Oxford City Council

Habitat Regulations Assessment: Screening Update and Appropriate Assessment

Regulation 19 Report | November 2025

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This report includes Stage 1 (Screening) and Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment) of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Oxford Local Plan 2045 Regulation 19 "Proposed Submission" Document (hereafter the "Reg.19 Plan").

1.2 This HRA report should be read in conjunction with the Oxford City Council Stage 1 HRA Screening Report (hereafter the Oxford HRA Screening Report) published to support the Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation (27 June – 08 August 2025). The Oxford HRA Screening Report is included at Appendix 1 of this Report.

1.3 This HRA Report (hereafter the "Reg. 19 HRA Report") is presented in two sections:

- Section 1 – HRA Screening, includes:
    - An update of the HRA screening categorisation schedule to reflect the policies and site allocations contained within the Reg. 19 Plan;
    - A discussion about the site allocation screening process;
    - How Natural England's formal response to the Oxford Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation has been addressed; and
    - An update to the Air Pollution Impact Pathway analysis that considers the levels of growth proposed within the Oxford Local Plan Reg. 19 Document and reflects on whether there are any implications of the changes to the dates of the twenty-year plan period.
- Section 2 – Appropriate Assessment includes:
    - A summary of the policies and site allocations contained within the Reg. 19 Plan that were carried forward for further investigation as part of the HRA Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment;
    - A more detailed analysis of likely significant effects of certain identified policies and site allocations in view of the site's conservation objectives;
    - The identification of suitable mitigation measures to avoid or minimise the likelihood of any such effect arising.

Requirements of the Habitat Regulations

1.4 Local Authorities preparing development plan documents must consider whether the relevant plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have significant effects on "European sites" that are protected by the Habitat

Regulations. This generally means considering whether the plan would be likely to significantly affect the conservation objectives or the designated features of the site.

1.5 According to Government Guidance on How to carry out an HRA (February 2021), the HRA process can have up to three stages. The stages are:

1. Screening – to check if the proposal is likely to have a significant effect of the site. This will usually involve consideration of likely significant effects in view of the site's conservation objectives and its designated features, for example. If not, you do not need to go through the appropriate assessment or derogation stages.
2. Appropriate Assessment - to assess the likely significant effects of the proposal in more detail in view of the site's conservation objectives and identify ways to avoid or minimise any such effects.
3. Derogation - to consider if proposals that would have an adverse effect on a European site qualify for an exemption.

1.6 This guidance provides advice and recommendations about how to understand and comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 SI No 1012 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 SI No 579.

1.7 This part of the report covers Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment). Oxford City Council has undertaken the HRA process 'in- house'.

Key HRA Stages explained

Screening for Likely Significant Effects

1.8 Screening is the process which identifies whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects to European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Government guidance on HRA Screening sets out that when assessing likely significant effects of a proposal on European site, *"You must check if the proposal could have a significant effect on a European site that could affect its conservation objectives"*. There needs to be a causal connection or link between the plan or project and the qualifying features of the site which could result in significant effects - this may be direct or indirect.

1.9 Government Guidance on Appropriate Assessment sets out the implications of the the People over Wind Judgement for Habitat Regulations Assessments. This judgement

clarified that when making screening decisions for the purposes of deciding whether an appropriate assessment is required, competent authorities cannot take into account mitigation measures. Instead, mitigation measures can only be taken into account as part of an appropriate assessment itself.

1.10 All draft policies and potential sites being proposed for inclusion in the Oxford Local Plan 2045 were the subject of an HRA screening for likely significant effects on European sites.

Appropriate Assessment

1.11 The purpose of the Appropriate Assessment stage is to further analyse likely significant effects identified during the screening stage, as well as those effects which were uncertain or not well understood and taken forward for assessment in accordance with the precautionary principle. If required, an Appropriate Assessment evaluating the implications of the plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of affected European sites, should accompany the Regulation 19 stage of plan preparation.

1.12 If mitigation measures are needed to overcome any likely significant effects identified through the HRA process, the People Over Wind Judgement clarified that a competent authority may only take account of mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a plan or project as part of an appropriate assessment (rather than at the initial screening stage).

Derogation

1.13 If the Appropriate Assessment stage identifies a significant adverse effect (or effects) on the integrity of a European site, that cannot be suitably mitigated, the plan or project cannot go ahead unless it can be shown to be in the overriding public interest. This is known as 'derogation'.

In-combination effects

1.14 Other plans and projects being prepared or implemented in the area may have the potential to cause adverse effects on European sites. These effects may act in-combination with the effects of the Local Plan, possibly leading to an insignificant effect becoming significant. It is therefore important to consider which other plans and projects could generate similar effects as development within Oxford city, at the same European sites, and which may act in-combination.

1.15 The following list sets out the plans and projects with the greatest potential for in-combination effects with the Oxford Local Plan 2045:

Oxford City Council:

- Oxford Local Plan 2036 (Adopted June 2020)

Cherwell District Council:

- Cherwell Local Plan (adopted November 1996) – saved policies
- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (adopted July 2015)
- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need (adopted September 2020)
- Cherwell Local Plan 2042 (emerging)

West Oxfordshire District Council

- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted September 2018)
- Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (emerging)
- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 (emerging)

South and Vale District Council

- South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (adopted December 2020)
- Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (adopted December 2016)
- Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2036 Part 2 (adopted October 2019)
- South and Vale Joint Local Plan 2041 (emerging)

Oxfordshire County Council

- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (adopted July 1996) - saved policies
- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted September 2017)
- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (emerging)
- Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) (adopted July 2022)
- Oxfordshire Traffic Filters (trial due to commence following the re-opening of the Botley Road Bridge in 2026)

Other Plans and Projects

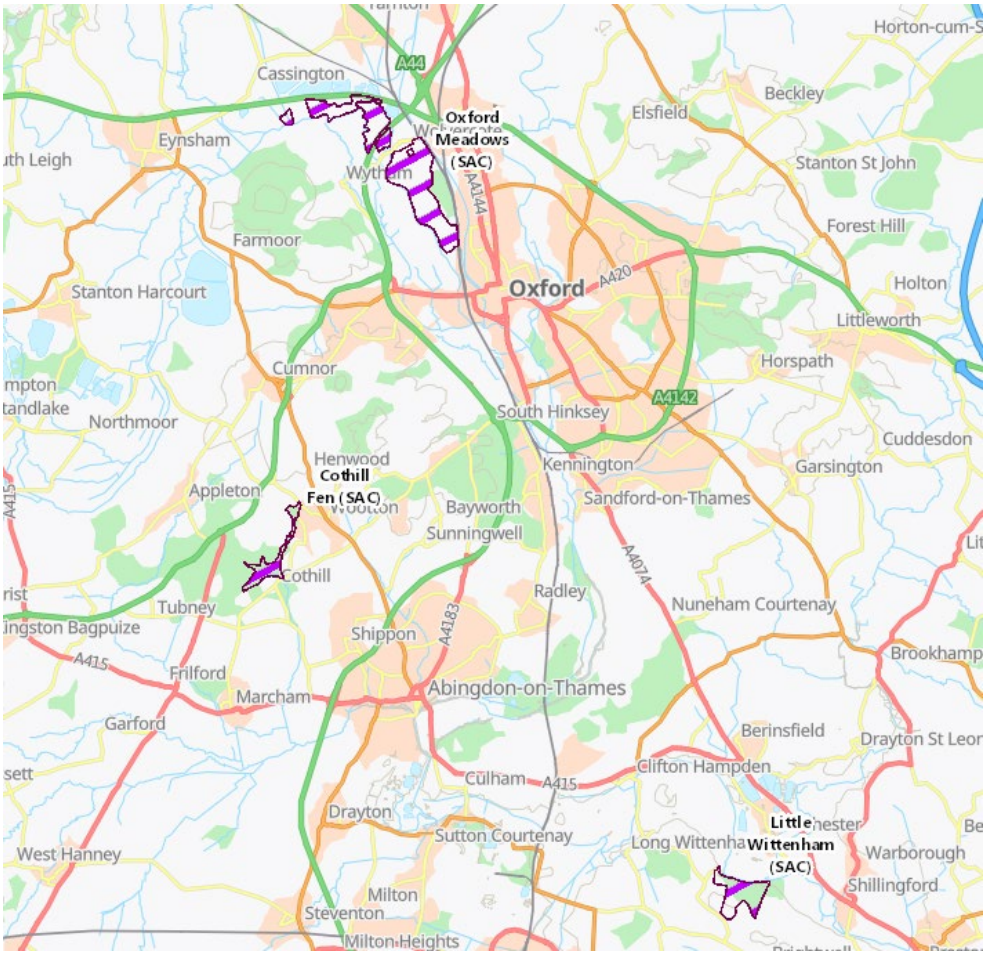
- Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (Environment Agency)
- East West Rail Project
- Thames Water Drought Plan, Thames Water (2022)

- Thames River Basin Management Plan, Environment Agency (2025)

European Sites

1.16 Oxford City Council prepared a Stage 1 HRA Screening Report in June 2025, which set out that there are the three European sites within 10km of the Oxford City Council administrative boundary. Figure 1.1 shows the locations of the three European sites within 10km of the Oxford City Council Boundary.

Figure 1.1 Locations of European sites within 10km of Oxford



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Source: Magic Maps

1.17 The three sites within 10km of the Oxford City Council Boundary are as follows:

- Oxford Meadows SAC (within and adjacent to Oxford city)
- Cothill Fen SAC (over 5km from city boundary)
- Little Wittenham SAC (over 8km from city boundary)

Qualifying Features

1.18 European sites are designated to conserver a wide variety of habitats of international importance as well as species populations of high conservation significance.

1.19 Each SAC contains protected species (excluding birds), habitats or both. These protected habitats and species are the “qualifying features” as to why each site has been designated. Table 1.1 sets out the qualifying features for each of the "European sites” within 10km of the city.

Table 1.1 European sites within 10km of Oxford City Council Boundary

Name of Site	**Description**	**Qualifying Features**
Oxford Meadows SAC	Together with North Meadow and Clattinger Farm, also in southern England, Oxford Meadows represents lowland hay meadows in the Thames Valley centre of distribution. The site includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in the world in reflecting the influence of longterm grazing and hay-cutting on lowland hay meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function. Oxford Meadows is selected because Port Meadow is the larger of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort Apium repens.	Qualifying Habitats: 6510 **Lowland Hay Meadows** (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) Qualifying Species: 1614 **Creeping marshwort** Apium repens
Cothill Fen SAC	This lowland valley mire contains one of the largest surviving examples of alkaline fen vegetation in central England, a region where fen vegetation is rare. The M13 Schoenus nigricans – Juncus subnodulosus vegetation found here occurs under a wide range of hydrological conditions, with frequent bottle sedge Carex rostrata, grassof-Parnassus Parnassia palustris, common butterwort Pinguicula vulgaris and marsh helleborine Epipactis palustris. The alkaline fen vegetation forms transitions to other vegetation types that are similar to M24 Molinia caerulea – Cirsium dissectum fenmeadow and S25 Phragmites australis – Eupatorium cannabinum tall-herb fen and wet alder Alnus spp. wood.	Qualifying Habitats: 7230 **Alkaline Fens**

Little Wittenham SAC	One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broad-leaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts Triturus cristatus have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.	Qualifying Species: 1166 **Great crested newt** Triturus cristatus

Source: Joint Nature Conservancy Council www.jncc.org.uk

1.20 Natural England's SSSI condition assessment shows that the majority of SSSI units that make up the three SACs within 10km of Oxford are in a favourable condition. Appendix 1 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report provides further details.

Conservation Objectives

1.21 The Habitat Regulations require the appropriate authority to maintain, or where appropriate, restore habitats and species populations of European importance to favourable conservation status. European site conservation objectives are referred to in the Habitat Regulations. They are used where there is a need to undertake an "appropriate assessment" under the relevant parts of the respective legislation. The conservation objectives are set for each qualifying feature (habitat or species) of each European site (SAC or SPA). Where the conservation objectives are met, the site can be said to demonstrate a high degree of integrity and makes a full contribution to meeting the legislative aims.

1.22 The Oxford HRA Screening Report (Appendix 1 of this document) provides more details about the conservation objectives for each of the SAC in Section 2.

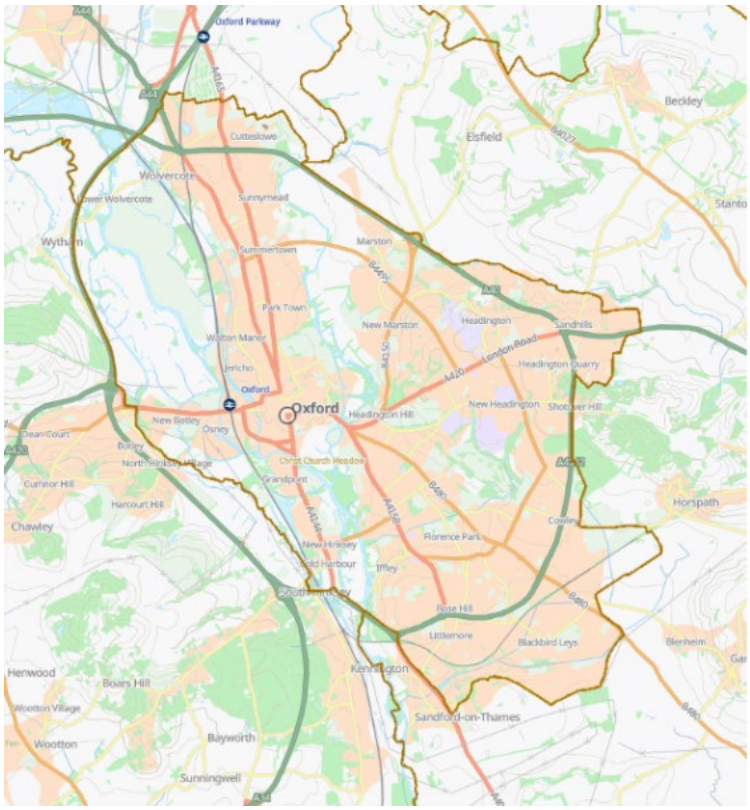
2. Oxford Local Plan 2045 Regulation 19 Document

Context

2.1 Oxford is a small and compact city with a population of 165,200 (according to ONS mid-year population estimates for 2023, released in July 2024). Oxford's total area is only 46 sq km (17.6 sq miles). While some parts of the urban area are densely developed, more than half of the city is open space and more than a quarter lies in the Oxford Green Belt.

2.2 Oxford benefits from a wide range of historic city parks, a unique built heritage which is intrinsically linked to the surrounding hills, and important sites for nature conservation. The city's river corridors (River Thames and Cherwell) are sometimes referred to the as the city's "green lungs" as they make a valuable contribution to the Oxford's green and blue infrastructure by providing space for wildlife to thrive away close to the city's dense urban area. Figure 2.1 shows a map of the Oxford. The salmon pink colour area represents the urban area while the administrative boundary is shown in brown.

Figure 2.1 - Map of Oxford



Oxford Local Plan 2045

2.3 Oxford City Council has produced a Local Plan 2045 Regulation 19 Document. This "Proposed Submission" consultation document sets out the proposed strategy for development in the city until 2045. It includes site allocation policies and a suite of development management policies.

2.4 The Local Plan 2045 Regulation 19 Document:

- Sets a capacity-based housing target which aims to meet as much of the city's identified housing need (using the Government's Standard Method), as possible within the city, with the appropriate consideration of other policy aims.
- Makes provision for more than 9,200 homes under Policy H1: Housing Requirement.
- Seeks to meet identified employment land needs using existing employment sites and through supporting employment at highly accessible locations, namely the city and district centres.
- Enables the modernisation, intensification and regeneration of existing Key Employment Sites, while supporting their diversification (particularly those in accessible locations), by allowing an element of housing delivery subject to specific criteria being met.
- Allows poorly performing existing employment sites to be redeveloped for other uses including housing.

Amendment to the plan period

2.5 For a number of technical reasons, we have amended the plan period to 2025-2045, rather than 2022-2042. Paragraphs 4.8-4.11 consider the implications of this change in date for the HRA.

