para 5.2, Para 6.45 & Appendix B

- 2.12 The findings of Stage 1 (Screening) are set out in Section 6.0, which consider the ways in which the application site development may affect the European Site.

3.0 SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 In order to identify which European sites should be included in the assessment the MAGIC website was consulted. The MAGIC website, managed by Natural England, provides geographic information about the natural environment from across government. Magic was used to identify European sites and the extent of Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) that may extend to the proposals.
- 3.2 The IZRs are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. They define zones around each site which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.
- 3.3 The vast majority of the Proposed Development site lies within a 0km-10km IRZ for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar. The proposals do not correspond to any development type listed as requiring further consultation with Natural England. A small proportion of the J15 highway improvements (albeit only minor works) occur within a 0-5km IRZ. Development types that Natural England expects to be consulted on include road infrastructure. Further information is also provided in The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (August 2015) (See Section 4: Table 2 below).
- 3.4 No other IRZs concerning other European sites are relevant to the Proposed Development site and no further sites are included in the scope of this assessment.

4.0 RELEVANT STRATEGIES, GUIDELINES OR DOCUMENTS

The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (August 2015)

- 4.1 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been jointly prepared by Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), primarily for the benefit of Northamptonshire County Council and partner local Authorities and others to ensure that development has no significant effect on the SPA, in accordance with the legal requirements of the Habitats Regulations. The SPD outlines a consistent approach to consulting with Natural England, levels of survey effort and assessment to identify any potential significant effects on the qualifying features of the SPA / Ramsar.

- 4.2 Natural England in the SPD advises early consultation regarding proposals that could affect the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar and has developed specific consultation zones for the SPA. These clarify for local planning authorities and other competent authorities when to consult Natural England about potential impacts on the SPA/Ramsar.

Table 2: Consultation zones for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar site within the SPD suggests Natural England should be consulted for:

Development Management	
Within SPA/Ramsar	All applications
0 – 50 metres	All applications except householder applications
0km-2km of SPA/Ramsar	All planning applications with a new/additional footprint outside existing settlements Large commercial / industrial development with internal floor space > 1000m² Quarry applications All proposals that would alter accessibility in or around the SPA (e.g. new or reduced public car parking, new cycle tracks or pedestrian routes) All proposals likely to generate significant noise (e.g. clay pigeon shoot)
0km-3km of SPA/Ramsar	All applications with net gain in residential units
0km-5km of SPA/Ramsar	Infrastructure including road, rail, pylons, pipelines (except routine maintenance)
0km-10km of SPA/Ramsar	Airports Solar development over 0.5ha Pig and poultry units Any industrial development including combustion sources which could cause air pollution Landfill and other waste management including composting Discharge to surface water or ground All wind farms/turbines except: Building mounted turbines Single turbines less than 15m

- 4.3 The SPD suggests significant adverse effects can arise from any of the following causes, alone or in combination with the effects of other plans or projects:
- **Physical loss of habitats within the SPA** through conversion to other land uses
 - **Fragmentation of habitats within the SPA**, which isolates waterbirds in small habitat patches and impedes waterbird movement through the site
 - **Loss of usable habitat within the SPA** in which the physical extent of habitat remains, yet factors like disturbance or visual barriers reduce the amount of habitat that is actually suitable for waterbirds
 - **Loss of supporting habitat** adjacent to or outside the SPA

- **Increased disturbance to waterbirds** from human activity (e.g. recreational uses), domestic pets, noise, light and other factors that cause birds to spend less time feeding and more energy avoiding the disturbance, compromising long term survival
- **Changes in ecological condition**, e.g. due to lack of management, ecological succession or deteriorating water quality, which render the habitat unsuitable for waterbirds
- **Direct waterbird mortality**, e.g. from collision with structures.

4.4 Supporting habitat is defined as:

“an area of habitat outside the boundaries of a European site but which is of fundamental importance for the overall survival of the population(s) for which the European site was designated. Supporting habitat tends to be associated with sites designated for highly mobile species (e.g. bats, birds) that are not physically restricted to the European site boundaries.”

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA Citation³

4.5 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar lies approximately 5.5km from the west boundary of the Main Site and approximately 7.5km north-east of the Bypass Corridor, respectively. The data sheet is included in Appendix A.

Qualifying Species

4.6 The SPA is classified under article 4(1) of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Annex 1 Species	Count and Season	Period	% of GB Population
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2 individuals - wintering	5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2%
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	5,790 individuals - wintering	5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.3%

4.7 The site is classified under article 4(2) of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex 1) in any season:

Migratory Species	Count and Season	Period	% of subspecies/ population
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals - wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0% strepera, NW Europe (breeding)

Qualifying Assemblages

4.8 The site qualifies under article 4.2 of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds (as defined by the Ramsar Convention) in any season:

³ Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA UK9020296 Compilation date: April 2011 Version: 1.0

- 4.9 In the non-breeding season, the area regularly supports 23,821 individual waterbirds (5-year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04), including wigeon *Anas penelope*, gadwall *Anas strepera*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, shoveler *Anas clypeata*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and coot *Fulica atra*.
- 4.10 The site further qualifies under Criterion 6 for the identification of Wetlands of International Importance because it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird in any season:

Species	Count and Season	Period	% of subspecies/ population
Mute swan <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	629 individuals - wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/2004	1.7% Britain

European Site Conservation Objectives⁴

- 4.11 With regard to the qualifying populations of individual breeding, passage and wintering bird species and assemblage species, the conservation objectives of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar, and subject to natural change, are to:

“Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

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

European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features (Appendix A)⁵

- 4.12 This document provides Natural England’s supplementary advice for the European Site Conservation Objectives relating to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. Site-specific information about the SPA’s qualifying features are provided.
- 4.13 Details that are particularly relevant to the site include the reference to supporting habitat, which can be, according to this advice, both within and outside of the SPA (‘functionally-linked land’). With reference to golden plover the advice states:

⁴ European Site Conservation Objectives for Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area
Site Code: UK9020296 Publication date: 30 June 2014 (Version 2)

⁵ European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features. Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) Site Code: UK9020296. Date of Publication: 24 March 2017

“The site supports internationally numbers of golden plover during the winter months and when the SPA was classified this represented 2.3% of the NW European population.

Numbers fluctuate from year to year depending on weather conditions in the UK and Europe; during periods of cold weather in continental Europe, larger numbers of golden plover visit the SPA. However, during periods of extreme cold within central England the birds move further south and west.

Whilst there is natural fluctuation within the population year to year, the population trend on the site has been downwards since the classification of the SPA; this is thought to be due to increased levels of recreational disturbance at the key roosting site of Northamptonshire Washlands.

Golden Plover use the SPA for roosting and loafing, favouring three main roost locations at Stanwick, Earls Barton (Summer Leys) and Northamptonshire Washlands. Birds feed on the surrounding agricultural land often flying many kilometres to feed. It is not currently known where their preferred feeding grounds are and whether they remain faithful to specific fields or select fields based on crop type / food availability.”

- 4.14 Table 3, gives further specific targets for the extent and distribution of supporting habitat:

“Maintain the extent and distribution of suitable habitat (either within or outside the site boundary) which supports European Golden Plover for all necessary stages of the nonbreeding/ wintering period (moulting, roosting, loafing, feeding);

- *Grassland roosting / loafing areas: 143ha at 3 specific locations (see supporting information)*
- *Feeding areas: Unknown extent”*

- 4.15 It is noted that golden plover are known to fly out to the surrounding agricultural land to feed but that little is known about their preferred locations, distances travelled and faithfulness to specific sites. Emphasis is given to their main roosting and loafing sites at Northamptonshire Washlands; Summer Leys and Stanwick Lakes, although it is generally accepted that feeding areas are more widely distributed and perhaps transitory, potentially changing with crop type and weather, although little is understood about these areas.

- 4.16 Factors not considered to be an influence on how Golden Plover use the SPA or influence the numbers using the SPA each year include water quality, air quality and hydrology/flow.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF ORNITHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE

Consultation

- 5.1 In order to identify the features with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development, the following were consulted during 2016 and/or September 2017:
- The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website;
 - Northamptonshire Bird Recorder (September).

