

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Matrix and Appropriate Assessment Statement

PLEASE NOTE: Undertaking the HRA process is the responsibility of the decision maker as the Competent Authority for the purpose of the Habitats Regulations. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the Competent Authority with the information that they require for this purpose.

HRA drafting date:	06.12.2022
HRA completion date:	06.12.2022
Application reference:	22/02037/FUL
Application address:	Land To The East Of The A272, Andover Road, Littleton, Hampshire
Application description:	The construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, ancillary infrastructure, landscape planting and the construction of a new access road and access from the A272.
Lead Planning Officer:	Catherine Watson
Please note that all references in this assessment to the 'Habitats Regulations' refer to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.	

Stage 1 - details of the plan or project	
European site potentially impacted by planning application, plan or project:	Solent and Southampton Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Ramsar Site. Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and SAC. Collectively known as the Solent SPAs
Is the planning application directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (if yes, Applicant should have provided details)?	No. The proposal is for the construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility on land currently used for growing arable crops. This development is neither connected to nor necessary to the management of any European site.
Are there any other projects or plans that together with the planning application being assessed could affect the site (Applicant to provide details to allow an 'in combination' effect to be assessed)?	No.

Stage 2 - HRA screening assessment

Screening under Regulation 63(1)(a) of the Habitats Regulations – The Applicant to provide evidence so that a judgement can be made as to whether there could be any potential significant impacts of the development on the integrity of the SPA/SAC/Ramsar.

Development within the district will increase the human population at the coast and thus increase the level of eutrophication resulting in loss of feeding grounds and disturbance of bird species. The impacts of eutrophication (both at the site-scale and in combination with other development in the Solent area) are analogous to impacts from direct habitat loss as they can cause important habitat and feeding grounds to be unavailable for use (the habitat is functionally lost, either permanently or for a defined period). Birds can be displaced by eutrophication and use valuable resources in finding suitable areas in which to rest and feed undisturbed. Ultimately, the impacts of eutrophication can be such that they affect the status and distribution of key bird species and therefore act against the stated conservation objectives of the European sites.

The site is currently an arable field above a principal aquifer (chalk) at medium to high risk for groundwater vulnerability so there is little potential for attenuation if a potentially polluting loss or spillage occurs there.

Would the proposal lead to a likely significant effect on European site integrity? No.

(If yes, continue to Stage 3).

Stage 3 - Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment under Regulation 63(1) - if there are any potential significant impacts, the applicant must provide evidence showing avoidance and/or mitigation measures to allow an Assessment to be made. The Applicant must also provide details which demonstrate any long term management, maintenance and funding of any solution.

Nutrients

The proposed development is within Winchester District. An assessment of elements of the design and operation of the AD facility which could affect water quality in the vicinity and consideration of measures that will be in place to mitigate potential impact has been carried out. The site will require a Bespoke Environmental Permit to operate and will be regulated by the EA. Dirty water will be captured and used within the process and not discharged, only captured clean water (e.g. from roofs) may be released. The site infrastructure is specifically designed to ensure this requirement is met and therefore the Three Maids AD facility should not result in the release of additional N and P load to the River Itchen catchment and is therefore unlikely to result in impacts to the integrity of those protected sites through a consequent increase in eutrophication (the increase in dissolved nutrients that simulate the growth of aquatic plant life, usually resulting in the depletion of dissolved oxygen).

The project being assessed does not result in a net increase of nutrients being released within the Winchester District in line with Policy CP16 of the Winchester City Council Local Plan Part 1 Joint Core Strategy, and the WCC position statement on nitrate neutral development.

Stage 4 – Summary of the Appropriate Assessment (To be carried out by the Competent Authority (the local planning authority) in liaison with Natural England

In conclusion, the council as competent authority, agrees with the applicant's Nutrient Neutrality and Mitigation Strategy and for the reasons set out in that report, no nutrient mitigation is required.

This represents the authorities' Appropriate Assessment as Competent Authority in accordance with requirements under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive and having due regard to its duties under Section 40(1) of the NERC Act 2006 to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Consideration of the Ramsar site/s is a matter of government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

Natural England

Natural England's advice: N/A