3. Stage 1 Screening

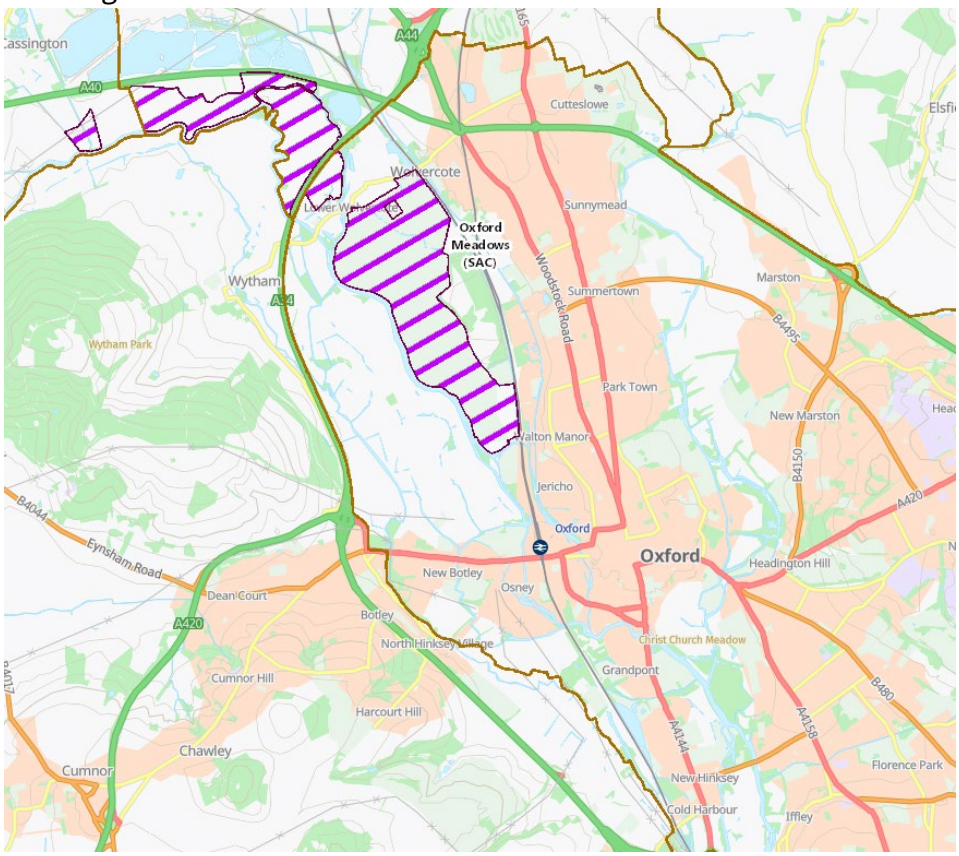
3.1 The Oxford HRA Screening Report published at Reg. 18 sets out that, of the three European sites within 10km of the Oxford's administrative boundary, Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC, were screened out from further assessment. The 10km distance is a widely used, precautionary buffer zone used in HRA screening . The 10km buffer has been widely accepted where European sites contain non-mobile qualifying features (such as the different plant communities found at the Oxford Meadows SAC).

3.2 The Oxford HRA Screening Report found at Appendix 1 of this HRA Report provides more information and details the reasoning and rationale for having done so. This HRA report therefore focuses on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Oxford Meadows SAC

3.3 Table 1.1 in this report, sets out the reasons for which the Oxford Meadows has been designated an SAC while Figure 3.1 shows a map of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Figure 3.1 showing the location of the Oxford Meadows SAC



3.4 As set out in Chapter 4 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report, in HRA terms, 'impact pathways' are the potential routes or mechanisms by which a plan or project could affect a European site.

3.5 Impact pathways provide a structed approach for assessing whether a plan or project is likely to give rise to significant effects on a European site. If potential significant effects are identified (or cannot be ruled out through the HRA Screening process), then an Appropriate Assessment will be required.

3.6 Each designated site has its own unique set of impact pathways which need to be considered. At a meeting with Natural England in June 2022, it was agreed that the following impact pathways should be considered as part of the HRA Screening to assess the likely significant effects of the Oxford Local Plan on the Oxford Meadows SAC:

- Atmospheric/ Air Pollution
- Recreational pressure/ disturbance
- Water quality and quantity (Balanced Hydrological Regime)

3.7 These are considered in turn below. It is worth noting a discussion of these issues is also considered at Paragraphs 4.18-4.46 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report.

Atmospheric/ Air Pollution

3.8 Atmospheric pollution is a widespread issue. Background air quality is heavily influenced by large point-source emitters including from transboundary sources. Local pollutant sources can also affect designated sites (particularly in relation to protected habitats within SACs), often from road traffic emissions.

3.9 The Oxford Local Plan 2045 is unable to influence some of the underlying causes of background atmospheric pollution (e.g., large point sources). However, the location, amount, type and scale of development proposed through the policies in the Oxford Local Plan 2045 has the potential to affect locally emitted pollutants reaching the Oxford Meadows SAC.

3.10 According to the Air Pollution Information Systems website (APIS), and the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance (2020), the main pollutants affecting vegetation are as follows:

- Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) produced through the combustion process (approximately half of UK emissions are from road traffic; and
- Ammonia (NH_3), the main source of which is usually from agriculture (e.g., from manures and fertilisers).

3.11 These gases can result in direct effects to vegetation through exposure, and indirect effects through deposition to soil and freshwater (dry deposition) or with precipitation (wet deposition).

3.12 Direct exposure of vegetation to NOx and NH3 is harmful, especially in areas close to sources, such as roadside verges. Some vegetation (including lichens, mosses, etc.) is particularly vulnerable to these sorts of toxic effects, which can result in changes to plant growth, difficulties in the plant's ability to assimilate CO2, and other bio-chemical effects.

3.13 Indirect effects through deposition include:

- **Acid deposition**: acid deposition is most likely to affect vegetation indirectly through changes to soil properties. NOx and ammonium (from NH3) react with rain or cloud water to form nitric (or sulphuric) acid. Increases in soil acidity can increase the mobility of certain toxic metals which can result in root damage, stunted growth and reduced microbial activity. These effects can lead to changes in species composition.
- **Eutrophication by nitrogen deposition**: dry deposition of NOx is greatest within large conurbations and close to major roads. Whilst nitrogen is essential for plant growth, excessive amounts can become toxic, as instead of acting as a nutrient, nitrogen becomes a pollutant. Many semi-natural plants are unable to assimilate nitrogen when there is too much available. As a result, these (semi-natural) plants can be outcompeted by plants that can tolerate elevated levels of nitrogen (such as many grass species). This can lead to long-term changes in vegetation and reduced diversity.

3.14 As approximately half of UK NOx emissions are associated with road traffic, nitrogen emissions from traffic generated by residential and commercial development form the focus of this part of the assessment.

Air Pollution at the Oxford Meadows SAC

3.15 As the Oxford Meadows is bisected by the A34 and the A40 runs adjacent to parts of the site, there is the potential for air quality to be impacted by changes in traffic flows associated with the development proposed in the Reg. 19 Plan.

3.16 Chapter 4 of this report includes an update to the air pollution impact pathway HRA Screening (as originally presented in Chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report (found at Appendix 1 of this report).

Recreational Pressure/ Disturbance

3.17 Population growth associated with residential development brings the potential for additional visitor pressure on European sites. There are a number of impact pathways which bring the potential for significant effects including:

- Species disturbance (modifying behaviour, increasing predation, reducing feeding and breeding success);
- Habitat trampling/ wear (soil compaction, erosion, direct damage to habitats, expansion of path networks, churning up sediment in water bodies);
- Fire (resulting in direct mortality, habitat removal, long-term changes to vegetation structure);
- Contamination (including litter, nutrient enrichment through dog fouling, pollution from dogs entering watercourses, spread of alien species and pathogens, greywater from caravans, etc.)
- Harvesting (e.g., collection of wood, fungi);
- Grazing issues (impacts on grazing animals, e.g., from feeding worrying by dogs, open gates, road traffic accidents; and
- Visitor expectation including pressure for facilities and public perceptions of management resulting in difficulties achieving necessary habitat and species protection.

Recreational pressure at the Oxford Meadows SAC

3.18 In relation to the Oxford Meadows SAC, the qualifying species likely to be impacted by increased recreational pressure – A. repens (creeping marshwort) - is not particularly sensitive to trampling. It is, however, sensitive to increased nutrient enrichment associated with dog-fouling.

3.19 Chapter 6 of this report presents the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for this impact pathway which was carried on the policies and site allocations for which likely significant effects could not be ruled at the Screening Stage. Chapter 6 also includes the findings of the visitor survey undertaken in May 2025 and considers whether

bespoke mitigation measures are required for each of the relevant site allocations and policies.

Water Quantity

3.20 Water Quantity plays a vital role in the health of biodiversity and river catchments. Water levels (depth and volumetric flow) and velocity in the river, and water table levels in the floodplain. These properties can influence rates of siltation and erosion, dissolved oxygen, and pollutant and nutrient concentrations. Low flow rates affect food availability for riparian fauna, may limit migration and dispersal, and can alter the structure, composition and condition of vegetation communities. New homes can require the development of new infrastructure, including the provision of fresh water supply. Increases in water demand can impact the locations where water is abstracted.

Water Quantity at the Oxford Meadows SAC

3.21 Direct rainfall, surface water and groundwater flowing in from outside the area are the three main sources of water that help to maintain a "balanced hydrological regime" at the Oxford Meadows SAC. The Oxford HRA Screening Report concluded that the amount of surface water reaching the Oxford Meadows SAC is unlikely to be affected by the policies and site allocations in the plan. Direct rainfall is important to helping maintain a balanced hydrological regime at the SAC, but is generally considered to be outside the influence of the planning system.

3.22 However, the Oxford HRA Screening Report was unable to rule out likely significant effects of certain site allocations in relation to their potential to influence groundwater recharge and the flow of groundwater to the Oxford Meadows SAC. Chapter 7 of this report presents findings of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, and considers whether mitigation measures are required.

Water Quality

3.23 Water quality is important in relation to the proper functioning of many habitats. The quality of water can be affected by a number of key factors including nutrients, contaminants and dissolved oxygen availability. The two key nutrients of interest in the water environment are phosphates and nitrates:

- Phosphates can be organic and inorganic. Phosphates contribute to the eutrophication of receiving waters and are generally considered to be the "problem" nutrient regarding freshwater. These problems arise as an excess of

phosphate can result in the accelerated growth of certain types of algae. This can lead to direct competition with vascular plants for light and nutrients. This can result in a loss of nutrient sensitive species, and a reduction in the species composition, extent and condition of riverine communities.

- Ammonia is a form of nitrogen which aquatic plants can absorb. While nitrate is the stable "end-product" of nitrification (i.e., the conversion of ammonia into nitrite and ultimately nitrate). Both nitrate and phosphate can contribute to the eutrophication of receiving waters. Nitrates are generally more of a problem in saline coastal regions, where phosphates are considered to have a lesser role.

3.24 New development can alter the quality of the water environment through direct contamination at locations that are hydrologically connected to designated sites. Changes in demand for wastewater treatment can also result in changes to the quality of the water environment.

Water Quality at the Oxford Meadows SAC

3.25 As set out in paragraphs 3.21above, the Oxford HRA Screening Report recognised that direct rainfall, surface water and groundwater flowing in from outside the area are the three main sources of water that help to maintain a balanced hydrological regime at the Oxford Meadows.

3.26 However, the Oxford HRA Screening Report was unable to rule out likely significant effects of certain site allocations in relation to their potential to influence water quality at to the Oxford Meadows SAC. Chapter 8 of this report presents findings of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, and considers whether mitigation measures are required.

4. Oxford City HRA Screening Update

Introduction

4.1 This chapter of the report should be read in conjunction with the Oxford HRA Screening Report, published in June 2025. The Oxford HRA Screening Report is also presented in Appendix 1 of this Report. It provides an update on following topics:

- HRA screening categorisation schedule update to reflect policies and site allocations contained within the Oxford Local Plan Regulation 19 "Proposed Submission" Document
- Natural England's formal response to the Oxford Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation.
- Air Pollution Impact Pathway update that looks at changes to levels of growth and considers whether there are any implications of using a different twenty year plan period.

HRA Screening Categorisation Update

4.2 The Oxford HRA Screening Report (Appendix 3) provides an assessment of the draft policies and site allocations as set out in the Regulation 18 consultation document, based on the screening categorisation schedule recommended by Natural England. It is important that the HRA Screening update considers the policies and site allocations proposed in the Reg. 19 Plan against the screening categorisation schedule to capture any changes made to policies in the plan between the statutory consultation stages.

4.3 The screening categorisation schedule allows policies within no likely significant effects on European sites to be screened out from further assessment so that the assessment process can focus on policy areas and site allocations where there are potential effects.

4.4 The following schedule has been provided by Natural England to screen policy areas:

A – Policies or proposals cannot have any negative impact
B – Effects will be addressed 'down the line' including project level HRA
C – Could have an effect, but would not be likely to have a significant (negative) effect, (alone or in-combination with other plans or projects)
D – Likely to have an effect alone and would require an Appropriate Assessment
E – Likely to have an effect in combination with other plans or projects and which require Appropriate Assessment of those combinations

F – Likely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans and projects but which would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site

G – Likely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects and for which it cannot be ascertained that they would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site

4.5 The results of the screening categorisaiton assessment (Reg. 19) update are are presented in Appendix 2 of this HRA Report.

4.6 Finally, it is worth noting that all the policies in the plan were screened against the impact pathways as agreed with Natural England (see paragraph 3.6 above). A summary of the policies and site allocations for which likely significant effects were not able to be screened out following the are presented in Chapter 5 of this Report. As part of the policy screening assessment process, consideration was given to whether or not the policies in the plan would result in any likely direct physical effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC (e.g., land-take). None of the policies or site allocations proposed in the plan resulted in direct physical impacts at the Oxford Meadows SAC. As such, there are unlikely to be likely significant effects from direct physical impacts resulting from the policies and site alloctions proposed in the Reg. 19 Plan on the the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Natural England's formal Reg. 18 Response to Stage 1 Screening

4.7 Natural England responded to the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation on several issues, including the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Stage 1 Screening Report (June 2025). Natural England stated:

> *We have reviewed the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening report June 2025 submitted with the consultation and look forward to receiving the Appropriate Assessment in due course.*
>
> *We cannot currently agree with the conclusion of the Air Quality Screening which concludes that the Oxford Local Plan 2042 is unlikely to have a significant effect on air quality at the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation either alone or in-combination with other relevant plans and projects.*
>
> *We recognise that the Oxford City Local Plan Screening report models a small impact alone. However when considered in combination with other Local Plans and planning applications in Oxfordshire out to consultation, Natural England consider that the cumulative impact from these live plans and applications may highlight a more significant issue and therefore we will require further information at the Appropriate Assessment stage regarding the approach to the 'in-combination' assessment of air quality impacts.*

4.8 Following receipt of this response, Oxford City Council met with Natural England in September 2025 to discuss the issues outlined above and to try to find a way forward that would be satisfactory to both parties.

4.9 At the meeting, which took place on 16 September 2025, Natural England agreed the following, which were subsequently communicated via email on 24 September 2025:

- *We agree to the use of the 2023 traffic modelling data, undertaken as part of the draft 2040 Oxford Local Plan submission as the overall housing numbers are lower for the 2042 Plan in comparison to the previous plan, so this is precautionary.*
- *We agree with the Appropriate Assessment screening conclusion in relation to the Oxford City alone figures which show that they are below the AADT screening threshold.*

4.10 Natural England also provided the following advice in their email dated 24 September 2025 in relation to the 'in-combination' assessment:

- *We advise that further work be undertaken in relation to the in-combination assessment, with inclusion of the latest figures modelled by South and Vale. We suggest Oxford City contact the South and Vale directly to discuss.*
- *We advise that Oxford City use the figures submitted by Cherwell at Regulation 19 stage as part of their 2042 submission when undertaking the in-combination assessment.*
- *There may be other plans and projects to consider in-combination which have arisen in between submissions… so you may need to consider the findings… in-combination*

4.11 It was also agreed at the meeting that the City Council and Natural England would continue to work together to progress a Statement of Common Ground.

4.12 In response to the advice outlined above, the City Council contacted South and Vale to request the latest traffic modelling figures expressed as AADT. South & Vale replied on 19 September 2025 setting out that the latest figures from their modelling were not in the public domain. In a subsequent email on 24 September 2025, South and Vale confirmed that the figures presented in the "Explanatory Note" (see Appendix 6 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report (presented in Appendix 1 of this Report)) are still "current".