Data Collection Methods

- 5.2 In order to assess the current value of the site to winter birds, and in particular SPA-classified species a range of winter bird surveys have been undertaken. Methods were agreed with Natural England initially in 2014 and subsequently in 2018 (Pers. comm. Ross Holgate, Natural England 16.01.2018).
- 5.3 These included full winter bird surveys (WBS), whereby all species seen or heard using the site were recorded over four winter visits; one in each of the months from November to December, and more focused surveys for species that contribute to the interest features of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA (SPA surveys). These were conducted bimonthly from October to March and, following agreement by Natural England, included visits during the period at least an hour after dusk and an hour after dawn during the same night to assess the likely nocturnal use of the site by golden plover and lapwing.
- 5.4 Surveys have been completed over three winter seasons 2013/2014 (WBS and SPA survey), 2014/2015 (WBS bypass route only), 2016/2017 (WBS and SPA survey) and during the 2017/2018 season (SPA survey).

Field Survey Results

2013/14 Surveys

- 5.5 Full survey results are included in the Wintering Bird Survey Report (ES Chapter 5, Appendix 5.6). Baseline data is, however, summarised below.
- 5.6 During surveys of the site carried out in 2013/14 the only species of interest to be recorded were golden plover and lapwing, which were recorded in a single field supporting winter stubbles. Whilst the former, golden plover, is noted as a qualifying species, the latter, lapwing, is a species which is not an SPA features in its own right but forms a named part of the 20,000 wintering waterbird assemblage.
- 5.7 Golden plover were recorded on a total of 10 survey occasions of a total of 17 in 2013/14, with a mean of 72 individuals (taking the peak count over a 24hr period (where relevant i.e. dusk/dawn visits) to avoid double-counting) or 1.25% of the SPA population.
- 5.8 A single lapwing was observed within the same large arable field compartment and separate from the golden plover flock on a single survey occasion (28.02.14) and represents 0.03% of the five year peak mean Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA.

2016/17 Surveys

- 5.9 No golden plover were recorded on site during twelve 2016/17 SPA surveys.
- 5.10 The only other species recorded that contributes to Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar was lapwing. Lapwing were recorded in low numbers during five survey occasions with a peak count of 35 birds incidentally recorded during other surveys of the site on the 8th December 2016.

2017/2018 Surveys

- 5.11 The only qualifying species to be recorded in the eight 2017/18 SPA surveys was golden plover. This species was only recorded on a single occasion in late November where a total of 10

individuals were recorded in the same field as those recorded in 2013/14. In common with all survey periods this field supported winter stubbles. This represents 0.17% of the 5-year peak mean Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA population.

6.0 SCREENING FOR LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

- 6.1 The Proposed Development 'main site' is situated approximately 5.5km to the east of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar at its closest point. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document jointly prepared by Natural England and the RSPB identifies zones whereby Natural England expects to be consulted. The zone where "*Large commercial/industrial Development with internal floor space >1000m²*" proposals require consultation lies between 0-2km of the SPA/Ramsar. For "*Infrastructure including road, rail, pylons, pipelines (except routine maintenance)*" it lies from 0km -5km from the SPA/Ramsar. The site lies outside of these consultation zones and implies that significant effects would not be expected.
- 6.2 In assessing the potential for significant effects, the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPD has been reviewed. There will be no 'land take' from the SPA/Ramsar, however, it is necessary to assess whether it is possible that the proposed development has the potential to have other direct or indirect effects upon the interest features of this European Site. The causes of potential significant indirect effects upon the classified features of the site, albeit outside of the consultation zone for which NE expects to be consulted, are as follows:
- Loss of SPA Supporting Habitat on the Application Site (indirect impact).
- 6.3 The assessment has been based on the Parameters Plan (Document 2.10) and survey work to identify how golden plover and other species of interest use the Site. Given the nature of the proposals as detailed below, no other permits/consents that may be required are likely to require consideration of the potential for Likely Significant Effects to occur.
- 6.4 The assessment contains a summary of the evidence base used to undertake the test of Likely Significant Effect. It illustrates the findings and provides discussion as to how conclusions were reached with regards to potential Likely Significant Effect.

Development Proposals

- 6.5 The proposed development is identified in detail in Chapter 2 of the Environmental Statement. In summary it comprises:
- **An intermodal freight terminal including container storage and HGV parking, rail sidings to serve individual warehouses, and the provision of an aggregates facility as part of the intermodal freight terminal, with the capability to also provide a 'rapid rail freight' facility**
- 6.6 The terminal is identified as Zone B on the Parameter Plan (Doc 5.2 – ES Fig 2.1) and is designed to accommodate trains of up to 775m length (standard freight train length), and to accommodate up to 16 trains per day once fully operational over the longer-term (excluding the potential rapid rail freight facility). In the initial period after opening the terminal is expected to handle at least 4 trains per day before increasing over time.

- 6.7 The terminal would enable the transfer of freight from road to rail (and vice versa), as well as the storage of containers or other freight at the terminal itself. An aggregates terminal area will be delivered within Zone B (for the storage and transfer of aggregates), with provision also made for a 'rapid rail freight' terminal as part of the longer-term future-proofing of the site.
- 6.8 The terminal area will also include HGV parking relating to the terminal use, and associated ancillary built accommodation such as gatehouses, and estate management offices.
- 6.9 As part of the construction of the terminal, rail infrastructure, connecting directly to warehouse plots, will be put in place.
- **Up to 468,000 sq m (approximately 5 million sq ft) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, with additional floorspace provided in the form of mezzanines;**
- 6.10 The height and broad layout of development zones on the site are fixed via the Parameters Plan (Doc 5.2 – ES Fig 2.1). The layout of the site allows for flexibility in the scale and the design of individual units and includes the ability of the site to accommodate very large floorspace units.
- 6.11 Much of the built floorspace would be located on development plots sunk into the site following a proposed earthworks strategy to not only create flat plateau, but to also enable creation of substantial bunds around the site to form part of the visual screening (mitigation) and landscaping.
- 6.12 A small amount of ancillary floorspace is also proposed such as gatehouses, estate management offices, and other small ancillary buildings.
- 6.13 In addition to the 'built' development described above associated infrastructure will include will include:
- Rail lines to serve buildings (in Zones A2, A3 and A4);
 - Service roads including road access to the rail terminal;
 - On-plot landscaping and planting;
 - Sub-stations and other utilities infrastructure;
 - Bus turning-head (associated with public transport access to the site).
 - A secure, dedicated, HGV parking area of approximately 120 spaces including driver welfare facilities to meet the needs of HGVs visiting the site or intermodal terminal;
 - **New road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including the provision of a new access and associated works to the A508, a new bypass to the village of Roade, improvements to Junction 15 and to J15A of the M1 motorway, the A45, other highway improvements at junctions on the local highway network and related traffic management measures;**
- 6.14 A package of highway works is proposed as part of the proposed development. These include substantial improvements to Junction 15 of the M1, and a new bypass to the village of Roade to the south of the main site.

6.15 In addition, a wider range of more localised works are proposed to mitigate likely transport impacts, and to address existing known bottle-necks or problematic junctions which would otherwise see worsening reliability and/or safety in the future.

- **Strategic landscaping and tree planting, including diverted public rights of way;**

6.16 The proposed development includes provision of landscaping and tree planting as part of the mitigation of visual and landscape effects. The design of the main site incorporates a landscaping strategy which includes retention of existing woodland blocks within the site, as well as around parts of its boundary (such as along the M1).

6.17 The landscaping strategy compliments the earthworks strategy which would create substantial landscaped bunds around much of the main site perimeter, and which would form the bulk of the visual mitigation measures.

6.18 The strategy would ensure the establishment of a strong and cohesive framework of landscape and environmental areas. These would form one of the main elements of the overall development and would be fully integrated with the built development and infrastructure zones.

- **Earthworks and demolition of existing structures on the SRFI site**

6.19 Substantial earthworks will be undertaken on the main site, with some areas in the western part of the site being lowered by between 8 and 10 metres from existing ground levels. This change in levels is required to establish the flat plateau required for the buildings, and the 'cut and fill' exercise enables the creation of bunding necessary to ameliorate visual effects

6.20 The scale of the Main Site earthworks is such that it would be appropriate to adopt a phased approach so that subsequent activities can commence before all the previous tasks have been completed. Logically, it would be appropriate to commence the earthworks adjacent to the access point and work away from the access. Therefore the Main Site Earthworks, Drainage and Landscaping have been divided into two phases.

6.21 Phase 1 opens up the development plateaus for the rail terminal and Zones A1a and A4 (refer to the Parameters Plan, Doc 2.10) and constructs the key sections of the perimeter screening bund appropriate to screening these areas. This component provides the necessary permanent and temporary drainage and balancing ponds with suitable outfalls.

6.22 Phase 2 opens up the development plateau for the rest of the site and constructs the sections of the perimeter screening bund adjacent to this area. This component provides the necessary permanent and temporary drainage and balancing ponds with suitable outfalls.

6.23 Landscaping will be installed at the first available planting season following completion of that component to which it relates.

Timings

6.24 The Indicate Master Programme, included within the CEMP (Doc 5.2 – ES Description and Alternatives Appendix 2.1), shows how the works may be carried out. Final programming of the works will be undertaken following detailed design, selection of materials and the appointment of key contractors. However, it is envisaged that highways improvements and bulk earthworks would be complete within three years following commencement, with the completion of building construction occurring over a 6-year period.

Potential Effects on the European Site from the Proposed Works

- 6.25 In addressing the potential effects, consideration has been given to the, characteristics of the proposed development, existing ecological baseline and conservation objectives for the European site.
- 6.26 Only two wintering species of relevance to this assessment have been recorded using the Main Site over the three seasons of study: golden plover and lapwing, the former as a qualifying species and the latter as a named species making up the assemblage of >20,000 waterbirds.
- 6.27 Despite the *Selection Guidelines for Special Protected Areas* (JNCC 1999), which should result in boundary selection that delimits areas providing for the conservation requirements of a species against which the test for integrity should be made, it is generally recognised that the capacity of habitats within the SPA to support the internationally important populations of overwintering waterbirds for which they are designated is often also dependent upon their regularly used supporting habitats or 'functionally-linked land' outwith the SPA. The individual qualifying species of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar most likely to use surrounding 'functionally-linked land' and of particular relevance is golden plover, although other named species such as lapwing is also relevant.
- 6.28 Survey has demonstrated that the site is used very sporadically by golden plover, with a mean over the three survey periods of 33.64 individuals (0.58% of the 5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/2004 wintering individuals). This is below the 1% critical threshold of the Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar population of golden plover, above which may be deemed significant if regularly occurring.
- 6.29 Use of the site was variable over the three survey periods. With very few and no individuals recorded during 2017/18 and 2016/17 survey periods respectively. The highest number of golden plover were recorded over the 2013/214 survey period, when a mean of 72.65 individuals (1.25% of the SPA population) was recorded. Most previous studies of winter habitat selection of golden plover were undertaken in mixed farming areas and reported a preference for feeding on grassland, particularly permanent pasture. However, research suggests that wintering golden plover are not habitat specialists and feed in diverse habitats including areas of intensively managed arable farmland⁶. This supports the results; that indicate that there is no particular site fidelity or reliance on the site between seasons, despite agricultural management (winter stubbles) being constant. It is clear that suitable and extensive grassland and arable habitat is widespread elsewhere both within and outside of the more sensitive 1-5k distance for which Natural England expects to be consulted on.
- 6.30 'Regular use' underpins the criteria for selection of the SPA's, for consistency these criteria have been used to identify regularly used 'functionally-linked land'. The definition of 'Regular: as per Selection guidelines for Special Protection Area' is:

"The Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention has defined the term "regularly" as used in the Ramsar site selection criteria and this definition applies also to these Guidelines. A wetland regularly supports a population of a given size if:

⁶ Gillings S, Full RJ & WJ Sutherland (2007) Winter field use and habitat selection by Eurasian Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* and Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* on arable farmland. Ibis 149, 509 – 520.

- *the requisite number of birds is known to have occurred in two thirds of the seasons for which adequate data are available, the total number of seasons being not less than three; or*
- *the mean of the maxima of those seasons in which the site is internationally important, taken over at least five years, amounts to the required level (means based on three or four years may be quoted in provisional assessments only)."*

[FPCR emphasis underlined]

- 6.31 On the basis that the site is only used in less than two thirds of years for which data exists and as it lies outside of the consultation zone for which NE expects to be consulted for this develop type; suggesting that effects are unlikely to be significant, **it is considered that the loss of the site would not lead to a Likely Significant Effect on golden plover.**
- 6.32 The presence of >20,000 waterfowl is also a qualifying feature of the SPA, therefore all 'SPA birds' i.e. waterbirds (waders and wildfowl) recorded on the application site constitute part of the assemblage criteria (but are not necessarily qualifying features in their own right) this includes lapwing, golden plover, lesser black-backed gull, herring gull and mallard. No significant populations of birds that contribute to the designation of the SPA/Ramsar were recorded within the site boundary. The only other species recorded that contributes to Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar was lapwing. Lapwing were recorded in small numbers (i.e. below >1% threshold for significance) during five survey occasions with a peak count of 35 birds incidentally recorded during survey of the site on the 8th December 2016. Observations included foraging and loafing birds with a single observation of a flock of 54 birds overflying a field in the north of the site.
- 6.33 **On this basis it is considered that the loss of the site would not lead to a Likely Significant Effect on the over-wintering waterbird assemblage of the SPA.**

Potential In-combination Effects

Plans and projects

- 6.34 When assessing in-combination effects the following plans or projects should be considered⁷:
- projects that are under construction;
 - permitted application(s) not yet implemented;
 - submitted application(s) not yet determined;
 - all refusals subject to appeal procedures not yet determined;
 - projects on the National Infrastructure's programme of projects; and
 - projects identified in the relevant development plan (and emerging development plans - with appropriate weight being given as they move closer to adoption) recognising that much information on any relevant proposals will be limited and the degree of uncertainty which may be present.

⁷ Para 4.17, Advice note ten: Habitats Regulations Assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects (Version 8).