4.13 Following a series of letters between the Planning Inspectorate and South and Vale Councils, published on the South and Vale Joint Local Plan Examination webpages, the

most recent dated 07January 2026, the South and Vale Joint Local Plan 2041 examination remains ongoing.

4.14 At the time of writing, the most up-to-date, current and publicly available traffic modelling data for South & Vale remains that, which was presented in the 'Explanatory Note', and which was presented in the Oxford HRA Screening Report.

4.15 Natural England also advised Oxford City to use the "figures submitted by Cherwell at Regulation 19 Stage as part of their 2042 submission". Cherwell's published air quality assessment is not compatible with the city's. This is because the methodology presented in their published HRA (November 2024) does not present its findings as traffic modelling outputs (i.e., AADT). Instead it relies on air quality modelling.

4.16 The most recent compatible publicly available assessment of traffic modelling data from Cherwell was therefore the data contained within the "Explanatory Note" (see Appendix 6 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report (presented in Appendix 1 of this Report)) .

4.17 Natural England's final piece of advice was involved ensuring that there were no additional plans or projects (i.e., planning applications) that had been submitted which potentially may require a project level HRA. At the time of writing, there are no additional plans or projects to consider.

Air Pollution Impact Pathway Update

4.18 This section of the report should be read in conjunction with Chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report, published in June 2025. The Oxford HRA Screening Report is also presented in Appendix 1 of this Report. This update is meant to supplement that report, and it seeks to consider the implications of any relevant changes that have taken place between the publication of the Regulation 18 Plan (June 2025), and the Regulation 19 "Proposed Submission" Plan for Oxford.

4.19 The Oxford HRA Screening Report was produced to support the Regulation 18 stage consultation process. As such, the housing numbers and jobs/ employment floorspace figures contained within it were subject to change. This section looks at changes to the levels of growth (i.e., changes to the number of homes and the amount of commercial floorspace (jobs). It also considers whether there are any implications of using a different twenty year plan period.

4.20 Table 4.1 (below) shows the total number of dwellings and commercial floorspace (from which the residential and commercial land use assumptions in the traffic modelling were derived) and compares these figures with the levels of growth proposed through the Oxford Local Plan Reg. 18 Document. This table replicates Table 5.7 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report.

4.21 Table 3.1 shows that a higher number of dwellings and more commercial floorspace were assessed using the agreed the traffic modelling, than were proposed in the Regulation 18 Document. As such, the City Council considered that the traffic modelling took a precautionary approach as it assessed more homes and commercial floorspace than was likely to come forward in the Local Plan Regulation 18 Document.

Table 4.1 – Total dwellings and floorspace (Reg 18 Plan)

	Oxford Local Plan Regulation 18 Document	**Traffic Modelling (DM+DS Scenario)**
Dwellings	9,851	11,491
Commercial Floorspace	500,000sqm	1,172,372sqm

Source: 2023 Atkins Report and Oxford Local Plan Reg. 18 Document

4.22 The next step is therefore to compare the housing numbers or commercial floorspace contained within the Regulation 19 Document with those assessed in the traffic modelling. This is shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 – Total Homes and commercial floorspace (Reg. 19 Plan)

	Oxford Local Plan Reg. 19 Document	**Traffic Modelling (DM+DS Scenario)**
Dwellings	9,267	11,491
Commercial Floorspace	550,000sqm	1,172,372sqm

Source: 2023 Atkins Report, Oxford Local Plan Reg. 19 Document and evidence base

4.23 As can be seen in Table 4.2, the number of homes and the amount of floorspace proposed in the Oxford Local Plan Reg 19 document have both changed slightly from the Reg. 18 Plan, however they are both comfortably within the amounts tested through the traffic modelling.

4.24 The City Council therefore considers that the traffic modelling used within the Oxford HRA Screening Report (June 2025) maintains a robust and precautionary

approach in its assessment of the housing numbers and commercial floorspace proposed through the Regulation 19 Plan and that it is still appropriate to rely on it.

Amendment to the plan period

4.25 For a number of technical reasons, we have amended the plan period to 2025-2045, rather than 2022-2042. This next section considers whether there are any implications of this change on the traffic modelling evidence, which underpins the HRA.

4.26 The City Council does not consider that there are any implications for continuing to rely on the existing traffic modelling. This is because, as set out above, the number of homes and floorspace proposed within the traffic modelling is greater than the that proposed in the Plan.

4.27 The traffic modelling also takes a precautionary approach to technical aspects of its design. For instance (as discussed in paragraphs 5.25-26 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report) the traffic modelling uses a base year of 2018, which shows a higher concentration of NOx levels at the Oxford Meadows SAC than the most recent Air Pollution Information Systems (APIS) dataset (modelled data from 2021).

4.28 Given that APIS data is presented as a 3-year average, as such the modelled data from 2021 (i.e., between 2020-2022) could have been impacted by movement restrictions resulting from national lockdowns imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Using 2018 as the base year for the transport model means that the base year traffic flows used in the transport model were not affected by lower emissions associated with the pandemic. As such, the continued reliance on the current traffic modelling remains suitably precautionary.

4.29 It is worth noting that the Oxford HRA Screening Report (paragraphs 5.22-5.24) provides an overview of the DEFRA Background Mapping Data for Local Authorities. The Oxford HRA Screening Report recognises the advice provided in paragraph 4.30 of Natural England's approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitat Regulations (June 2018) (hereafter "NE Air Quality Advice Note 2018) which sets out that background pollutant levels should should be considered later in the process should an appropriate assessment be needed.

4.30 The DEFRA Background Mapping Data provides estimations of background concentrations of specific pollutants (including NOx) This mapping data, like the APIS mapping data, is based on 1km grid squares. The two datasets are broadly aligned for the 2018 and 2021 years and both datasets show NOx levels rates falling by a similar amount over the same time-perid.

4.31 Interestingly, the DEFRA Background Mapping Data provides predictions about future changes in pollutant levels over a longer time-horizon than the APIS dataset. The DEFRA Background Mapping Data predicts that the long-term trend for background NOx levesl at the Oxford Meadows SAC show continued reductions that fall to below 10µg/m^3 by 2040.

Conclusions of the Screening Update

4.32 As the level of growth proposed in the Oxford Local Plan 2045 is comfortably within the level of growth assessed within the traffic modelling, and the base year information contained within it remains suitably precautionary, the conclusions drawn in relation to the 'alone' assessment of air quality impacts (as set out in Chapter 6 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report) remain valid.

4.33 For completeness, this next section sets out the modelled outputs for the Local Plan 2045. Please refer to Chapter 6 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report for further details).

'Alone' Assessment

4.34 Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below show the changes in AADT on the 'affected roads' (i.e., the A34 and A40) resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'alone'.

4.35 As can be seen from the Tables 4.3 and 4.4 (below) which show the results of the traffic modelling presented within the 2023 Atkins Report, the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'alone' is below the screening thresholds for general traffic flow (i.e., cars and light goods vehicles (LGVs)) and below the screening threshold for Heavy Duty Vehicle (HDVs) on both the A34 and the A40. As such, the City Council considers that the effects of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'alone' can be screened out from further assessment.

Table 4.3 Change in AADT on the A34 resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'alone'

	AADT (DS-DM) Cars/ LGVs	AADT (DS-DM) HDVs
A34 (northbound)	-48	-7
A34 (southbound)	+322	-42
Total (Two-way change)	**+274**	**-49**

Source: 2023 Atkins Report

Table 4.4 Change in AADT on the A40 resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'alone'

	AADT (DS-DM) Cars/ LGVs	AADT (DS-DM) HDVs
A40 (westbound)	-25	+2
A34 (eastbound)	+39	-15
Total (Two-way change)	+14	-13

Source: 2023 Atkins Report

'In combination' Assessment

4.36 In order to calculate the likely effects of Oxford City's Local Plan 2045, 'in combination' with the other emerging local plans, the 'alone' traffic modelling results (as shown above) have been considered cumulatively with the two 'alone' assessments for South and Vale and for Cherwell's Local Plans (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report).

4.37 Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show the cumulative two-way change in AADT flows on the A34 and A40 respectively for Oxford City's Local Plan 2045 'in combination' with the South and Vale Local Plan 2041 and the Cherwell Local Plan 2042.

Table 4.5 Two-way change (AADT) on A34 resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'in combination' with the South and Vale Local Plan 2041 and the Cherwell Local Plan 2042

	AADT (DS-DM) Cars/ LGVs	**AADT (DS-DM) HDVs**
Oxford Local Plan 2045	+274	-22
South and Vale Local Plan 2041	-73	-22
Cherwell Local Plan 2042	-330	-165
Total	**-129**	**-235**

Source: Atkins 2023 Report and Oxford HRA Screening Report

Table 4.6 Two-way change (AADT) on A40 resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'in combination' with the South and Vale Local Plan 2041 and the Cherwell Local Plan 2042

	AADT (DS-DM) Cars/ LGVs	**AADT (DS-DM) HDVs**
Oxford Local Plan 2045	+14	-8
South and Vale Joint Local Plan 2041	-22	-13
Cherwell Local Plan 2042	-448	+26
Total	**-456**	**+5**

Source: Atkins 2023 Report and Oxford HRA Screening Report

4.38 As can be seen from these tables, the total change in AADT resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 'in-combination' with the South and Vale Local Plan 2041 and the Cherwell Local Plan 2042 results in a change below the identified screening threshold (i.e., less than 1,000AADT for cars/ LGVs and less than 200AADT for HDVs).

Conclusions of the Air Quality Screening Update

4.39 Given the changes in AADT resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 (both 'alone' and 'in-combination' with other plans and projects falls below the screening thresholds for cars/ LDVs and HDVs, the City Council therefore considers that the Oxford Local Plan 2045 is unlikely to have a significant effect on air quality at the Oxford Meadows SAC, either 'alone' or 'in combination' with other relevant plans and projects.

5. Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Introduction

5.1 . This next part of the HRA considers those policies and site allocations contained in the Oxford Local Plan 2045, for which it was not possible to rule out likely significant effects on the following impact pathways:

- Recreational Impacts;
- Water Quantity; and
- Water Quality.

5.2 An 'alone' assessment (i.e., looking at the likely significant effects of certain policies and site allocations proposed in the Oxford Local Plan 2045), and an 'in-combination' assessment (i.e., that takes into account a range of other plans and projects) was carried out in relation to each impact pathway.

5.3 The following chapters make up the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for each respective impact pathway.

- Chapter 6 considers Recreational Impacts
- Chapter 7 considers Water Quantity
- Chapter 8 considers Water Quality

6. Recreational Impacts

Introduction

6.1 Creeping marshwort (Apium repens) is a low-growing plant which is only found in two naturally occurring locations in the UK – Oxford Meadows SAC being one - and which relies on trampling by cattle to enlarge its territory. Natural England has previously confirmed that A. Repens is not particularly sensitive to trampling but is sensitive to dog-fouling. The increased population that would be housed in Oxford resulting from the Local Plan 2045 could own dogs, and those dogs could potentially have a significant effect on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC. As such, significant effects could potentially arise relating to the increase in Oxford's population, as projected by Policy H1, and some proposed site allocations. Significant effects could also arise due to the potential increase in residential dwellings on the city's employment sites, as set out in Policy E1.

6.2 The following site allocations and Key Employment Sites (Policy E1) are therefore considered as part of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for Recreational Impact.

Site Allocations:

- *Policy SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House*
- *Policy SPN2 – Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way*
- *Policy SPN3 – Oxford North Remaining Phases*
- *Policy SNP4 – OUP Sports Ground, Jordan Hill*
- *Policy SPN5 – Pear Tree Farm*
- *Policy SPCW1 – Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B*
- *Policy SPCW2 – Botley Road sites around Cripley Road including River Hotel and Westgate Hotel*
- *Policy SPCW3 – Canalside Land, Jericho*
- *Policy SPCW5 – Jowett Walk (South)*
- *Policy SPCW8 – Osney Mead*
- *Policy SPCW12 – West Wellington Square*

Key Employment Sites (Policy E1):

- *Oxford North*
- *Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ site)*
- *Oxford University Press*
- *Oxford University Science Area and Keble Road Triangle*
- *Osney Mead*
- *Jordan Hill Business Park*
- *Botley Road Retail Park*

6.3 Findings from public consultation undertaken in 2005 by Scott Wilson as part of their 'Oxford City Green Space Study' revealed that residents of Oxford were generally willing to walk approximately 1,900m to large green spaces. More recent evidence to support the Local Plan 2045 (Green Infrastructure Study, Ethos) considered that the "access standard" for "Destination Parks" such as Port Meadow (which forms part of the Oxford Meadows SAC was 960m (straight-line distance). While the age (circa 20yrs old) of the data underpinning this recreational impacts assessment is acknowledged, and the availability of more up-to-date information, the 1,900m distance screening threshold, was applied at the HRA Screening Stage, and as such, it is used on a precautionary basis for the remainder of this HRA. However, given the age of the underlying data, the City Council will look to update this threshold for the next round of plan-making.

6.4 A 1,900m straight-line distance was therefore applied to the site allocatons proposed in the Reg. 19 Plan on a precautionary basis as the screening threshold for recreational impacts. (See Table A2.2 at Appendix 2 of this HRA Report)

Screening for Recreational Impacts

6.5 All site allocations that exceeded the 1,900m screening threshold were screened out from further assessment.

6.6 A number of sites that exist within the 1900m threshold were also screened out from further assessment. These are the site allocations are located within the West End of the city centre. These sites often propose a mix of uses that include residential development including student accommodation, given their location within the city centre.

6.7 Previous HRA work undertaken by the City Council concluded that sites within the West End benefit from a variety of alternative locations that are more accessible to dog-walkers than the Oxford Meadows SAC. Alternative accessible greenspaces located within and surrounding the West End include the following: Oxpens Meadow, Christchurch Meadow, University Parks, Oatlands Road Recreation Ground, Botley Park, Grandpont Nature Park, Grandpont Recreation Ground and Hinksey Park.

6.8 The following site allocations were therefore "screened out" by virtue of their location with Oxford's West End:

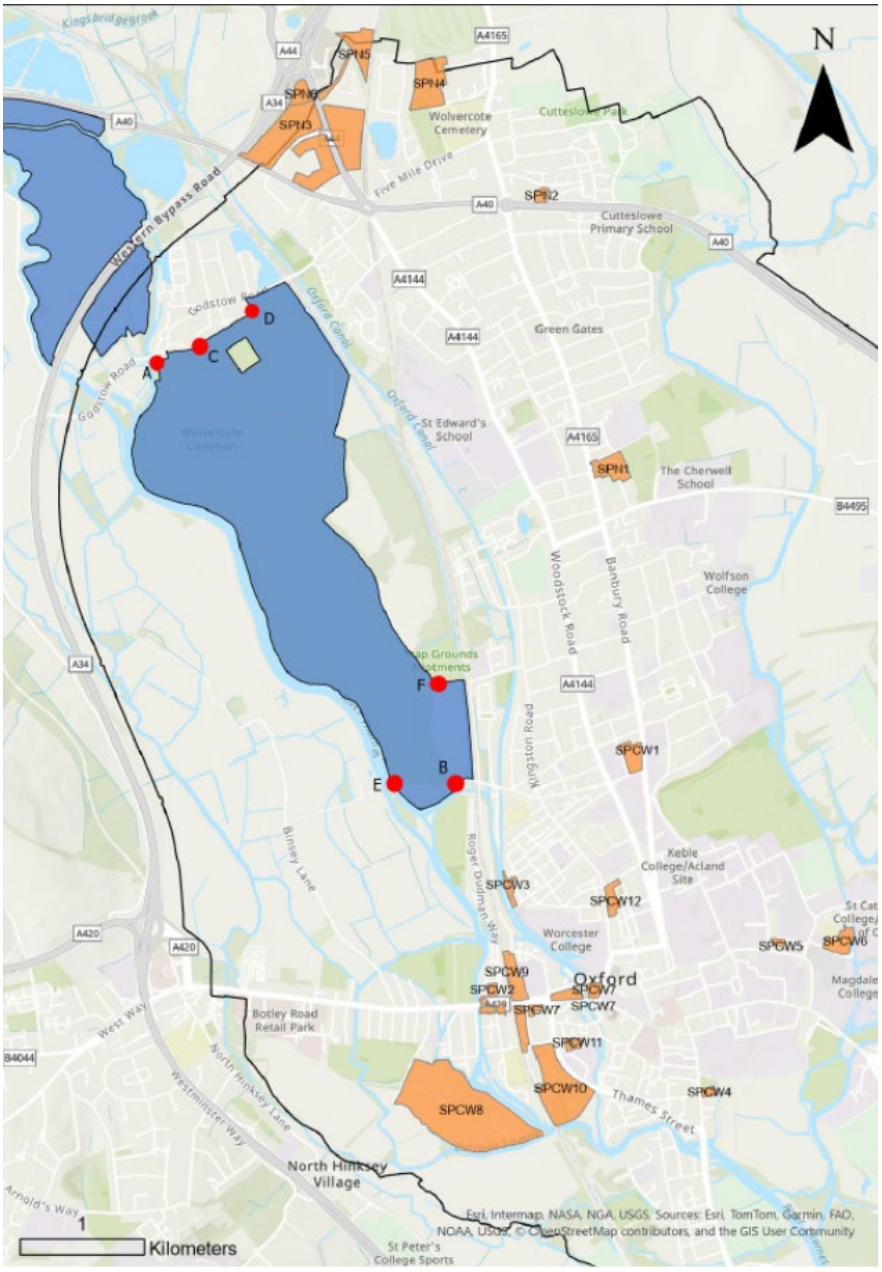
- Policy SPCW7 – Nuffield Sites

- Policy SPCW9 – Oxford Railway Station and Becket St Car Park
- Policy SPCW10 – Oxpens
- Policy SPCW11 – St Thomas School and Osney Warehouse

'Alone' Assessment

6.9 Figure 6.1 shows the locations of site allocations proposed in the Reg. 19 Plan within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Figure 6.1 – Map showing site allocations within 1,900m from the Oxford Meadows SAC



6.10 Table 6.1 lists the site allocations where residential development could take place, located within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Table 6.1 Residential site allocations proposed within 1,900m of Oxford Meadows SAC

Site Name	Distance from SAC (m)	No. of Dwellings	Type of development proposed
North Infrastructure Area			
Policy SPN1 Diamond Place and Ewert House	1,280	135	Mixed use inc. Residential or Student Acc.
Policy SPN2 Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way	1,490	20	Residential
Policy SPN3, Oxford North Remaining Phases*	715	161	Mixed use inc. Residential
Policy SPN4 OUP Sports Ground, Jordan Hill	1,060	90	Residential
Policy SPN5 Pear Tree Farm	1,285	111	Residential
Central and West Infrastructure Area			
Policy SPCW1 Banbury Road University Sites	800	54	Residential or Student acc.
Policy SPCW2 Botley Road sites around Cripley Road including River Hotel and Westgate Hotel	1,070	20	Residential
Policy SPCW3 Canalside Land, Jericho	500	18**	Residential
Policy SPCW5 Jowett Walk (South)	1,800	14	Residential or Student Acc.
Policy SPCW8 Osney Mead	1,360	247***	Residential (including employer linked affordable housing) or Student acc.
Policy SPCW12 West Wellington Square	900	13	Residential (including employer linked affordable housing) or Student acc.
TOTAL Residential		**883**	

** Previous HRA mitigation measures (agreed with Natural England as part of the HRA for the Northern Gateway AAP) are included in Policy SPN3.*

*** Precautionary approach to site capacity - figure taken from approved planning application*

**** subject to further flood risk work*

6.11 It is worth noting that several sites considered as part of the Oxford HRA Screening Report were not taken forward as site allocations as part of the Reg. 19 Plan. These sites are set out below:

- 579 ROQ Site (Radcliffe Observatory Quarter)
- 657 Clarendon Centre

6.12 As recommended by Natural England, a visitor survey to inform the Reg. 19 HRA Report was carried out on six days in May 2025, resulting in 486 interviews. The aim of the survey was to understand how the Oxford Meadows SAC was used by residents of Oxford and by visitors from outside of the city. Appendix 3 shows the results of the visitor survey in full, and they are summarised at Table 6.2. The survey replicates the visitor surveys carried out in 2011 and 2017, which resulted in 332 and 575 interviews respectively.

Table 6.2 – Summary of visitor survey

Total number of visitors recorded during the survey	908
Number of surveyed access points	2
Mean number of visitors per access point	454
Number of hours surveying per access point	48
Total number of access points to the SAC	6

6.13 To interpret the survey data and project the total number of visitors to the site, the calculation shown in Table 6.3 was carried out. The methodology broadly follows that used by Bracknell Forest DC in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA analysis, as recommended by Natural England as best practice.

6.14 Table 6.3 suggests that, as a result of the Oxford Local Plan 2045, the Oxford Meadows SAC could see an increase of 5,213 – 6,951 visits, representing a 1.70-2.27% increase over current numbers.

6.15 The two access points (marked A and B on Figure 6.1) were used as survey points. As these access points are located nearest to the two existing car parks, this means that the survey results have the potential to be skewed towards arrivals by car. There is also the potential to overestimate visitor numbers, as larger numbers are likely to arrive via the car parks than via the other entrances to the site.

6.16 There are 6 access points to Oxford Meadows, shown at Figure 6.1:

- A Wolvercote car park;
- B Car park off Walton Well Road,
- C Godstow Road,
- D right of way at the entrance to Wolvercote off Godstow Road,
- E bridge across the river from Binsey, and
- F bridge at Aristotle Lane.

Table 6.3 Projected visitor numbers based on visitor survey

	Calculation/ reference		Result
Total number of visits over survey period	From survey data	A	908
Percentage of visits over survey period from within postcode sectors OX1 and OX2[1]	From survey data	B	70.4%
Projected total number of visits per annum	See note 2	C	306,600
Projected total number of visits from within postcode sectors OX1 and OX2 per annum	(C ÷ 100) x B	D	215,846
Population of postcode sectors OX1 and OX2	Taken from 2021 Census (see Note 3)	E	68,549
Projected visits per head of OX1 and OX2	D ÷ E	F	Max 3.1
Projected future population arising from new potential development.	See Table 6.1 and Note 4	G	Max: 2,208 Potential to own dogs: 1,656
Projected visits per annum arising from projected future population	G x F	H	5,213 – 6,951
% of projected future visits, as it relates to current projected total visits	(H ÷ C) x 100	I	**1.70 – 2.27%**

Notes:

1. These postcodes broadly represent a 1,900m radius around the Oxford Meadows SAC
2. Mean number of visitors per surveyed access point, per hour = 454/48 = 10
   Total active hours in a day (06:00-20:00) = 14
   Projected mean number of visitors per access point per day = 10 x 14 = 140
   Projected mean number of visitors per access point per year = 140 x 365 = 51,100
   If all six access points had similar numbers of visitors, then projected total number of visits, per year = 6 x 51,100 = 306,600
   This maximum includes small children, elderly people, etc. Most likely the number is less than this figure.
3. Population of Postcode sector OX1 – 27,136 (Census 2021)

Population of Postcode sector OX2 – 41,413 (Census 2021)

4. Average household size at the time of the 2021 Census was 2.5. The maximum number of homes proposed (883 from Table 6.1) multiplied by 2.5 people per household = 2,208. Removing students and employer-linked affordable accommodation (assuming these comprise 25% of new residents), would result in a future population of 1,656 that could own dogs.

6.17 It is not visitor numbers however that are the potential problem, but the impact of dog fouling on the Apium repens. A 2007 Report estimated that dog ownership in Oxford was a maximum of 24%. The survey results showed that 32% of groups visiting the SAC came with a dog, and 30% of respondents came with the main purpose of dog-walking. Although dog-walkers are more likely to visit the SAC, and probably more likely to visit on a daily basis than other visitors. This would re-balance the numbers in the opposite direction.

6.18 Dog-walkers visiting the Oxford Meadows SAC are either likely to visit by car or on foot. Car journeys to the Oxford Meadows SAC are limited by the number of parking spaces available. There are two public car parks linked to the Oxford Meadows SAC. One at the southern end of Port Meadow (close to Jericho), and the other provides parking and visitor access to Port Meadow via Wolvercote. As there are no plans to increase parking at either car park during the plan period, visitors by car will be limited by the number of parking spaces available. In addition to the two public car parks, a very limited amount of on-street parking is available on Godstow Road with direct access to Port Meadow. Lower Wolvercote is not currently the subject of a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) and the latest programme for the rollout of new CPZs is currently being worked on by the County Council. However, as no additional on-street parking is planned in this location, visitors to the site are restricted by spaces available.

6.19 Student accommodation does not allow pets, so this accommodation can be screened out of the assessment process. It can also be expected that at least some of the employer-linked accommodation provided by the universities would be for visiting academics coming for short periods, and who are also unlikely to have dogs.

6.20 Additionally, as set out in Table 6.1 (above), most of the proposed sites are further than 500m from the SAC, reducing the likelihood of their residents regularly using the SAC; other recreational facilities will be available to most of the sites. This Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment makes recommendations for site allocation policies proposed in the the Local Plan 2045. It alsy proposes mitigation measures especially to reduce recreational impacts on the SAC, where appropriate.

6.21 The subsequent paragraphs consider each of the sites listed in Table 6.1 with respect to the issues highlighted above:

North Infrastructure Area

6.22 Policy SPN1: Diamond Place and Ewert House is allocated for 135 dwellings and is more than 1,200m away from the SAC. The site allocation policy includes a requirement for at least 10% public open space to be provided on-site. This site is nearly 2km from the SAC on foot (via Aristole Lane footbridge) or 2.5km by car (Port Meadow Car Park South, Walton Well Road). Public open space provided on-site would be usable by residents of the new development and dog walkers who currently use the SAC. Although there is not a prolific amount of public open space in Summertown itself, alternative existing public open space in the locality includes Sunnymeade Meadow (and the adjacent Sunnymeade Park) which is around 1,300m away (on foot) or 950m as the crow flies. The footpath along the River Cherwell to the west also provides an alternative to the SAC. These alternative areas are likely to be more attractive to dog-walkers than the SAC, as the route to the SAC involves crossing the (often busy) Banbury and Woodstock Roads.

6.23 Policy SPN2: Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way proposes 20 dwellings and is approximately 1.5km away from the SAC as the crow flies. The site allocation is 1.8km (approx.) on foot from the Oxford Meadows SAC principally via sections of the car- dominated A40 North Way. As such, trips to the SAC would most likely need to be undertaken by private car. Alternative public open space exists at Cuttlesowe Park, which is a short walk away (approximately 500m on foot), which represents a much more attractive alternative for dog-walkers. Sunnymead Park is another alternative public open space that is also more accessible from this site than the SAC.

6.24 Policy SPN3: Oxford North Remaining Phases is allocated for 161 dwellings and is 715m away from the nearest entry point to the SAC as the crow flies. This policy benefits from previously agreed mitigation carried forward from the recommendations of the HRA for Northern Gateway Area Action Plan. That HRA recommended specific policy wording to deliver a higher amount of public open space associated with any residential development occurring as part of the development in order to ensure that recreational impacts. Policy SPN3 therefore includes the following policy wording:

> *Planning permission will only be granted for developments that provide usable, well designed and good-quality publicly accessible green open space. At least 15% of the*

total site area must be provided as green public open space; this must be distributed so that at least 15% of any parcel proposed for residential development is green public open space.

6.25 Policy SPN4: OUP Sports Ground, Jordan Hill proposes 90 dwellings and is more than 1km away from the SAC, as the crow flies. This residential capacity figure assumes that the cricket pitch is retained on site. This site is expected to deliver at least 10% public open space on-site, which would be usable by not only the residents of the new development but also dog-walkers who currently use the SAC. Alternative exiting public open space provision in the area includes Cuttleslowe Park, which is a more accessible recreation area than the Oxford Meadows SAC. Access from this site to Cutteslowe Park is via quiet side-roads, whereas accessing the Oxford Meadows SAC would involve crossing the busy Wolvercote roundabout.

6.26 Policy SPN5: Pear Tree Farm proposes 111 dwellings and is 1,300m away from the nearest access point at the Oxford Meadows SAC (as the crow flies). Other alternative opportunities for dog walking exist nearby at equally or more accessible locations to the site allocation (e.g. Cuttleslowe Park, Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground). Also, an increased provision of public open space for dog walking has been secured at Oxford North. Given the distance of the site from the SAC (1,300m straight line), trips to the SAC would most likely need to be undertaken by private car. As there are no proposals to increase the number of parking spaces at the Oxford Meadows SAC, there would not be an increase in visitors to the SAC by car. Thus, policy compliant open space provision should be made onsite.

<u>Central and West Infrastructure Area</u>

6.27 Policy SPCW1: Banbury Road University Sites proposes 54 dwellings and is 800m away from the SAC as the crow flies. The proposed allocation is for a mix of uses including academic institutional uses, student accommodation, and/or residential development. It is likely that the site will come forward for student accommodation which is unlikely to generate any dog-walking activity. University Parks is more accessible from this site than the Oxford Meadows SAC.

6.28 Policy SPCW2: Botley Road sites around Cripley Road including River Hotel and Westgate Hotel proposes 20 dwellings and is over 1km away from the SAC as the crow flies. Alternative public open space exists at Botley Park, which is a short walk away (approximately 550m on foot), which represents a much more attractive alternative for dog-walkers.

6.29 Policy SPCW3 Jericho Canalside. While the site allocation policy proposes does not provide a minimum number of dwellings, at the time of writing an extant planning permission for 18 dwellings exists for this site. Given existence of this extant permission, a precautionary approach has been taken for this site. As such, Table 6.1 assumes that the site has the potential to deliver 18 dwellings. This site is approx. 510m from the Oxford Meadows SAC (as the crow flies).

6.30 The allocation policy for this site should include the following provisions to ensure that should residential development be brought forward at this site, it is able to mitigate any significant effects at the Oxford Meadows SAC.

> *"Development proposals involving residential development should be accompanied by an assessment of potential recreational pressure on the immediate setting including the canal towpath and the Oxford Meadows SAC that may arise from increased numbers of visitors, along with plans to mitigate this impact as necessary."*

6.31 Policy SPCW5 Jowett Walk (South) is allocated for 14 dwellings and is more than 1.7k away from the SAC as the crow flies. The proposed allocation is for residential or student accommodation. As the housing at the site would likely be for students it is likely to generate limited (if any) dog walking activity. University Parks represents a more accessible public open space should any dog-walking activity be generated from the site.

6.32 Policy SPCW8: Osney Mead proposes 247 dwellings (unless further flood risk work undertaken cannot find a solution to ensure the safety of residents). A precautionary approach has been taken (for this site) and an assumption has been made that the residential development is possible (This assumption is for HRA purposes only).

6.33 Osney Mead is more than 1.2km away from the SAC as the crow flies and is proposed for a mix of employment-generating uses, academic institutional uses and residential (including employer-linked affordable housing) and student accommodation. The delivery of student accommodation or employer-linked affordable housing is likely to generate limited (if any) dog-walking activity. The site is close to range of different types of publicly accessible open space, including an extensive network of publicly accessible fields heading towards South Hinksey. While access to the SAC is possible, either via a 2km walk along the bank of the River Thames and across Bailey Bridge, or via a 2km drive along Binsey Lane followed by an 800m

walk to access Port Meadow via Fiddler's Island. It is considered that most future residents would be unlikely to make this journey on a regular basis.

6.34 Policy SPCW12: West Wellington Square is allocated for 13 dwellings and is more than 800m away from the SAC as the crow flies. The site is proposed for academic institutional, student accommodation, and residential including employer-linked affordable housing. As the housing at the site would likely be for students and academics, it is likely to generate limited (if any) dog walking activity. University Parks is also more accessible from this site than the Oxford Meadows SAC.

6.35 In addition to Oxford North, several Key Employment Sites are also located within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows SAC. These are set out in Table 6.4 below:

Table 6.4 Key Employment sites within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows SAC

Key Employment Site (name)	**Distance from Oxford Meadows SAC (m)**
Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ site)	650
Oxford University Press	750
Oxford University Science Area & Keble Road Triangle	1,010
Osney Mead	1,240
Jordan Hill Business Park	1,260
Botley Road Retail Park/ Science District	1,310

6.36 Of the above sites, only Osney Mead has a bespoke site allocation policy, which already makes provision for a mix of uses that include residential (including employer-linked affordable housing) and student accommodation. Osney Mead has been assessed in the preceding paragraphs (see paragraph 4.24-25)

6.37 The two Key Employment Sites nearest to the SAC are the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ) on Walton St/ Woodstock Road, and the Oxford University Press (OUP), on Walton St. OUP is a long-standing publishing company with its offices located in the heart of the city. Given the constrained nature of OUP, it is unlikely that residential development could be accommodated at the site. Whereas the ROQ is in the final stages of its transformation from its former use – the Old Radcliffe Hospital – to a modern teaching and research campus for the University of Oxford. As a teaching campus, any residential development delivered at the site is likely to either be student accommodation or employer-linked affordable housing as such, any potential increases in dog-walking are likely to be limited. Also, there is minimal remaining

available land at the site following the completion of the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

6.38 The other sites listed are all more than 1km away from the SAC as the crow flies and are all close to existing alternative public spaces that are more accessible that the SAC or would deliver forms of residential that would result in limited (if any) increase in dog-walking (i.e., student accommodation/ employer-linked affordable housing). As such, any impact of supporting housing delivery on the city's employment sites would be likely to be minimal.