Permitted applications not yet implemented

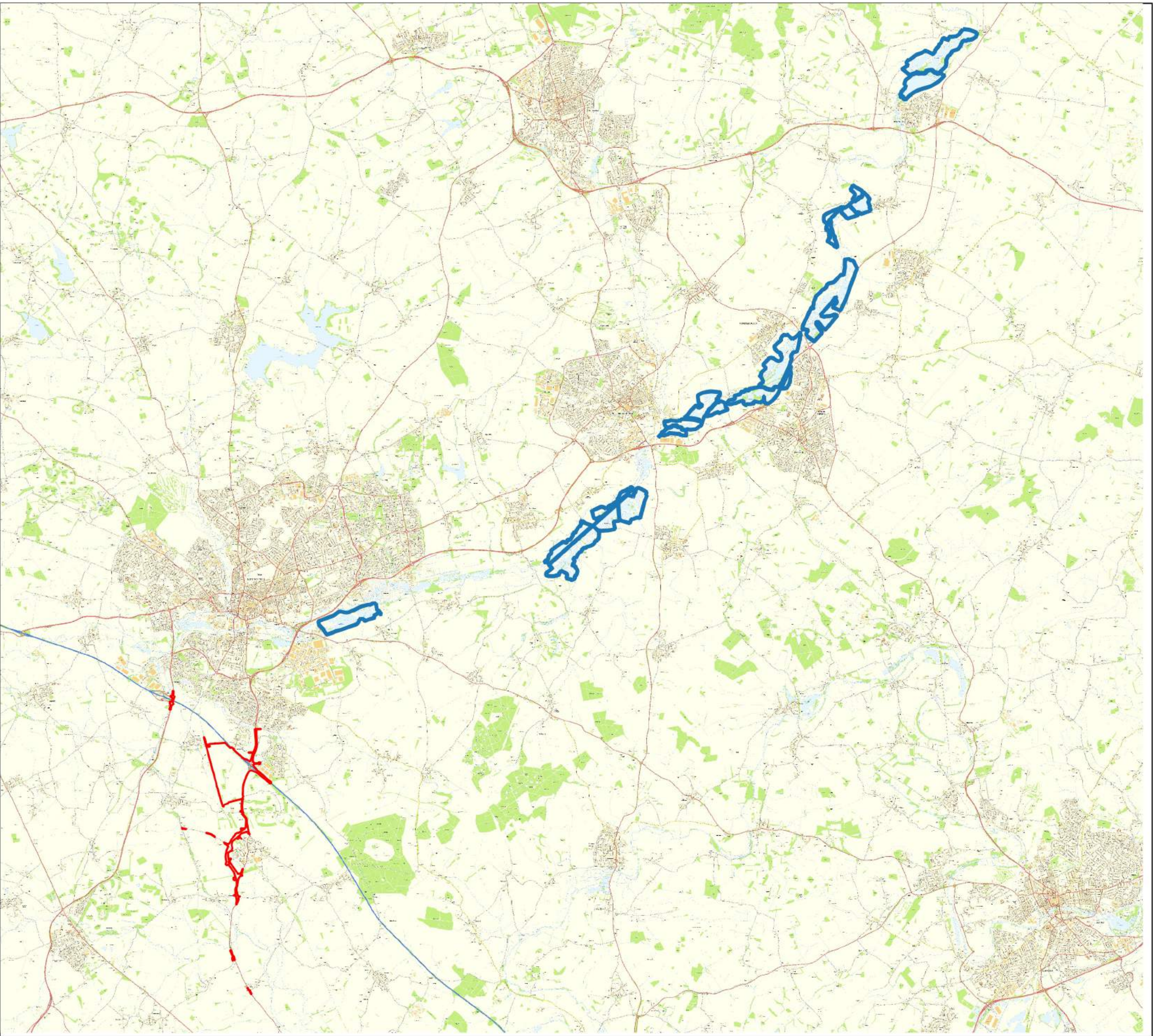
- 6.35 Allocated sites as identified by Northampton Borough have been reviewed to identify those that could lead to in-combination effects on supporting habitats/functionally-linked land. These include two allocated sustainable urban extensions (SUE) – Northampton South SUE, and South of Brackmills SUE, which both support open farmland habitats that could be used by golden plover and lapwing. In addition, and in accordance with *Advice note ten: Habitats Regulations Assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects*, the potential, if theoretical, in-combination effects should the emerging 'Rail Central' SRFI proposed to the west of Northampton Gateway also be approved in addition to the committed developments was also considered.
- 6.36 The committed developments (i.e. projects authorised but not yet started) considered are the two SUE suggested for consideration through the ES Scoping process, at Northampton South, and South of Brackmills.
- 6.37 The closer of these two sites Northampton South SUE lies on the opposite side of the M1 motorway from the Northampton Gateway and supports a range of farmland habitats that could be used by Annex I species. The overwintering bird survey results submitted with the Application did not identify use by either golden plover or lapwing and, accordingly, in-combination effects have been ruled out.
- 6.38 The South of Brackmills SUE is dominated by intensively managed arable land; a habitat that could be used by golden plover and lapwing. The wintering bird survey submitted with the application specifically looked to determine if golden plover used the Application Site. No golden plover or lapwing were recorded at the Site and the proposals were not considered to provide supporting habitat for either golden plover or lapwing and, accordingly, in-combination effects have been ruled out.

Projects on the National Infrastructure's programme of projects

- 6.39 The Rail Central SRFI proposals, which are located west of the Proposed Development have the potential to result in ecological effects which, theoretically, if both proposals were to proceed, could give rise to cumulative effects.
- 6.40 Habitats within the Rail Central site are similar to those within the proposals, being dominated by agricultural land. The March 2018 Rail Central draft PEIR shared by the scheme promoter includes the results of specifically looked to determine if golden plover used the Application Site. No golden plover or lapwing were recorded at the Site and the proposals were not considered to provide supporting habitat for either golden plover or lapwing and, accordingly, in-combination effects have been ruled out.
- 6.41 To conclude, a review of plans or projects that could potentially lead to in-combination effects has been undertaken to identify those that could lead to an effect on supporting habitat/functionally linked land.
- 6.42 Based on available information, there are no in-combination effects on supporting habitats/functionally linked land that would lead to significant effect on the interest features of the SPA/Ramsar.

Conclusion

- 6.43 A review of the potential for LSE on the Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar site has been undertaken. This include a review of the development proposals and the potential for effect on the feature of interest associated with the SPA/Ramsar; specifically and of relevance to the proposals, their effect on wintering birds, most notably, but not limited to, golden plover, which have been recorded sporadically within the site over three seasons of study.
- 6.44 Despite the SPA/Ramsar lying some distance from the Proposed development, it is now well-established that where SPA qualifying features might rely on nearby but undesignated functionally linked land then may fall within the scope of the HRA of new plans or projects. On the basis that use of the site by golden plover or other overwintering species is irregular or in low numbers within the site, it is not considered to provide significant functionally-linked land and the proposed development is not considered to lead to Likely significant effects on the Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA/ Ramsar site.
- 6.45 Following consultation, this is supported by Natural England who advises that a Likely Significant Effect can be ruled out (Appendix B) .
- 6.46 The HRA has been concluded as no LSE without inclusion of proposed mitigation and, as is consistent with para 1.17 and the recent People over Wind high-court ruling, it is not necessary to proceed to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.




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Key

- Site Boundary
- Special Protection Area (SPA)





client
Roxhill (Junction 15) Ltd

project
Junction 15,
Northampton

drawing title
SITE LOCATION PLAN

scale
1:60,000

drawn
SAR / PH

date
9/5/2018

Figure 1

Appendix A: Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA Data Sheet

NATURA 2000 – STANDARD DATA FORM

Special Protection Areas under the EC Birds Directive.

Each Natura 2000 site in the United Kingdom has its own Standard Data Form containing site-specific information. The data form for this site has been generated from the Natura 2000 Database submitted to the European Commission on the following date:

22/12/2015

The information provided here, follows the officially agreed site information format for Natura 2000 sites, as set out in the [Official Journal of the European Union recording the Commission Implementing Decision of 11 July 2011](#) (2011/484/EU).

The Standard Data Forms are generated automatically for all of the UK's Natura 2000 sites using the European Environment Agency's Natura 2000 software. The structure and format of these forms is exactly as produced by the EEA's Natura 2000 software (except for the addition of this coversheet and the end notes). The content matches exactly the data submitted to the European Commission.

Please note that these forms contain a number of codes, all of which are explained either within the data forms themselves or in the end notes.

Further technical documentation may be found here
http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/activities/Natura_2000/reference_portal

As part of the December 2015 submission, several sections of the UK's previously published Standard Data Forms have been updated. For details of the approach taken by the UK in this submission please refer to the following document:
http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Natura2000_StandardDataForm_UKApproach_Dec2015.pdf

More general information on Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the United Kingdom is available from the [SPA home page on the JNCC website](#). This webpage also provides links to Standard Data Forms for all SPAs in the UK.

Date form generated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee
25 January 2016.



NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

For Special Protection Areas (SPA),
Proposed Sites for Community Importance (pSCI),
Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and
for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SITE UK9020296
SITENAME Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

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- [1. SITE IDENTIFICATION](#)
- [2. SITE LOCATION](#)
- [3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION](#)
- [4. SITE DESCRIPTION](#)
- [5. SITE PROTECTION STATUS AND RELATION WITH CORINE BIOTOPES](#)
- [6. SITE MANAGEMENT](#)
- [7. MAP OF THE SITE](#)

1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Type A	1.2 Site code UK9020296	Back to top
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1.3 Site name

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

1.4 First Compilation date 2011-04	1.5 Update date 2015-12
--	-----------------------------------

1.6 Respondent:

Name/Organisation: Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Address: Joint Nature Conservation Committee Monkstone House City Road Peterborough
PE1 1JY

Email:

1.7 Site indication and designation / classification dates

Date site classified as SPA:	2011-04
National legal reference of SPA designation	Regulations 12A and 13-15 of the Conservation Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/490/contents/made) as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/625/contents/made).