'In-combination impacts'

6.39 The Proposed Submission Draft of the Cherwell Local Plan 2042 Policy KID1 Kidlington Area Strategy provides the policy framework for the site allocations within Cherwell District Council's administrative area that nearest the Oxford Meadows SAC. Policy KID1 sets out that policies PR6a-PR9 from the extant Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 are to be retained.

6.40 Policy PR6a – Land East of Oxford Road; and PR6b – Land West of Oxford Road are the only sites within the Cherwell Local Plan that are within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows SAC. The site allocation policies for these sites are contained within the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 2031 Part 1 Partial Review.

6.41 Policy PR6a – Land East of Oxford Road allocates this 48ha site as a residential-led "urban extension to Oxford city". The policy provides for a net increase of 690 dwellings, a primary school, local centre and the delivery of 11ha public open space as an extension to Cutteslowe Park. In addition, Policy PR6a requires the creation of a green infrastructure corridor on 8ha of land (in addition to the extension of public open space at Cutteslowe Park). PR6b – Land East of Oxford Road is allocated for a residential-led development for 670 dwellings on 32ha of land.

6.42 These are the only sites contained in Cherwell's Local Pan that are within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows SAC. The number of residential dwellings allocated across the two sites is 1,360 homes. Given average household size is 2.5 (Census 2021), it is likely that this would lead to an additional 3,400 residents (all of whom have the potential to own dogs).

6.43 Table 6.5 shows the 'in-combination impacts' resulting from the population growth resulting from the two residential-led developments proposed through the Cherwell Local Plan 2042.

Table 6.5 Projected 'in-combination impacts'

	Calculation/ reference		Result
Projected future population arising from 'in-combination' impacts	See para. 1.33	J	3,400
Projected visits per annum from projected future 'in-combination impacts' population	F* x J	K	10,706
% of projected 'in-combination impacts' visits, as it relates to current projected total visits	(K ÷ C**) x 100	L	3.49%

** F = 3.1 (see Table 6.3 for further details)*

*** C =306,6600 (see Table 6.3 for further details)*

6.44 The cumulative impact of the additional visits resulting from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 (4,517-6,022 or 1.70-2.27%) and the Cherwell Local Plan 2042 (10,706 or 3.49%) equates to between 15,919-17,657 visits or 5.19-5.76%).

6.45 As set out above, the site allocations within Cherwell propose the creation of additional recreation provision. Policy PR6a includes a requirement for the provision of public open space as an extension to Cutteslowe Park on 11 hectares of land. It is likely that this extension would serve as a more accessible alternative recreation space for dog-walkers than the Oxford Meadows SAC for both the Cherwell site allocations. Given the size and proximity of this recreation provision to the two Cherwell sites, it is considered that this would be suitable recreation provision likely to encourage new residents (in particular, dog-walkers) to use it as an alternative to the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Conclusions

6.46 It is interesting to compare the findings of this year's study, with previous studies. Table 6.6 below shows the key findings from each of the surveys.

6.47 Table 6.6 shows that since 2011, there has been an apparent decline in total visitor number at the Oxford Meadows SAC. While the 2017 survey, which informed the

adopted Local Plan 2036 resulted in a slightly higher number of future 'alone' and 'in-combination' visit and that these resulted in a lower percentage score.

Table 6.6 comparison of findings from previous visitor surveys

	2011	2017 (OLP2036)	2025
Projected total visits per annum	525,600	429,240	306,600
Visits per annum from new population from planned development ('alone')	5,612	10,573 – 14,098	5,213 – 6,951
% of projected future visits as it relates to current visits	1.07%	2.5-3.3%	1.70-2.27%
Visits per annum from new population arising from from 'in-combination' and 'alone' development	8,364	14,977 - 19,378	15,919 - 17,657
% of projected future visits 'alone' and 'in-combination' as it relates to current vists	**1.59%**	**3.5-4.5%**	**5.19-5.76%**

6.48 There is no indication that current visitor numbers are having a detrimental effect on the condition of Apium repens at the Oxford Meadows SAC. The assessment recognises that the majority of site allocations have alternative publicly greenspaces in equally more accessible locations. This, coupled with bespoke policy wording included within the Local Plan 2045, would be likely to result in minimal recreational impacts (dog fouling) at the Oxford Meadows SAC. As such, the Reg. 19 Plan is unlikely (both 'alone' and 'in-combination') to result in significant effects, either alone, or 'in-combination' on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC in relation to recreational impacts.

7. Water Quantity

Introduction

7.1 This next section looks at the impact pathway of water quantity. Maintaining a balanced hydrological regime at the Oxford Meadows SAC is important as Apium repens relies on seasonal flooding to support its growth.

7.2 It is generally recognised that there are three main sources of water that support the plant communities on the Oxford Meadows SAC. These are direct rainfall, surface water, and groundwater that flows in from outside the area. Any of these sources, or a combination, may contribute to the soil water, which supports the plant communities found at the Oxford Meadows SAC.

7.3 Of the three sources of water which support the plant communities at the Oxford Meadows SAC, groundwater recharge and flow has the potential to be directly or indirectly influenced by the policies and site allocations within the Reg. 19 Plan. This is because part of Oxford has been shown to as having some hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows and as such new development in this location has the potential to affect groundwater recharge and flows.

7.4 The policy areas and site allocations for which it was not possible to conclude no likely significant effects in relation to the impact pathway of water quantity are as follows:

Policy Areas:

- *Policy S1 – Spatial Strategy*
- *Policy H1 – Housing Requirement*

Site allocations

- *Policy SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House*
- *Policy SPN2 – Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way*
- *Policy SPCW1 – Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B*

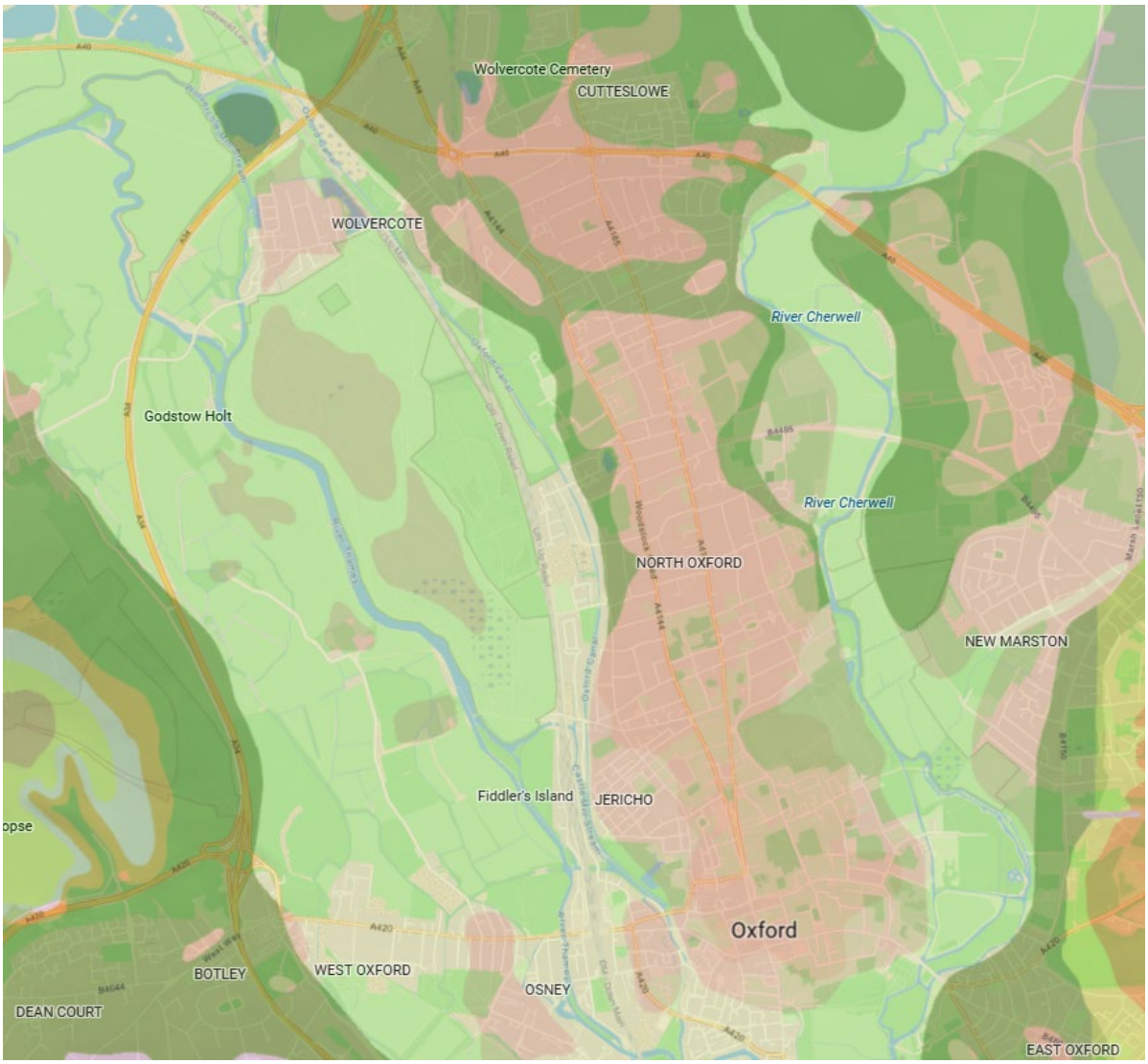
Screening for Water Quality Impacts

7.5 The Botantical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) species account for Apium repens (2016) considers that water level fluctuation at Port Meadow is influenced by an underground aquifer, with the water table raised and lowered depending on the amount of rainfall flowing through the river gravels. The river gravels located in North

Oxford (the North Oxford Gravel Terrace) has some potential for hyrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC. The sequence of maps of the following pages illustrates the issue.

7.6 Figures 7.1 and 7.2 (below) show the British Geological Survey (BGS) map of the North Oxford Gravel Terrace and a conceptual model of groundwater flow for Oxford that includes the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Figure 7.1 Map showing the North Oxford Gravel Terrace and Port Meadow within the context of Oxford

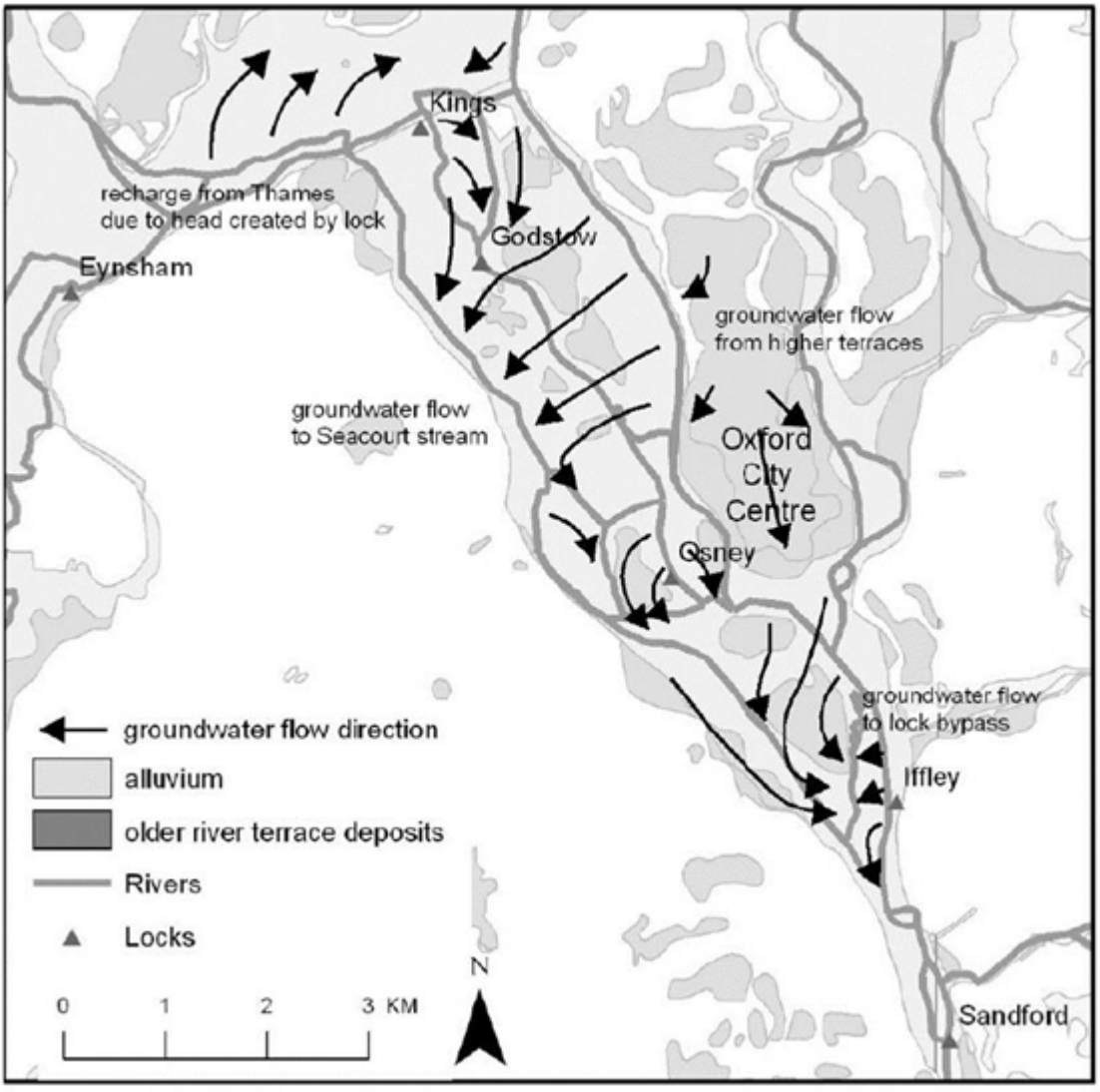


(Source: British Geological Survey – BGS Map Viewer Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI [2025])

7.7 Figure 7.1 (above) shows the geology of Oxford, including the Oxford Meadows SAC. The salmon pink colouring reaching from the city centre right up through Summertown and beyond to the north represents the North Oxford Gravel Terrace. While these deposits are a source of groundwater recharge to the Oxford Meadows. It is recognised that this is not the only source of groundwater recharge, as it is likely that there is a much larger groundwater catchment area that serves the Oxford Meadows SAC (HRA for the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan).

7.8 Figure 7.2 shows a conceptual model of groundwater flow for Oxford including the area surrounding the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Figure 7.2 - Conceptual model of groundwater flow in Oxford (2007)



Source: Oxford DEFRA Paper (2007)

7.9 Previous HRAs have taken a precautionary approach which assumes that the direction of groundwater flow follows the direction of travel shown here. The model in Figure 76. .2 shows that groundwater flows from the city centre away from the SAC. This means that proposed development at sites in this area will not affect the hydrology of the SAC since the direction of travel of the groundwater is away from the SAC.

7.10 There are two interlinked issues relating to groundwater. The first is in relation to groundwater recharge. Groundwater recharge is where the surface water recharges the supply of surface water beneath it. Previous HRA work considered the North Oxford Gravel Terrace to be a source of groundwater recharge for the Oxford Meadows SAC.

7.11 The second relates to the flow of groundwater itself to the Oxford Meadows SAC. Previous HRA work has considered that it is important that groundwater flow to the Oxford Meadows SAC is not interrupted. As such, only subterranean (i.e., basement development) is likely to impact the flow of groundwater. This is because the groundwater travels through the aquifer situated where the river gravels meet the underlying bedrock geology – predominantly made up of impermeable Oxford Clay.

7.12 As groundwater cannot flow upstream, any site allocations downstream (to the south) of the Oxford Meadows SAC will be unlikely to have significant effects on groundwater recharge and flow to the Oxford Meadows SAC. As such, site allocations located downstream from the Oxford Meadows SAC have not been considered further as part of this assessment. Site allocations not located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace were screened out from further assessment.

'Alone Assessment'

7.13 The following sites are situated to the north of the Oxford Meadows SAC and located on the area known as the North Oxford Gravel Terrace:

- SPN1: Diamond Place and Ewert House
- SPN2: Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way
- SPCW1: Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B

7.14 Figure 7.3a shows the redline boundary for SPN1: Diamond Place and Ewert House while 7.3b shows the that the entire site is located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace.

Figure 7.3a Redline site allocation boundary for SPN1: Diamond Place and Ewert House

Figure 7.3b - the extent of Policy SPN1 located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace

(Source: British Geological Survey – BGS Map Viewer Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI [2025])

7.15 Figure 7.4a shows the redline boundary of Policy SPN2 Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way, while Figure 7.4b shows the part of the site to be located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace.

Figure 7.4a – redline site allocation boundary for Policy SPN2: Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way

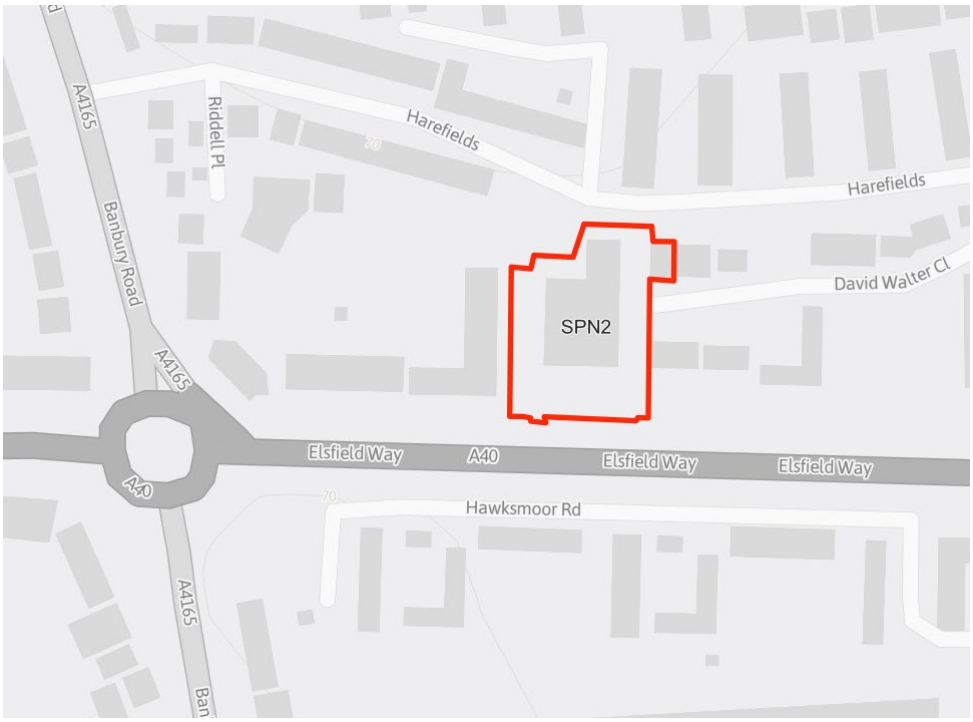
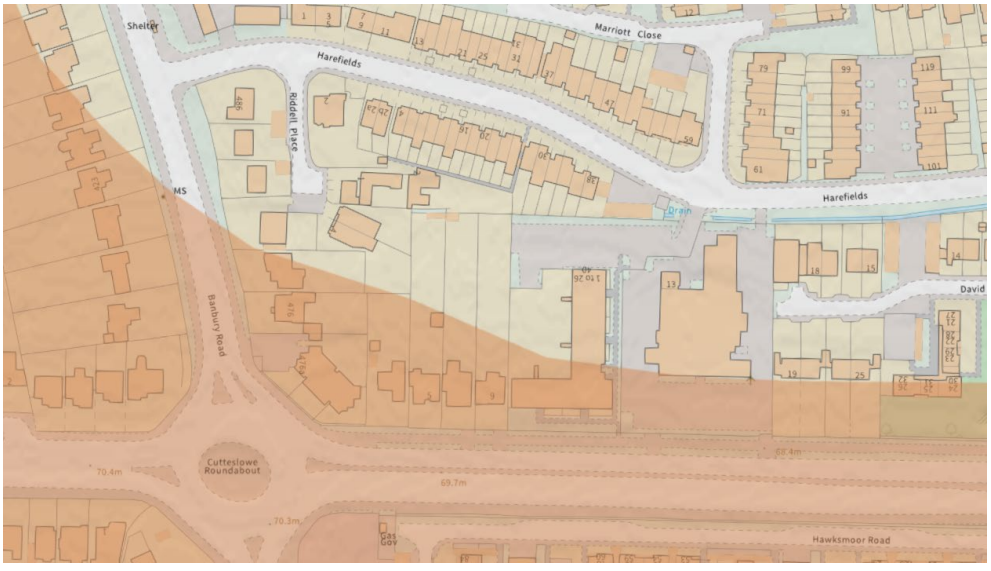


Figure 7.4b – the extent of Policy SPN2 located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace



(Source: British Geological Survey – BGS Map Viewer Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI [2025])

7.16 Figure 7.5a shows the the redline boundary of Policy SPCW1 Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B, while Figure 7.5b shows that the entire site is located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace.

Figure 7.5a – redline site allocation boundary for Policy SPCW1: Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B

Figure 7.5b – the extent of Policy SPCW1 located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace

(Source: British Geological Survey – BGS Map Viewer Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI [2025])

7.17 In order to ensure no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC development proposals involving subterranean development (i.e., basements) need to be accompanied by a hydro-geological investigation to ensure that they do not adversely impact groundwater flow.

7.18 Similarly, to ensure that groundwater recharge is maintained , appropriately designed SuDS must be incorporated into the scheme.

7.19 The following wording has therefore been included in Policies SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House; Policy SPN2 – Elsfied Hall, Elsfield Way and SPCW1 – Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B and their supporting "information boxes".

Information box:
This site has been identified as being located in an area identified as having potential hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC

Policy text:
Development proposals must demonstrate that likely significant effects on groundwater recharge and water quality have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant through the use of appropriate measures including SuDS.

Development proposals involving subterranean development must include a hydrogeological investigation which must demonstrate that likely significant effects on groundwater flow have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant.

7.20 The City Council considers that, with the inclusion of the above policy wording within each site allocation policy, these policies will not result in likely significant effects on the impact pathway of water quantity (i.e., ensuring groundwater recharge and flow) at the Oxford Meadows SAC.

7.21 It is important that the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment also considers how to address development proposals (that do not benefit from bespoke site allocation poliices but which could come forward in this part of the city) that involve basements or that have the potential to impact the amount of groundwater recharge.

7.22 As such Policy G6: Protecting Oxford's Biodiversity including the Ecological Network and the supporting text includes the following wording that relates to the Oxford Meadows SAC:

Extract from Supporting Text to Policy G6

Policy context

- *Oxford has a range of habitats and ecological sites, many benefit from levels of designation including:*
  - *International designations – the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC), part of which is within Oxford's boundary and that contains certain habitats and species recognised for their importance across Europe…*
- *A number of sites in the city are particularly reliant upon specific hydrological conditions, which means that they are potentially vulnerable to changes in hydrology that could arise from development. For example:*
  - *Oxford Meadows SAC is potentially sensitive to changes in recharge, flows and quality of groundwater stemming from development on the North Oxford gravel terrace…*
- *A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been produced to support the Local Plan 2045. This assesses the level of development proposed through the plan both 'alone' and 'in-combination' with other relevant plans and projects against the relevant conservation objectives for the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA includes a Stage 1 Screening, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment which proposes mitigation measures to ensure there are no likely significant effects, either alone or in-combination, on the integrity of Oxford Meadows SAC.*

Policy implementation

- *The policy outlines particular considerations around impacts on surface and/or groundwater in relation to Oxford Meadows SAC, the Lye Valley and New Marston Meadows SSSI's. Proposals may need to consider impacts on water quality, as well as disruptions to the flows and quantities of water to these sites.*

Extract from Policy G6

Policy G6: Protecting Oxford's Biodiversity including the Ecological Network

Internationally and nationally designated sites and irreplaceable habitats

When determining planning applications potentially causing significant harm to biodiversity, then the approach set out in Paragraphs 193-195 of the NPPF (or the equivalent in any update) will be applied.

To ensure no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC, proposals identified in an area identified as having potential hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC that:

a) *May negatively affect groundwater recharge and/or water quality must demonstrate that likely significant effects have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant through use of appropriate measures including incorporation of SuDS.*
b) *May negatively affect groundwater flow (subterranean development) must include a hydrogeological investigation, which must demonstrate that likely significant effects have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant.*

7.23 The City Council considers that with the addition of this wording within the supporting text and within Policy G6, in addition to the site specific policy wording included within the three site allocation policies, that there will not be likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC (in relation to the *water quantity* impact pathway).

'In-combination' Assessment

7.24 A number of "other plans and projects" have been considered as part of this 'in-combination' assessment. It draws on previous HRA work undertaken by the City Council and supplements this with a review of a range of plans and projects by third party organisations.

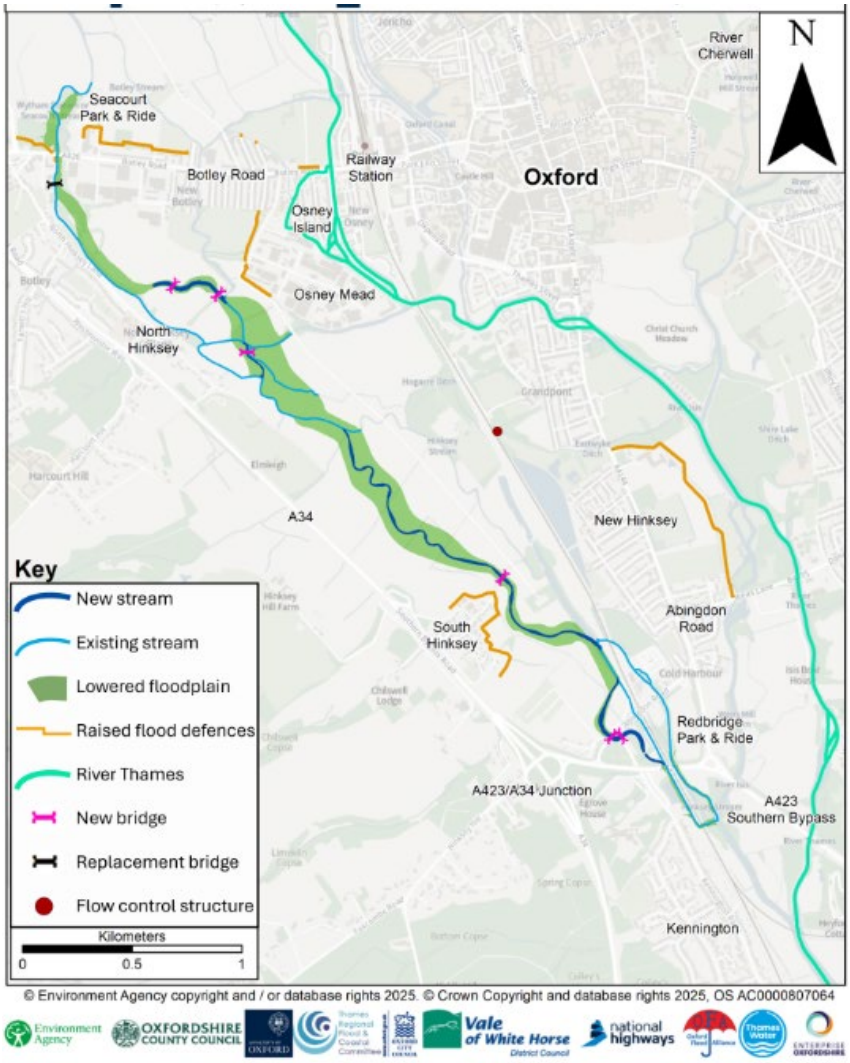
7.25 The HRA Screening Report undertaken to support Thames the Water Drought Plan (2022) confirms that no likely significant effects are anticipated from any of the proposed drought schemes (in particular at Farmoor Reservoir) on the Oxford Meadows SAC, either alone, or in combination with other licenses and consents.

7.26 Thames Water has produced a Habitat Regulations Assessment to support its Water Resources Management Plan 2024. This HRA assessed the likely impact of a variety of infrastructure project options on the numerous "European Sites" across the Thames Water area. As likely significant effects could not be ruled out for several project options at the HRA Screening stage, further HRA work was carried out in the form of a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. The Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment proposed various mitigation measures for each of the selected options and concluded that with the implementation of these mitigation measures, likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows could be ruled out.

7.27 The Environment Agency's flood alleviation scheme for Oxford, which is likely to consist of enlargement of existing watercourse and/ or creating flood relief channels, may affect the flooding regime of the River Thames. Figure 7.6 below shows the map of the scheme design for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

7.28 The Environment Agency's flood alleviation scheme for Oxford will create a flood relief channel downstream of the SAC.

Figure 7.6 – Map of the scheme design for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme



(Source: Environment Agency website)

7.29 The Oxford Flood Alleviation scheme is downstream of the SAC, and Natural England has stipulated that a key requirement of the Oxford flood alleviation scheme is that it does not have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows hydrological regime.

7.30 Given the HRA work undertaken by other organisations to support their plans and projects concluded no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC, there are unlikely to be 'in-combination' effects.

Conclusions

7.31 Given the mitigation measures proposed as part of the 'alone' assessment and coupled with the findings from the 'in-combination' assessment, the City Council considers that the Oxford Local Plan 2045 is unlikely to give rise to significant effects on water quantity (groundwater recharge and flow) to the Oxford Meadows SAC.

8. Water Quality

Introduction

8.1 As set out in Chapter 7 (above), the North Oxford Gravel Terrace is potentially hydrologically connected to the Oxford Meadows SAC. While it was established that maintaining groundwater flows and the amount of water that is recharged to groundwater is important for the plant communities that reside there, the quality of that water is the final impact pathway to be considered.

8.2 Table A2.3 of the Screening Categorisation Schedule (Appendix 2) highlights those policy areas and site allocations for which is was not possible to rule out likely significant effects. This chapter of the Appropriate Assessment therefore focuses on ensuring that the quality of water that is recharged to groundwater is maintained.

8.3 The policy areas and site allocations for which it was not possible to conclude no likely significant effects in relation to the impact pathway of water quality are as follows:

Policy Areas:

- *Policy S1 – Spatial Strategy*
- *Policy H1 – Housing Requirement*

Site allocations

- *Policy SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House*
- *Policy SPN2 – Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way*
- *Policy SPCW1 – Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B*

Context

8.4 Oxford is located within the River Basin District covered by the Thames River Basin Management Plan15 (TRBMP). This was last updated by the Environment Agency in 2022. The aim of the River Basin Management Plans is to enhance nature and the natural water assets that are the foundation of everyone's wealth, health and wellbeing, and the things people value including culture and wildlife. The TRBMP describes the challenges that threaten the local water environment in the Thames River Basin District and how these challenges can be managed. It includes data on the condition of the waterbodies within the river basin, with surface waters being assessed for ecological status or potential and chemical status, and groundwaters assessed for quantitative status and chemical status.

8.5 The most recent assessment data available for the waterbodies within Oxford's administrative boundary is presented in Oxford City Council's Water Cycle Scoping Study. That data is represented here for completeness. Table 8.1 below provides a summary of the waterbody status for the main watercourses in Oxford.

Table 8.1 summary of the waterbody status for the main watercourses in Oxford

Waterbody name	Ecological	Chemical
Cherwell (Ray to Thames) and Woodeaton Brook	Poor	Fail
Bayswater Brook	Poor	Fail
Northfield Brook (Source to Thames) at Sandford	Moderate	Fail
Thames (Evenlode to Thame)	Poor	Fail

Source: Oxford City Council Water Cycle Study Stage 1 Report

8.6 Water body ecological status is either poor or moderate within the city. This is due to a range of factors including agricultural land practices, invasive species and drought. However, sewage discharge is a major contributing factor to the failure to reach good status in three of the four waterbodies. Sewage discharges by Thames Water into waterbodies are regulated by the Environment Agency (EA) through a series of permits and licences.