2. SITE LOCATION

2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

Longitude

-0.5822

Latitude

52.3344

2.2 Area [ha]:

1357.68

2.3 Marine area [%]

0.0

2.4 Sitelength [km]:

35.0

2.5 Administrative region code and name

NUTS level 2 code

Region Name

UKF2

Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire

2.6 Biogeographical Region(s)

Atlantic (100.0
%)

3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION

3.2 Species referred to in Article 4 of Directive 2009/147/EC and listed in Annex II of Directive 92/43/EEC and site evaluation for them

Species					Population in the site						Site assessment			
G	Code	Scientific Name	S	NP	T	Size		Unit	Cat.	D.qual.	A B C D	A B C		
						Min	Max				Pop.	Con.	Iso.	C
B	A056	Anas clypeata			w	178	178	i		G	C		C	
B	A050	Anas penelope			w	5001	5001	i		G	C		C	
B	A053	Anas platyrhynchos			w	2312	2312	i		G	C		C	
B	A051	Anas strepera			w	12	12	Bfemales		G	B		C	
B	A059	Aythya ferina			w	625	625	i		G	C		C	
B	A061	Aythya fuligula			w	1187	1187	i		G	C		C	
B	A021	Botaurus stellaris			w	2	2	i		G	B		C	
B	A125	Fulica atra			w	2323	2323	i		G	C		C	
B	A017	Phalacrocorax carbo			w	285	285	i		G	C		C	
B	A140	Pluvialis apricaria			w	5790	5790	i		G	B		C	

B	A005	Podiceps cristatus		w	288	288	i		G	C		C
B	A142	Vanellus vanellus		w	3349	3349	i		G	C		C

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, I = Invertebrates, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Type:** p = permanent, r = reproducing, c = concentration, w = wintering (for plant and non-migratory species use permanent)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the Standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting (see [reference portal](#))
- **Abundance categories (Cat.):** C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present - to fill if data are deficient (DD) or in addition to population size information
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation); VP = 'Very poor' (use this category only, if not even a rough estimation of the population size can be made, in this case the fields for population size can remain empty, but the field "Abundance categories" has to be filled in)

3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

Species					Population in the site				Motivation					
Group	CODE	Scientific Name	S	NP	Size		Unit	Cat.	Species Annex		Other categories			
					Min	Max		C R V P	IV	V	A	B	C	D
B	WATR	Waterfowl assemblage			23821	23821	i						X	

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, Fu = Fungi, I = Invertebrates, L = Lichens, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **CODE:** for Birds, Annex IV and V species the code as provided in the reference portal should be used in addition to the scientific name
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting, (see [reference portal](#))
- **Cat.:** Abundance categories: C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present
- **Motivation categories:** IV, V: Annex Species (Habitats Directive), A: National Red List data; B: Endemics; C: International Conventions; D: other reasons

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

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4.1 General site character

Habitat class	% Cover
N07	19.0
N16	5.0
N06	49.0
N14	27.0
Total Habitat Cover	100

Other Site Characteristics

4.2 Quality and importance

ARTICLE 4.1 QUALIFICATION (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: *Botaurus stellaris* (Europe - breeding) 2% of the GB population 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 ? 2003/04 *Pluvialis apricaria* [North-western Europe - breeding] 2.3% of the GB population 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 ? 2003/04 ARTICLE 4.2 QUALIFICATION (79/409/EEC) Over winter the area regularly supports: *Anas strepera* (North-western Europe) 2% of the population 5-year peak mean 1999/2000 ? 2003/04 ARTICLE 4.2 QUALIFICATION (79/409/EEC): AN INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT ASSEMBLAGE OF BIRDS Over winter the area regularly supports: 23821 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/92-1995/96) Including: *Podiceps cristatus*, *Phalacrocorax carbo*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Anas penelope*, *Anas strepera*, *Anas platyrhynchos*, *Anas clypeata*, *Aythya ferina*, *Aythya fuligula*, *Fulica atra*, *Pluvialis apricaria* [North-western Europe - breeding], *Vanellus vanellus*

4.3 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site

The most important impacts and activities with high effect on the site

Negative Impacts			
Rank	Threats and pressures [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
H	F02		I
H	E06		B
H	A02		I
H	G01		I

Positive Impacts			
Rank	Activities, management [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
H	A04		I
H	A02		I
H	A06		I

Rank: H = high, M = medium, L = low

Pollution: N = Nitrogen input, P = Phosphor/Phosphate input, A = Acid input/acidification,

T = toxic inorganic chemicals, O = toxic organic chemicals, X = Mixed pollutions

i = inside, o = outside, b = both

4.5 Documentation

Conservation Objectives - the Natural England links below provide access to the Conservation Objectives (and other site-related information) for its terrestrial and inshore Natura 2000 sites, including conservation advice packages and supporting documents for European Marine Sites within English waters and for cross-border sites. See also the 'UK Approach' document for more information (link via the JNCC website).

Link(s): <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/3212324>
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216>

http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Natura2000_StandardDataForm_UKApproach_Dec2015.pdf

5. SITE PROTECTION STATUS (optional)

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5.1 Designation types at national and regional level:

Code	Cover [%]	Code	Cover [%]	Code	Cover [%]
UK04	100.0				

6. SITE MANAGEMENT

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6.1 Body(ies) responsible for the site management:

Organisation:	Natural England
---------------	-----------------

Address:	
Email:	

6.2 Management Plan(s):

An actual management plan does exist:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No, but in preparation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

6.3 Conservation measures (optional)

For available information, including on Conservation Objectives, see Section 4.5.

7. MAP OF THE SITES

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INSPIRE ID:

--

Map delivered as PDF in electronic format (optional)

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reference(s) to the original map used for the digitalisation of the electronic boundaries (optional).

--

EXPLANATION OF CODES USED IN THE NATURA 2000 STANDARD DATA FORMS

The codes in the table below are also explained in the [official European Union guidelines for the Standard Data Form](#). The relevant page is shown in the table below.

1.1 Site type

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Designated Special Protection Area	53
B	SAC (includes candidates Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance and designated SAC)	53
C	SAC area the same as SPA. Note in the UK Natura 2000 submission this is only used for Gibraltar	53

3.1 Habitat representativity

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent	57
B	Good	57
C	Significant	57
D	Non-significant presence	57

3.1 Habitat code

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
1110	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	57
1130	Estuaries	57
1140	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	57
1150	Coastal lagoons	57
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	57
1170	Reefs	57
1180	Submarine structures made by leaking gases	57
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines	57
1220	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	57
1230	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts	57
1310	Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand	57
1320	Spartina swards (Spartinion maritimae)	57
1330	Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)	57
1340	Inland salt meadows	57
1420	Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (Sarcocornetea fruticosi)	57
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes	57
2120	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria ("white dunes")	57
2130	Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")	57
2140	Decalcified fixed dunes with Empetrum nigrum	57
2150	Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea)	57
2160	Dunes with Hippophila rhamnoides	57
2170	Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae)	57
2190	Humid dune slacks	57
21A0	Machairs (* in Ireland)	57
2250	Coastal dunes with Juniperus spp.	57
2330	Inland dunes with open Corynephorus and Agrostis grasslands	57
3110	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae)	57
3130	Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea	57
3140	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp.	57
3150	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation	57

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
3160	Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds	57
3170	Mediterranean temporary ponds	57
3180	Turloughs	57
3260	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation	57
4010	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix	57
4020	Temperate Atlantic wet heaths with Erica ciliaris and Erica tetralix	57
4030	European dry heaths	57
4040	Dry Atlantic coastal heaths with Erica vagans	57
4060	Alpine and Boreal heaths	57
4080	Sub-Arctic Salix spp. scrub	57
5110	Stable xerothermophilous formations with Buxus sempervirens on rock slopes (Berberidion p.p.)	57
5130	Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	57
6130	Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae	57
6150	Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands	57
6170	Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands	57
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)	57
6230	Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in Continental Europe)	57
6410	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)	57
6430	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels	57
6510	Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis)	57
6520	Mountain hay meadows	57
7110	Active raised bogs	57
7120	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	57
7130	Blanket bogs (* if active bog)	57
7140	Transition mires and quaking bogs	57
7150	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	57
7210	Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae	57
7220	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)	57
7230	Alkaline fens	57
7240	Alpine pioneer formations of the Caricion bicoloris-atrofuscae	57
8110	Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani)	57
8120	Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (Thlaspietea rotundifolii)	57
8210	Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	57
8220	Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	57
8240	Limestone pavements	57
8310	Caves not open to the public	57
8330	Submerged or partially submerged sea caves	57
9120	Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer (Quercion roburi-petraeae or Ilici-Fagenion)	57
9130	Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests	57
9160	Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli	57
9180	Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines	57
9190	Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains	57
91A0	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles	57
91C0	Caledonian forest	57
91D0	Bog woodland	57
91E0	Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)	57
91J0	Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles	57

3.1 Relative surface

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	15%-100%	58
B	2%-15%	58
C	< 2%	58

3.1 Conservation status habitat

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent conservation	59
B	Good conservation	59
C	Average or reduced conservation	59

3.1 Global grade habitat

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent value	59
B	Good value	59
C	Significant value	59

3.2 Population (abbreviated to 'Pop.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	15%-100%	62
B	2%-15%	62
C	< 2%	62
D	Non-significant population	62

3.2 Conservation status species (abbreviated to 'Con.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent conservation	63
B	Good conservation	63
C	Average or reduced conservation	63

3.2 Isolation (abbreviated to 'Iso.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Population (almost) Isolated	63
B	Population not-isolated, but on margins of area of distribution	63
C	Population not-isolated within extended distribution range	63

3.2 Global Grade (abbreviated to 'Glo.' Or 'G.' in data form)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A	Excellent value	63
B	Good value	63
C	Significant value	63

3.3 Assemblages types

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
WATR	Non breeding waterfowl assemblage	UK specific code
SBA	Breeding seabird assemblage	UK specific code
BBA	Breeding bird assemblage (applies only to sites classified pre 2000)	UK specific code

4.1 Habitat class code

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
N01	Marine areas, Sea inlets	65
N02	Tidal rivers, Estuaries, Mud flats, Sand flats, Lagoons (including saltwork basins)	65
N03	Salt marshes, Salt pastures, Salt steppes	65
N04	Coastal sand dunes, Sand beaches, Machair	65
N05	Shingle, Sea cliffs, Islets	65
N06	Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water)	65
N07	Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens	65
N08	Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana	65
N09	Dry grassland, Steppes	65
N10	Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland	65
N11	Alpine and sub-Alpine grassland	65
N14	Improved grassland	65
N15	Other arable land	65
N16	Broad-leaved deciduous woodland	65
N17	Coniferous woodland	65
N19	Mixed woodland	65
N21	Non-forest areas cultivated with woody plants (including Orchards, groves, Vineyards, Dehesas)	65
N22	Inland rocks, Screes, Sands, Permanent Snow and ice	65
N23	Other land (including Towns, Villages, Roads, Waste places, Mines, Industrial sites)	65
N25	Grassland and scrub habitats (general)	65
N26	Woodland habitats (general)	65

4.3 Threats code

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
A01	Cultivation	65
A02	Modification of cultivation practices	65
A03	Mowing / cutting of grassland	65
A04	Grazing	65
A05	Livestock farming and animal breeding (without grazing)	65
A06	Annual and perennial non-timber crops	65
A07	Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals	65
A08	Fertilisation	65
A10	Restructuring agricultural land holding	65
A11	Agriculture activities not referred to above	65
B01	Forest planting on open ground	65
B02	Forest and Plantation management & use	65
B03	Forest exploitation without replanting or natural regrowth	65
B04	Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals (forestry)	65
B06	Grazing in forests/ woodland	65
B07	Forestry activities not referred to above	65
C01	Mining and quarrying	65
C02	Exploration and extraction of oil or gas	65
C03	Renewable abiotic energy use	65
D01	Roads, paths and railroads	65
D02	Utility and service lines	65
D03	Shipping lanes, ports, marine constructions	65
D04	Airports, flightpaths	65
D05	Improved access to site	65
E01	Urbanised areas, human habitation	65
E02	Industrial or commercial areas	65

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
E03	Discharges	65
E04	Structures, buildings in the landscape	65
E06	Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities	65
F01	Marine and Freshwater Aquaculture	65
F02	Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources	65
F03	Hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), including damage caused by game (excessive density), and taking/removal of terrestrial animals (including collection of insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds of prey, etc., trapping, poisoning, poaching, predator control, accidental capture (e.g. due to fishing gear), etc.)	65
F04	Taking / Removal of terrestrial plants, general	65
F05	Illegal taking/ removal of marine fauna	65
F06	Hunting, fishing or collecting activities not referred to above	65
G01	Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities	65
G02	Sport and leisure structures	65
G03	Interpretative centres	65
G04	Military use and civil unrest	65
G05	Other human intrusions and disturbances	65
H01	Pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish)	65
H02	Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources)	65
H03	Marine water pollution	65
H04	Air pollution, air-borne pollutants	65
H05	Soil pollution and solid waste (excluding discharges)	65
H06	Excess energy	65
H07	Other forms of pollution	65
I01	Invasive non-native species	65
I02	Problematic native species	65
I03	Introduced genetic material, GMO	65
J01	Fire and fire suppression	65
J02	Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions	65
J03	Other ecosystem modifications	65
K01	Abiotic (slow) natural processes	65
K02	Biocenotic evolution, succession	65
K03	Interspecific faunal relations	65
K04	Interspecific floral relations	65
K05	Reduced fecundity/ genetic depression	65
L05	Collapse of terrain, landslide	65
L07	Storm, cyclone	65
L08	Inundation (natural processes)	65
L10	Other natural catastrophes	65
M01	Changes in abiotic conditions	65
M02	Changes in biotic conditions	65
U	Unknown threat or pressure	65
XO	Threats and pressures from outside the Member State	65

5.1 Designation type codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO
UK00	No Protection Status	67
UK01	National Nature Reserve	67
UK02	Marine Nature Reserve	67
UK04	Site of Special Scientific Interest (UK)	67

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) – 2009-2012 version

Available for download from http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm.

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX.22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 14, 3rd edition). A 4th edition of the Handbook is in preparation and will be available in 2009.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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DD MM YY

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 7 April 2011

3. Country:

UK (England)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

a) Designation of a new Ramsar site ☒; or

b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site ☐

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged: ☐

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ☐; or
- ii) the boundary has been extended ☐; or
- iii) the boundary has been restricted** ☐

and/or

If the site area has changed:

- i) the area has been measured more accurately ☐; or
- ii) the area has been extended ☐; or
- iii) the area has been reduced** ☐

** **Important note:** If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) a **hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): ☒;
- ii) an **electronic format** (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ☒;
- iii) a **GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables** ☒.

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The boundary follows the same boundary as Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and encompasses most of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI. For further details please see the maps provided at designation.

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

Longitude: 00 34 56 W

Latitude: 52 20 04 N

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s) the site lies and the location of the nearest large town.

Nearest town / city: Wellingborough and Northampton

The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits are located in the East Midlands region which is situated towards the centre of England in the county of Northamptonshire. The site extends for approximately 35 kilometres

along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene floodplain on the southern outskirts of Northampton, downstream to Thorpe Waterville, north of Thrapston.

10. Elevation: (in metres: average and/or maximum & minimum)

Min: 24m Max: 59m Mean: 37.77m

11. Area: (in hectares) 1,357.67

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

This chain of both active and disused sand and gravel pits form an extensive series of shallow and deep open waters which occur in association with a wide range of marginal features, such as sparsely-vegetated islands, gravel bars and shorelines and habitats including reedswamp, marsh, wet ditches, rush pasture, rough grassland and scattered scrub.

This range of habitats and the varied topography of the lagoons provide valuable resting and feeding conditions for concentrations of wintering waterbirds, especially ducks and waders. Species such as golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* also spend time feeding and roosting on surrounding agricultural land outside the Ramsar site.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 8 • 9
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 5** because it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds:

In the non-breeding season, the site regularly supports 23,821 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 6** because it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird in any season:

Species	Count and season	Period	% of subspecies/population
Mute swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	629 individuals - wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.7% Britain
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0% <i>strepera</i> , NW Europe (breeding)

Bird counts from: Denton Wood Associates. 2005. *Wintering waterbirds in the Upper Nene Valley – supplementary data analysis in relation to possible SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site designation*. Unpublished report to English Nature. Copies available from Natural England on request.

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & Geology	Alluvium, basic, neutral
Geomorphology & landscape	Floodplain, excavations
Nutrient Status	Eutrophic
pH	Circumneutral
Salinity	Fresh
Soil	Mainly organic
Water permanence	Permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Bedford 1971 – 2000) http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/bedford.html Max. daily temperature: 13.5 °C Min daily temperature: 5.6 °C Days of air frost: 50.5 Rainfall: 584.4mm Hrs of sunshine: 1523.6

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, and climate (including climate type).