8.7 The Oxford City Council Water Cycle Study Stage 1 Report includes a detailed discussion about the reasons for the scores attributed to each main watercourse and provides suggestions about how and when issues can and should be addressed through the planning system. The overarching message is that any impacts on the quality of water flowing through watercourses in Oxford resulting from development proposals can be satisfactorily addressed through the appropriate use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

'Alone' Assessment

8.8 The 'alone' assessment considers the policy areas and site allocations set out in paragraph 8.3 in turn.

8.9 Policies S1 and H1 are overarching policies from which other policies are put forward to deliver. These policies are not likely to have an impact on the SAC. Instead, it is through the development of site allocation policies and windfalls (for instance, that make up a source of the housing supply set out in Policy H1) that have a potential to impact the Oxford Meadows.

8.10 Paragraphs 7.14-7.16 includes a series of figures that show the extent to which each of the three site allocations are located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace.

- Policy SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House (see Figures 7.3a and 7.3b)
- Policy SPN2 – Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way (see Figures 7.4a and 7.4b)
- Policy SPCW1 – Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B (See Figures 7.5a and 7.5b)

8.11 In order to ensure no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC in relation to the water quality impact pathway development proposals must incorporate appropriately designed SuDs (in accordance with the recommendations of the Oxford City Council Water Cycle Study Stage 1 Report – see paragraph 8.7 above). The use of appropriately designed SuDs can satisfactorily address any impacts of development on water quality. In this context, the use of appropriately designed SuDs will ensure that there are no likely significant effects on the quality of water being recharged to groundwater as a result of the policies and site allocations within the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

8.12 As such, the three site allocation policies referenced in paragraph 8.4 (above), all include the wording set out at paragraph 7.19 above, specifically the inclusion of the reference to water quality and SuDS. The key section of the policy is duplicated below:

Policy text:

Development proposals must demonstrate that likely significant effects on groundwater recharge and water quality have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant through the use of appropriate measures including SuDS.

8.13 Paragraph 7.21 above highlights the importance of ensuring that development proposals that do not benefit from a site allocation, but that could still take place in this part of the city (i.e., on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace), do not result in likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC. While paragraph 7.21 focuses on the amount of groundwater recharge and groundwater flow, it is also important to ensure that the quality of the water is maintained. As such, Policy G6 : Protecting Oxford's Biodiversity including the Ecological Network and supporting text includes some text that relates to the Oxford Meadows SAC (see paragraph 7.22 for further details).

8.14 The entire of the supporting text and policy are not duplicated here, however the specific reference to water quality is duplicated to aid the reader.

Extract from Policy G6

Policy G6: Protecting Oxford's Biodiversity including the Ecological Network

To ensure no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC, proposals identified in an area identified as having potential hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC that:

a. *May negatively affect groundwater recharge and/or water quality must demonstrate that likely significant effects have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant through use of appropriate measures including incorporation of SuDS.*

8.15 The Local Plan 2045 also includes a policy on SuDS. The text of Policy G8 Sustatinable Urban Drainage Systems: SuDS is provided in full below:

Policy G8: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems: SuDS

All development proposals will be required where feasible to manage surface water through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Details of the SuDS must be submitted as part of a drainage strategy or FRA where required as part of a planning application submission, and must be submitted prior to determination unless agreed otherwise by the LPA.

SuDS should be designed in a way that incorporates reuse, infiltration, retention or conveyance methods which utilise natural, green and blue infrastructure rather than unnatural, artificial components. Below ground features such as pipe systems or underground attenuation tanks will not be permitted, unless exceptional site conditions justify an alternative approach which has been agreed with the Council. Multi-functionality of SuDS should be maximised in their design, such as where they are incorporated into public open space.

Where a site has potential for contamination, SuDS that rely on infiltration will be discouraged and other suitable methods should be adopted to protect the water environment unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no pathway of contamination. Infiltration SuDS measures would not be encouraged in areas that have shallow groundwater as these measures would not be suitable.

Surface water runoff should be managed to greenfield run-off rates as close to its source as possible, in line with the following drainage hierarchy:

a) store rainwater for later use; then:
b) discharge into the ground (infiltration); then:
c) discharge to a surface water body; then:

d) discharge to a surface water sewer, highway drain or other drainage system; and finally:

e) discharge to a combined sewer (only in exceptional circumstances).

For minor developments, SuDS should be designed in accordance with the City Council's latest SuDS design standards, or any equivalent replacement document. For major developments, SuDS should be designed in accordance with the national standards for sustainable drainage systems (or any national or county-level standards that supersede them). Details of the SuDS must be submitted as part of a drainage strategy or FRA where required as part of a planning application submission, and must be submitted prior to determination unless agreed otherwise by the LPA.

A SuDS maintenance plan should be submitted alongside any planning application for minor or major development, demonstrating how SuDS will be managed and remain effective for the lifetime of the development. The plan must clearly explain what maintenance measures will take place, maintenance responsibilities for all relevant parties, how frequently they will occur and for how long and will be secured by condition.

8.16 The inclusion of the specific wording in the specific site allocation policies and within Policy G6 (i.e., that development proposals *must demonstrate that likely significant effects have been avoided, or mitigated where relevant through use of appropriate measures including incorporation of SuDS)*, introduces a requirement for SuDS to be implemented when development proposals are located in area with potential hyrodological connectivity to the Oxford Meadows SAC.

8.17 Policy G8: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), when read in conjunction with the requirements of Policy G6, provides suitable mitigation to ensure that any impacts of development on water quality can be satisfactoriy addressed so as not to result in likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC. Appropriately designed SuDS will also ensure that the amount of water being recharged to groundwater is maintained.

8.18 As such, the City Council considers that specific wording included within Policy G6 alongside the three site allocation policies, in conjunction with Policy G8: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), will ensure that there are no likely significant effects resulting from the policies and site allocations in the Oxford Local Plan 2045 on the Oxford Meadows SAC, either in terms of water quality, or quantity.

‘In-combination’ Impacts

8.19 The other authorities’ Water Cycle Studies for this current local plan cycle are at various stages of production. As such, Water Cycle Studies to complement the most recent plan stages are not always available.

8.20 Table 8.2 sets out the most recent Water Cycle Studies for each local authority. Each Water Cycle Study presents where there are potential flow capacity or treatment issues for Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) in the respective districts. Of the other Oxfordshire authorities, only Cherwell has produced a Water Cycle Study for their most recent Local Plan. The other Oxfordshire authorities Water Cycle Studies are related to their current adopted plans (rather than their emerging plans).

Table 8.2 – Oxfordshire local authorities water cycle studies

Local authority	Date of WCS	Weblink for WCS
Cherwell	January 2023	https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11025/water-cycle-study-stage-1-january-2023.pdf
South & Vale	September 2024	https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/2024/12/CEQ18-Water-Cycle-Study-WCS-Scoping-Report.pdf
West Oxfordshire	July 2025	https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/oxuf3hnd/whs10174-wodc-scoping-water-cycle-study_v2-0.pdf

8.21 Each Water Cycle study highlights where there are potential issues at WWTW in the respective districts. For instance, in Cherwell District Council there are potential capacity issues at four out of the twenty-five assessed WWTW, which will require intervention during the plan period. The South and Vale Water Cycle Study highlights capacity issues at six WWTWs which will require attention in the plan period. The West Oxfordshire Water Cycle study highlights that a number of WWTWs have been operating outside their permits in recent years. It also highlights that there are a number of schemes ongoing to address compliance issues.

8.22 As the above constraints are being taken into account by the local authorities, in discussions with Thames Water, they are not expected to act ‘in-combination’ with the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

8.23 It is worth noting that Oxford has one Wastewater Treatment Works at Sandford (downstream of the Oxford Meadows SAC). Thames Water has confirmed that upgrades to the Sandford Sewage Treatment Works are confirmed and are likely to take place in the first half of the plan period. Thames Water confirmed that these works are fully funded and costed and are not impacted by any external factors as they are scheduled to take place with the most recent Asset Management Plan cycle of projects.

9. Conclusions

9.1 The Reg. 19 HRA Report therefore re-affirms the conclusions presented with regard to air impacts in the Oxford HRA Screening Report – that the Local Plan 2045 will not give rise to likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC in terms of air quality impacts (either 'alone' or 'in-combination').

9.2 It also concludes that the Oxford Local Plan 2045 with the suite of mitigation measures proposed through the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, will give rise to likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC in terms of recreational (dog fouling) impacts, water quatliy impacts or water quality impacts (either 'alone' or 'in-combination').

Appendix 1 – Oxford HRA Screening Report (June 2025)

Available through the following weblink:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3794/habitat-regulations-assessment-screening-final-report-june-2025

Appendix 2: HRA Screening Categorisation Update (Reg.19)

Table A2.1 – Assessment of the policy areas within the Oxford Local Plan Regulation 19 "Proposed Submission" Document

Reg. 19 Policy Ref	**Categorisation**	**Description of the policy area**	**Key environmental considerations likely to give rise to significant effects or not**
Chapter 1			
Policy S1: *Spatial strategy and presumption in favour of sustainable development*		Strategic policy that sets the overarching ambition for the plan to support the delivery of new homes and jobs and to while protecting the city's important ecological and heritage assets	While this is a strategic policy that focuses on delivering homes and jobs in the city. It does not specifically allocate sites. Other policies in the plan articulate its ambitions through more detailed policy wording. This policy approach is considered to have no likely significant effects on the designated site but the allocations arising from it will need to be considered. As such, this Policy has been considered as part of the appropriate assessment.
Policy S2: *High Quality Design*	A	Policy promoting the use of design guides and design guidance	Unlikely to have significant effects
Policy S3: *Infrastructure delivery in new development*	A	Policy setting out the need for development proposals to make contributions toward infrastructure delivery	Unlikely to have significant effects
Policy S4: *Plan viability*	A	Policy setting out that the policies in the plan should not result development becoming unviable and the mechanisms	Unlikely to have significant effects

		for addressing development viability in individual schemes.	
Chapter 2			
Policy H1: *Housing requirement*		Policy setting out the housing requirement for the plan period. The plan makes provision for 9,267 homes to be delivered in the city.	Policy does not allocate specific sites. The overall housing requirement for the plan is calculated based on assessments of capacity of individual sites. The housing requirement for the plan-period is capacity-based. This means it is an output resulting from a series of technical assessments which consider the capacity, availability, and deliverability of each site. While this policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on the designated site, the site allocations that arise from it will need to be considered. As such, this policy has been taken forward for further assessment as part of the Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.
Policy H2: *Delivering affordable homes*	A	Policy setting the requirements for the provision of affordable housing	Policy not locationally specific as requires a proportion of affordable homes to be provided as part of qualifying developments.
Policy H3: *Affordable Housing: contributions from other development types*	A	Policy setting out when contributions affordable housing contributions will be sought	Policy not locationally specific and sets out when affordable housing contributions will be sought from a range of development types.

Policy H4: *Employer-linked affordable housing*	A	Policy setting out which locations are suitable for employer-linked affordable housing instead of market housing	The sites referenced in this policy have all been assessed separately as part of the site allocations section. No need to duplicate that assessment.
Policy H5: *Mix of dwelling sizes (number of bedrooms)*	A	Policy setting out the appropriate mix of dwelling sizes to be provided as part of development proposals	Not likely to have significant effects as policy only applies to mix of dwellings.
Policy H6: *Development involving loss of dwellings*	A	Policy setting out approach for development proposals involving losses of dwellings.	Not likely to have significant effects as policy is only dealing with proposals involving the loss of dwellings.
Policy H7: *Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)*	A	Policy setting out the approach taken in considering planning applications for the conversion or creation of new HMOs.	Not likely to have significant effects as policy is concerned with how the location of new HMOs impact the existing residential environment.
Policy H8: *Location of new student accommodation*	A	Policy that sets out appropriate locations in the city for new purpose-built student accommodation. Includes city and district centres.	Summertown is identified as a district centre. As such it is likely that some additional residential and non-residential development will be location on brownfield sites in this location. Any individual sites that are allocated for development in Summertown will be picked up through the technical work underpinning the site application selection process. Any bespoke policy wording needed to mitigate likely impacts of individual sites will be undertaken as a part of the appropriate

			assessment process. This policy, however, is screened out from further assessment.
Policy H9: *Linking new academic facilities with the adequate provision of student accommodation*	A	Policy linking the delivery of new academic floorspace at the universities to whether or not a certain number of students (for each university) is housed in purpose-built student accommodation.	Not likely to have significant effects as the policy does not allocate sites for development. Instead it seeks to ensure that additional academic floorspace that generates increases in student numbers is supported by sufficient student accommodation.
Policy H10: *Homes for Travelling Communities*	A	Policy setting out criteria to be met when considering new residential pitches for travelling communities	Policy unlikely to have significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it does not outline development proposals that could have a potential impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
Policy H11: *Homes for Boat Dwellers*	A	Policy setting out criteria to be met when considering proposals for new residential moorings.	Limited scope and capacity for additional moorings in close proximity to the Oxford Meadows SAC. As such policy unlikely to have significant effects.
Policy H12: *Older persons and other specialist accommodation*	A	Policy setting out criteria to be met when considering development proposals for new older persons and specialist accommodation.	Policy unlikely to have significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it does not specifically outline locations where there is a higher potential for adverse impacts
Policy H13: *Self-build and custom housebuilding*	A	Policy setting out requirements for delivery of self-build and custom-build housing as part of qualifying developments (sites over 100 homes)	Policy unlikely to have a significant effect as it promotes a requirement on larger residential development proposals, which will themselves be assessed separately as part of this process.

Policy H14: *Boarding school Accommodation*	A	Policy restricting suitable locations for new boarding school accommodation to sites either on, or immediately adjacent to a main teaching campus	Policy unlikely to have significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it limits new boarding school accommodation to sites very close to the main teaching campus.
Chapter 3			
Policy E1: *Employment Strategy*	D	Policy restricting new employment development to existing employment sites and the city and district centres. Policy also allows an element of housing to come forward on employment sites providing certain key criteria are met.	Summertown is identified as a district centre. As such it is likely that some additional residential an non-residential development will be located on brownfield sites in this location. Any individual sites allocated for development within Summertown district centre will be picked up through the technical work underpinning the site allocation selection process. Any bespoke policy wording needed to mitigate likely impacts of individual sites will be undertaken as a part of the appropriate assessment process. This aspect of the policy is unlikely to have significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC. Policy also allows an element of housing to come forward at existing employment sites. This aspect of the policy should be given further consideration as part of the assessment of residential impacts in the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

Policy E2: *Warehousing, storage and distribution uses*	A	Policy restricting the location of warehousing storage and distribtution uses to existing key employment sites	Policy unlikely to have significant impact on SAC as relates to allowing specific type of employment development on sites where employment is already allowed.
Policy E3: *Community Employment and Procurement Plans (CEPPs)*	A	Policy requiring opportunities for local people in the construction and operational stage of developments and training opportunities etc.	Policy unlikely to have a significant impact on Oxford Meadows SAC as it relates to improving training and learning opportunities for local people
Policy E4: *Affordable workspaces*	A	Policy enabling certain key employment to help deliver affordable workspaces	Policy unlikely to have significant impact on SAC as it relates to delivering a certain type of employment floorspace where employment is already allowed.
Policy E5: *Hotel and short stay accommodation*	A	Policy sets out locations where new short-stay accommodation should be located in the city. Locations include city and district centre and main arterial routes into the city.	Summertown is identified as a district centre. As such it is likely that some additional residential an non-residential development will be located on brownfield sites in this location. Any individual sites allocated for development within Summertown district centre will be picked up through the technical work underpinning the site allocation selection process. This policy is unlikely to have significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
Chapter 4			
Policy G1: *Protection of Green Infrastructure*	A	Policy sets out approach for protecting and enhancing the GI network, defines residential	Policy unlikely to have impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC as provides protection for GI

		garden land and provides policy protection for trees and ancient woodland and other GI features (e.g., hedgerows)	network and features and provides a definition of residential garden land.
Policy G2: *Enhancement and provision of new green and blue features*	A	Policy about delivering new green and blue infrastructure features as part of new development proposals including public open space and management arrangements.	Policy unlikely to have impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC as related to delivering opportunities for green and blue features and associated management arrangements.
Policy G3: *Provision of new green and blue features – Urban Greening Factor (UGF)*	A	Policy regarding delivering new GI features in new developments using urban greening factor metric.	Policy unlikely to have impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC as related to delivering a range of on-site improvements for new developments.
Policy G4: *Delivering mandatory net gains in biodiversity*	A	Policy setting out the percentage of net gain to be delivered as part of developments in Oxford.	Policy unlikely to have impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets the amount of net gain required to be delivered as part of new developments in the city.
Policy G5: *Delivering onsite ecological enhancements*	A	Policy seeking ecological enhancements as part of new development proposals	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it requires developments to deliver a minimum amount of ecological enhancements.
Policy G6: *Protecting Oxford's biodiversity including the ecological network*	A	Policy providing protection of Oxford's ecological network of designated sites and other features of interest	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as seeks to provide for the safeguarding conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Oxford