The River Nene Catchment is 631 square miles (1,630km²).

The key characteristics of the wider Nene Valley - broad, flat and predominantly wide floodplain surrounded by rising landform of adjacent landscape types; deep, alluvial clay and silt with sand and gravel, masking the underlying geology; river channel with slow flowing watercourse with limited bank side vegetation in areas.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Flood water storage

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar “Classification System for Wetland Type” present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

Code	Name	% Area
7 (Human-made)	Excavations	49%
4 (Human-made)	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	26%
Other	Other	18%
6 (Human-made)	Water storage areas	5%
Ts (Inland)	Seasonal / intermittent freshwater marshes / pools on inorganic soils	1%
Xf (Inland)	Freshwater, tree dominated wetlands	1%

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

Open water, with associated wetland habitats including reedbeds, fen grassland and woodland which support a number of wetland plant and animal species including internationally important numbers of wintering and breeding wildfowl.

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Invasive plants present on site:

- Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*
- New Zealand Pigmy Weed *Crassula helmsii*
- Nuttall's Pondweed *Elodea nuttallii*

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Birds

Species occurring at levels of European importance (as identified at designation):

Over winter the area regularly supports:

Annex 1 species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0%
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	5,790 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.3%

Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:

Over winter the area regularly supports:

Species	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI (individual birds)	Period	% of GB population
Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	5,001	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.2%
Shoveler <i>Anas chrypeata</i>	178		1.2%
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	625		1.1%
Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1,187		1.3%
Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	288		1.8%
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	285		1.2%
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	2,323		1.3%

23. Social and cultural values:

a) Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values:

- Aesthetic
- Conservation education
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing
- Tourism
- Transportation/navigation

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

- No

If Yes, tick the box ☐ and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

Ownership category	a) On-site	b) Off-site
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	+
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	+
Private	+	+
Other	+	+

25. Current land (including water) use:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Activity	a) On-Site	b) Off-Site
Nature conservation	+	+
Tourism	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Current scientific research	+	+
Fishing: recreational / sport	+	+
Grazing	+	+
Flood control	+	
Transport route		+
Domestic water supply		+
Urban development		+
Non-urbanised settlements		+
Agriculture	+	+

26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of problem	a) On Site	b) Off Site	Major impact
Unspecified development: urban use	1	Activities connected with ongoing urban development cause significant disturbance to wintering birds if unmanaged.		+	
Vegetation succession	2	Lack of grazing is leading to succession from short grassland to rank grassland, scrub / woodland. Whilst this is desirable in certain areas, widespread vegetation succession will result in a decrease in the availability of suitable habitat for key species.	+		+
Introduction / invasion of non-native plant species	2	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i> and <i>Crassula helmsii</i> present in small areas of the site	+		
Recreation / tourism disturbance	2	Access by people and dogs both on and off of public rights of way is a significant cause of disturbance in some areas. The site is also subject to a variety of recreational activities including fishing & watersports. Demand for access and formal / informal recreational activities within the Nene Valley are increasing; development of facilities / opportunities is often in an uncoordinated manner.	+	+	+

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Vegetation succession: This is principally being addressed through agri-environment schemes, predominantly HLS. This is only relevant where large areas of grassland are involved. The scope of agri-environment schemes mean that much of the land is not eligible and there are no alternative sources of funding for the small scale landowners / occupiers to undertake positive management works associated with marginal / aquatic habitats e.g. willow clearance around edge of a lake. Alternative sources for funding e.g. local grant schemes should be investigated. Issues leading to vegetation succession are also to be addressed through enhanced liaison with landowners/occupiers, management agreements and management plans; assisted by powers under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Introduction / invasion of non-native plant species: Invasion of lakeside edges by invasive non-native plants is to be addressed through enhanced liaison with landowners / occupiers and The Environment Agency.

Recreation / tourism disturbance: The intensity and location of recreational activities taking place just prior to SSSI notification on 24 November 2005 was considered compatible with maintaining appropriate population levels. This is managed through voluntary agreements assisted by powers within Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010.

The development of future recreational opportunities is to be addressed through valley-wide tourism and recreational strategies to provide a coordinated approach; including the development of access

management plans for key sites and that appropriate planning policies are incorporated within strategic planning documents to ensure developments take account of direct and indirect recreational disturbance. Natural England intend to support and work in partnership with the following initiatives: The Wildlife Trust's Nene Valley Vision, RSPB Futurescapes and River Nene Regional Park projects.

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? Yes

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	+	+
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	+
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	+

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia ☐; Ib ☐; II ☐; III ☐; IV ☐; V ☐; VI ☐

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

No

d) Describe any other current management practices:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practices are given in these documents.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

No information available.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

- Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Counts
- Ongoing SSSI unit monitoring
- Various local Wildlife Trust monitoring and research projects

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire and Rockingham Forest Trust make use of the site for environmental educational purposes, both formal and informal. The Wildlife Trust have also established an Ecology Group within the Nene Valley aimed at increasing the number of local people with wildlife monitoring skills and involvement with local reserves.

Within the wider Ramsar site, bird hides exist at Summer Leys Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Titchmarsh LNR, both managed by the Wildlife Trust and at Stanwick Lakes, managed by Rockingham

Forest Trust. There is a visitor centre at Stanwick Lakes, managed by Rockingham Forest Trust which has interpretation facilities and an events programme relating to Stanwick Lakes; there is no wider Nene Valley focussed visitor centre.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Recreational activities: bird-watching, walking, fishing, sailing, canoeing, water-skiing, cycling

Facilities provided: visitor centre, interpretation, bird hides, cafe

These activities / facilities are spread across the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Site Designations Manager, Natural England, 3rd Floor, Touthill Close, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1XN, UK

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

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Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland**
Telephone: +41 22 999 0170 • Fax: +41 22 999 0169 • e-mail: ramsar@ramsar.org

Appendix B: Natural England Letter dated 30th July 2018

Date: 30 July 2018
Our ref: 252051
Your ref: Northampton Gateway SRFI NSIP



Peter Hoy
FPCR Environment and Design Ltd
Lockington Hall, Lockington
Derby
Leicestershire
DE74 2RH

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Peter Hoy

Planning consultation: Northampton Gateway SRFI NSIP
Location: Northampton Gateway, M1 Junction 15

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 03 June 2018.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

This advice is being provided as part of Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service. FPCR Environment and Design Ltd has asked Natural England to provide advice upon the acceptability of a draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) report. This advice is provided in accordance with the Quotation and Agreement dated 27 July 2018.

The following advice is based upon the information within 5772 App 5.6 Winter Bird Report and the 5772 Northampton Gateway - Draft HRA Report.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

NO OBJECTION

Based on the draft HRA and winter bird survey submitted, Natural England considers that the Northampton Gateway SRFI NSIP will not have significant adverse impacts on Functionally Linked Land (FLL) related to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Ramsar site, and has no objection.

Natural England was contacted by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on 03 June 2018 with a request to provide pre-examination stage advice on the acceptability of a draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) report. Please note that Natural England received notice on 27 June 2018 that an application in relation to this draft HRA had been submitted by the developer (Roxhill Junction 15 Limited) to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), and accepted for examination, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Within the Environmental Statement (ES) of the above 'developers application', in Appendix 1.2 of the Environmental Statement Scoping Opinion Issues and Responses, PINS (as a consultee) states that *'the Applicant is strongly advised to seek agreement with Natural England (NE) regarding the adequacy of current information and the timing and scope of any additional surveys required re: Golden Plover. Any mitigation proposals should also, if possible, be agreed with NE and taken into*

account in the ES'. The applicant (Roxhill Junction 15 Limited) states that they are preparing a Statement of Common Ground with Natural England. Natural England has not yet received this proposed Statement. Instead we suggest that the advice within this letter constitutes an agreement that the adequacy of winter bird survey data is sufficient. Regarding an agreement about mitigation proposals, the draft HRA has been concluded without inclusion of proposed mitigation (paragraph 1.7) in accordance with the recent Sweetman II high-court ruling. As mitigation proposals are absent from the draft HRA, we have not provided comments on these. Natural England does however welcome the 75.9 ha of green infrastructure, and 55 ha of woodland and meadow stated in the DAS Request form, which will provide priority habitat for bats, great crested newts and farmland birds.

More specifically, a recent judgment from the Court of Justice of the European Union (Case C-323/17 People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta) has provided authoritative interpretation relating to the use of mitigation measures at the screening stage of a Habitats Regulations Assessment. The judgment concluded that it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on a European site. However, when determining whether the plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site at appropriate assessment, a competent authority may take account of those avoidance and mitigation measures. PINS, as competent authority for the DCO application, should consider this judgment when undertaking the HRA screening under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and may wish to take its own legal advice on the implications of the judgement.

It is now well-established that where SPA qualifying features might rely on nearby but undesignated FLL then this is within the scope of the Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRAs) of new plans or projects. Such FLL requires the active implementation of conservation measures in recognition of its critical functional association with a European Site. The draft HRA states that the SPA is *c.5km west of the Main Site and c.7.5km north-east of the Bypass Corridor*. We advise that Paragraph 174a including footnote 57 of the revised (July 2018) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) puts greater emphasis on the enhancement of ecological networks, therefore any onsite enhancement of supporting habitat to the SPA would be warmly welcomed.

Regarding the Golden Plover, Natural England welcomes acknowledgement of our Supplementary Advice Note for the SPA (page 4), which states that *numbers fluctuate from year to year depending on weather conditions in the UK and Europe* and outlines that *it is not currently known where their preferred feeding grounds are and whether they remain faithful to specific fields or select fields based on crop type / food availability*. Consequently, the uncertainty in the numbers and preferred locations of golden plover means that determining significant effects largely relies on good survey data.

We note that winter bird surveys were undertaken using *methods agreed with Natural England initially in 2014 and subsequently in 2018 (Pers. comm. Ross Holgate, Natural England 16.01.2018)* (draft HRA paragraph 5.2). We also note that in the 2013/2014 season a mean of 72 golden plover were recorded including large flocks of up to 507; no golden plovers were recorded during the 2016/17 season; and in the 2017/18 season a total of 10 individuals were recorded on one occasion. Natural England subsequently agrees with paragraph 6.28 of the draft HRA which states that the *survey has demonstrated that the site is used very sporadically by golden plover*.

To meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, we advise you to record your decision that a likely significant effect can be ruled out. Natural England supports the reasoning behind concluding no likely significant effects within paragraph 6.31 of the draft HRA, and agrees with paragraph 1.9 of the Winter Bird Survey Report.

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on 02080263523.

This letter concludes Natural England's Advice within the Quotation and Agreement dated 27 July 2018 .

☒ The advice provided in this letter has been through Natural England's Quality Assurance process.

The advice provided within the Discretionary Advice Service is the professional advice of the Natural England adviser named below. It is the best advice that can be given based on the information provided so far. Its quality and detail is dependent upon the quality and depth of the information which has been provided. It does not constitute a statutory response or decision, which will be made by Natural England acting corporately in its role as statutory consultee to the competent authority after an application has been submitted. The advice given is therefore not binding in any way and is provided without prejudice to the consideration of any statutory consultation response or decision which may be made by Natural England in due course. The final judgement on any proposals by Natural England is reserved until an application is made and will be made on the information then available, including any modifications to the proposal made after receipt of discretionary advice. All pre-application advice is subject to review and revision in the light of changes in relevant considerations, including changes in relation to the facts, scientific knowledge/evidence, policy, guidance or law. Natural England will not accept any liability for the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of, nor will any express or implied warranty be given for, the advice. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by or on behalf of Natural England.

Yours sincerely

Anna Bush
Lead Planning Adviser

Cc commercialservices@naturalengland.org.uk

Appendix C: Screening Matrices (HRA Stage 1: Screening)

Potential Effects

Potential effects upon the European site(s)* which are considered within the submitted HRA report ([REPORT ON EUROPEAN SITES: HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT \(DOC 6.3\)](#)) are provided in the table below.

Effects considered within the screening matrices

Designation	Effects described in submission information	Presented in screening matrices as
Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area/Ramsar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of supporting habitat/functionally linked land outside of SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Habitat loss

* As defined in Advice Note 10.

STAGE 1: SCREENING MATRICES

The European sites included within the screening assessment are:

Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area

Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area Ramsar

Evidence for, or against, likely significant effects on the European site(s) and its qualifying feature(s) is detailed within the footnotes to the screening matrices below.

Matrix Key:

✓ = Likely significant effect **cannot** be excluded

✗ = Likely significant effect **can** be excluded

C = construction

O = operation

D = decommissioning

HRA Screening Matrix 1: Upper Nene Valley SPA

Name of European site and designation: Upper Nene Valley SPA												
EU Code: UK9020296												
Distance to NSIP: 5km												
European site features	Likely effects of NSIP											
	Habitat Loss			Effect			Effect			In combination effects		
Effect												
Stage of Development	C	O	D	C	O	D	C	O	D	C	O	D
Bittern (overwintering)	xa	xa								xa	xa	
Golden plover (overwintering)	xb	xb								xc	xc	
Gadwall (overwintering - migratory)	xa	xa								xa	xa	

Name of European site and designation: Upper Nene Valley SPA												
EU Code: UK9020296												
Distance to NSIP: 5km												
European site features	Likely effects of NSIP											
<i>Effect</i>	<i>Habitat Loss</i>			<i>Effect</i>			<i>Effect</i>			<i>In combination effects</i>		
<i>Stage of Development</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>
Overwintering waterbird assemblage >20,000 (Wigeon, Mallard, Northern shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Great crested grebe, Mute swan, Great cormorant, Lapwing, Golden plover, Coot)	xd	xd								xd	xd	

Evidence supporting conclusions:

- a. No identified reliance on supporting habitat/functionally linked land outside of SPA identified and habitats on site are unsuitable for use.

- b.** No regular use of Northampton Gateway site by golden plover do not regularly use site (refer to Para 4.5 – 4.11 & 5.8-5.9; Report on European Sites: Habitats Regulations Assessment (DCO ref 6.3)). The site lies outside of the distance considered to warrant consultation with Natural England (para 5.1 DCO ref 6.3). Golden plover are known to be able to use a variety of farmland habitats most of which are extensive both with 5km of the SPA and wider area (para 5.9, DCO ref 6.3).
- c.** On the basis of available information other plans and projects do affect supporting habitat/functionally linked land used by Golden Plover (5.14 – 5.22, DCO ref 6.3). this is supported by Natural England (refer to Report on European Sites: Habitats Regulations Assessment: Appendix B).
- d.** With the exception of golden plover noted above the Northampton Gateway site only supports very low numbers of lapwing on occasion that are below any threshold of significance (para 5.12, DCO ref 6.3).

HRA Screening Matrix 2: Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar

Name of European site and designation: Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area SPA												
EU Code: UK11083												
Distance to NSIP: 5km												
European site features	Likely effects of NSIP											
<i>Effect</i>	<i>Habitat Loss</i>			<i>Effect</i>			<i>Effect</i>			<i>In combination effects</i>		
<i>Stage of Development</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>Wintering waterbird assemblage > 20,000 (Wigeon, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted duck, Great crested grebe, Cormorant, Golden Plover, Lapwing & Coot)</i>	xa	xa								xa	xa	
<i>Mute Swan</i>	xb	xb								xb	xb	
<i>Gadwall</i>	xb	xb								xb	xb	

Evidence supporting conclusions:

- a. With the exception of golden plover, of the species making up the overwintering water bird assemblage the Northampton Gateway site only supports very low numbers of lapwing on occasion that are below any threshold of significance (para 5.12, DCO ref 6.3). While moderate numbers of golden plover were recorded in one year of three years of study, regular use of Northampton Gateway site by golden plover has been identified (refer to Para 4.5 – 4.11 & 5.8-5.9; Report on European Sites: Habitats Regulations Assessment (DCO ref 6.3)). Golden plover are also known to be able to use a variety of farmland habitats, most of which are extensive both with 5km of the SPA and wider area (para 5.9, DCO ref 6.3). The site lies outside of the distance considered to warrant consultation with Natural England (para 5.1 DCO ref 6.3).
- b. No identified use of site or reliance on supporting habitat/functionally linked land outside of SPA identified.