Policy G7: *Flood risk and Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs)*	A	Policy setting out how flood risk will be considered as part of development proposals, including when the LPA will require a flood risk assessment.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as sets out the types of development that require a flood risk assessment.
Policy G8: *Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)*	A	Policy setting out circumstances when Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be required as part of development proposals and how SuDS should be incorporated into schemes.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets out when development proposals will require SuDs and how they should be delivered.
Policy G9: *Resilient design and construction*	A	Policy setting out how design and construction measures that help mitigate climate change have been incorporated into development proposals.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it relates ensuring the design of development proposals helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
Chapter 5			
Policy R1: *Net zero buildings in operation*	A	Policy setting out how development proposals are to achieve energy reductions to deliver net zero.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows as concerned with how the developments will reduce energy use in their operational stages.
Policy R2: *Embodied carbon in construction*	A	Policy setting out how embodied carbon should be limited focusing on the construction process	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with limiting the amount of carbon used focusing on the construction process

Policy R3: *Retro-fitting existing buildings*	A	Policy supporting retrofit measures to help mitigate and adapt existing buildings to minimise climate change impacts.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with delivering climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to existing buildings
Policy R4: *Air quality assessments and standards*	A	Policy setting out the circumstances when development proposals require an assessment of air quality to ensure that the impact of new development on air quality is minimised.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets the requirements when an air quality assessment is required as part of new development proposals.
Policy R5: *Water resources and and quality*	A	Policy to promote water efficiency, SuDS, and which sets out how to deal with wastewater as part of development proposals	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets requirements for water efficiency, water quality and wastewater expected from new developments.
Policy R6: *Soil quality*	A	Policy setting out how development proposals are expected to demonstrate how any impacts on soils have been mitigated.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets out the requirements for addressing potential impacts on soil quality as part of development proposals.
Policy R7: *Land contamination*	A	Policy setting out the information required to be able to assess applications where there is the potential for impacts from contamination.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets out a requirement for additional information to be submitted where there is a risk of contamination as part of development proposals.

Draft Policy R8: *Amenity impacts of development*	A	Policy setting out how amenity and environmental health impacts will be considered as part of development proposals.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it seeks to mitigate a range of factors which could have an impact on amenity.
Chapter 6			
Policy HD1: *Principles of high quality design*	A	Policy seeks to ensure high-quality design in development proposals.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with ensuring development proposals are of the highest design quality
Policy HD2: *Making efficient use of land*	A	Policy setting out how development proposals on Listed Buildings should be considered in the planning process	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it is concerned with how development proposals are assessed on Listed Buildings.
Policy HD3: Designated h*eritage assets*	A	Policy setting out how development proposals that have an impact on Designated heritage assets are assessed	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it is concerned with the impact of development proposals on Designated heritage assets .
Policy HD4: *Non-designated heritage assets*	A	Policy defines a non-designated heritage asset and sets out the process by which these assets are to be considered when determining planning applications	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with how nondesignated heritage assets are considered during the planning process.
Policy HD5: *Archaeology*	A	Policy setting out how archaeological deposits will be	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it addresses how

		considered as part of the application process.	archaeological deposits will be considered in development proposals.
Policy HD6: *Views and building heights*	A	Policy seeking to protect views of Oxford's historic skyline.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with the heights and visual impact of development proposals.
Policy HD7: *Health Impact Assessment*	A	Policy setting out when a Health Impact Assessment should be submitted as part of development proposals and what it should contain.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with when a Health Impact Assessment should be submitted to inform development proposals and what it should contain.
Policy HD8: *Privacy, daylight and sunlight*	A	Policy setting out how the impacts of development proposals will be assessed in terms of privacy, sunlight and daylight.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it relates to how the impact of development proposals will be assessed.
Policy HD9: *Internal space standards for residential development*	A	Policy setting out that internal space standards for residential developments will follow nationally described space standards.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with quantity of internal space standards as part of new development proposals.
Policy HD10: *Outdoor amenity space*	A	Policy setting out requirements for outdoor amenity space to be delivered as part of development proposals.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as concerned with amount of onsite amenity space required as part of development proposals.
Policy HD11: *Accessible and adaptable homes*	A	Policy setting out the amount of affordable and market homes to	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it sets out the proportion of

		be delivered that comply with accessible standards.	accessible and adaptable homes to be delivered as part of development proposals.
Policy HD12: *Bin and bike stores and external servicing features*	A	Policy setting out how external servicing features (including bin and bike stores) will be considered as part of development proposals	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as is concerned with small scale onsite measures.
Chapter 7			
Policy C1: *City, district and local centres*	A	Policy setting out the types of uses suitable for Oxford's city, district and local centres. Policy also includes requirements for sequential test for town centre uses.	Summertown is identified as a district centre. As such it is likely that some additional residential an non-residential development will be located on brownfield sites in this location. Any individual sites allocated for development within Summertown district centre will be picked up through the technical work underpinning the site allocation selection process. This policy is unlikely to have significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
Policy C2: *Maintaining vibrant centres*	A	Policy sets out how development proposals within the city and district centres can maintain active frontages to help maintain the vibrancy of centres. Includes locally specific	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as related to protection of existing facilities and provision of new ones in suitably accessible locations.

		requirements for each of the city and district centres.	
Policy C3: *Protection, alteration and provision of local community facilities*	A	Policy setting out how local community facilities will be protected when they form part of development proposals. Also sets out support for new community facilities in appropriate locations.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as related to protection of existing facilities and provision of new ones in suitably accessible locations.
Policy C4: *Protection, alteration ande provision of learning and non-residential institutions*	A	Policy setting out how learning and non-residential institutions will be protected when they form part of development proposals. Also sets out support for new learning and non-residential institutions in appropriate locations.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as related to protection of existing facilities and provision of new ones in suitably accessible locations.
Policy C5: *Protection, alteration and provision of cultural venues and visitor attractions*	A	Policy setting out how cultural venues and visitor attractions will be protected when they form part of development proposals. Also sets out support for new cultural venues and visitor attractions in appropriate locations	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as related to protection of existing facilities and provision of new ones in suitably accessible locations
Policy C6: *Transport Assessments, Travel Plans and Service and Delivery Plans*	A	Policy setting out requirements for when Transport Assessments, Travel Plans and Service and Delivery Plans	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows as it relates to the conditions when

		should accompany a planning application.	certain applications should be accompanied by additional transport-related evidence.
Policy C7: *Bicycle and powered two wheelers parking design standards*	A	Policy setting out how bicycle and powered two-wheeler parking should be provided as part of development proposals.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it relates to the amount of cycle parking and parking for powered two-wheelers to be provided as part of development.
Policy C8: *Motor vehicle parking design standards*	A	Policy setting out how parking levels should be assessed as part of development proposals including providing requirements for low-car schemes.	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as provides car parking standards for development proposals including providing requirements for low-car schemes.
Chapter 8			
Policy I1: *Digital infrastructure to support new development*	A	Policy supporting the delivery of appropriate digital infrastructure as part of new development proposals	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it supports the delivery of appropriate digital infrastructure as part of new development proposals.
Policy I2: *Land safeguarded for Infrastructure*	A	Policy requiring development proposals to undertake specific measures where they occur on of land required for specific named infrastructure schemes governed by separate consenting regimes	Policy unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC as it requires development proposals to undertake specific measures where they occur on the land identified through this policy.

Table A2.2 – Assessment of site allocations within the Oxford Local Plan Regulation 19 "Proposed Submission" Document

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
		North Infrastructure Area	
	Northern Edge of Oxford Area of Focus (AOF)	The Area of Focus will not allocate specific sites but instead will set out broad infrastructure requirements and other non-site-specific policy aspects	No likely significant effects identified.
SPN1	Diamond Place and Ewert House	Site is located more than 200m away from SAC but within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m). Site lies within an area of potential hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Potential for recreational impacts on SAC as site allocation policy includes a mix of uses including residential Potential for water quantity and quality impacts due to site's location on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace
SPN2	Elsfied Hall, Elsfield Way	Site is located more than 200m away from the SAC but within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m) and within an area of potential hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling.	Potential for recreational impacts on SAC as site allocation policy includes residential Potential for water quantity and quality impacts due to site's

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
		Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	location on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace
SPN3	Oxford North Remaining Phases	Site is more than 200m away from the SAC. Site allocated for a mix of housing and employment uses. Previous HRA work for the site included screening and appropriate assessment stages. The appropriate assessment concluded that there would be no likely significant effects as a result of the mitigation measures proposed. These mitigation measures were embedded within the previous policy framework (AAP) and have been transferred into the Reg. 19 Plan policy for this site. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Previous HRA work suggested mitigation measures to reduce the risk of recreational impacts. Increased amount of public open space provided at the site. HRA for AAP also investigated impacts on balanced hydrological regime and concluded no significant effects.
SPN4	Oxford University Press Sports Ground, Jordan Hill	The site is located more than 200m away from SAC but within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m). Outside the area of potential	Potential for recreational impacts on SAC as site allocation policy includes residential

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
		hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	
SPN5	Pear Tree Farm	The site is located more than 200m away from SAC but within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m). Outside the area of potential hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Potential for recreational impacts on SAC as site allocation policy includes residential
SPN6	Red Barn Farm	The site is located more than 200m away from SAC but within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m) as Outside the area of potential hydrological connectivity with the Oxford Meadows SAC.	Policy E1 allows residential uses to be delivered at employment sites. As such potential for recreational impacts on SAC

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
		Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	
		South Infrastructure Area	
	Cowley Branch Line Area of Focus (AOF)	The whole of the Southern Infrastructure Area lies outside the buffer zones for recreational impacts and outside of the potential groundwater recharge zone for the SAC. Transport modelling that informs the air quality screening takes account of all sites in the plan.	Site allocations and development likely to come forward within this Area of Focus are unlikely to have a significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
SPS1	474 Cowley Road	All sites listed here are outside the buffer zones for recreational impacts (1,900m) and do not lie in an area of hydrological connectivity to the site.	Sites listed here are unlikely to have a significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC due to their location.
SPS2	ARC Oxford		
SPS3	Bertie Place Recreation Ground		
SPS4	Cowley Marsh Depot		
SPS5	Crescent Hall	Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Sites listed are screened out from further assessment.
SPS6	Former Iffley Mead Playing Field		
SPS7	Kassam Stadium		

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
SPS8	Land at Meadow Lane		
SPS9	Littlemore Mental Health Centre		
SPS10	MINI Plant Oxford		
SPS11	Overflow Car Park at Kassam		
SPS12	Oxford Science Park		
SPS13	Ozone Leisure Park		
SPS14	Redbridge Paddock		
SPS15	Sandy Lane Recreation Ground		
SPS16	Templars Square		
SPS17	Unipart Site		
		East Infrastructure Area	
	Marston Road and Old Road Area of Focus	The entire Marston Road and Old Road Area of Focus lies outside the buffer zones for recreational impacts (1,900m) and does not lie in an area of hydrological connectivity to the site. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using transport modelling.	Site allocations and development likely to come forward within this Area of Focus are unlikely to have a significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
		Results presented in section 5 of this HRA Screening.	
SPE1 SPE2 SPE3 SPE4 SPE5 SPE6 SPE7 SPE8 SPE9 SPE10 SPE11 SPE12 SPE13 SPE14	Churchill Hospital East Oxford Bowls Club Govt. Buildngs and Harcourt Hse Jesus College Sports Area John Radcliffe Hospital Land surr. St. Clement's Church Lincoln College Sports Grnd Manzil Way Resource Centre Marston Paddock Extension Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre Oxford Brookes Marston Rd Rectory Centre Ruskin Campus Ruskin Field	All sites listed here are outside the buffer zones for recreational impacts (1,900m) and do not lie in an area of hydrological connectivity to the site. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Sites listed here are unlikely to have a significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC due to their location. Sites listed are screened out from further assessment.

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
SPE15 SPE16 SPE17 SPE18	Slade House Thornhill Park (phase 2) Union St Car Park Warneford Hospital		
		Central and West Infrastructure Area	
NCCAOF	University Areas North of the City Centre Area of Focus	Areas of focus will not allocate sites but rather set out broad infrastructure requirements and other non-site-specific policy aspects.	No likely significant effects identified.
WEBRAOF	West End and Botley Road Area of Focus	Areas of focus will not allocate sites but rather set out broad infrastructure requirements and other non-site-specific policy aspects.	No likely significant effects identified.
SPCW1 SPCW2 SPCW3 SPCW5 SPCW7	Banbury Road University Sites Botley Road sites around Cripley Road inc. River Hotel and Westgate Hotel Canalside Land, Jericho Jowett Walk Nuffield Sites	All sites listed here are within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m) and are not located in an area of hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Sites allocated for a ranges of uses including residential. Some also allocated for student accommodation. Sites carried forward for further assessment as part of Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for recreational impacts

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
SPCW8 SPCW9 SPCW10 SPCW11 SPCW12	Osney Mead Oxford Railway Station and Becket Street Car Park Oxpens St Thomas School and Osney Warehouse West Wellington Square		
SPCW4 SPCW6	Faculty of Music, St Aldates Manor Place	All sites listed here are outside the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m) and are not located in an area of hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using traffic modelling. Results presented in chapter 5 of the Oxford HRA Screening Report and within the Screening Update in Chapter 4 of this HRA Report.	Sites listed here are unlikely to have a significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC due to their location. Sites listed are screened out from further assessment.
	Employment Sites		
		All employment sites more than 1,900m from the Oxford Meadows were screened out from the assessment.	

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
E1	Oxford North ROQ Site Oxford University Press Jordan Hill Business Park Banbury Road	All sites listed here are Key Employment Sites within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m) and are located in an area of potential hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using transport modelling. Results presented in section 5 of this HRA Screening.	Further investigation is needed for those employment sites less than 1,900m from the Oxford Meadows SAC as the plan's employment strategy now promotes an element of housing on all employment sites. As such the Stage 2 assessment will look at these sites in more detail. Potential for water quantity and quality impacts due to site's location on or near the North Oxford Gravel Terrace to be investigated further as part of Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment
E1	Osney Mead Botley Road Retail Park	All sites listed here are Key Employment Sites within the buffer zone for recreational impacts (1,900m) and are not located in an area of hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Air quality impacts of the whole plan (on SAC) have been assessed using transport modelling.	Further investigation is needed for those employment sites less than 1,900m from the Oxford Meadows SAC as the plan's employment strategy now promotes an element of housing on all employment sites. As such the Stage 2 assessment

Ref:	Name	If the policy has no effect, the reason why	Possible impacts on SAC
		Results presented in section 5 of this HRA Screening.	will look at these sites in more detail.

Table A2.3 Sites and Policies within the Oxford Local Plan 2045 with potential impact pathways to the Oxford Meadows SAC

Impact Pathway	Policy areas and sites	Magnitude/ Duration / Location	Conclusions
Air Pollution	*Policy areas:* Policy S1 – Spatial Strategy Policy H1 – Housing Requirement *Sites:* Traffic modelling has been undertaken which considers how the development proposed through the Local Plan ('in-combination' with othe relevant plans and projects) is likely to impact air quality at the Oxford Meadows SAC.	Natural England Guidance on Air Quality suggests that increases in trips under 1,000 AADT (Cars/ LGVs) or under 200 AADT (HDV) can be screened out from further assessment. It is assumed that all sites will be developed within the Local Plan period. Any impacts would therefore occur within this period. Sites put forward across the city have the potential to change traffic flows on A34 and A40 which are adjacent to the Oxford Meadows SAC.	Traffic modelling has been undertaken to support the Local Plan. The results of this modeling are discussed as part of a "Screening Update" presented in chapter 5 of this HRA report. This updates the work previously undertaken as part of the Oxford HRA Screening Report.
Recreational Pressure	*Policy Areas:* Policy S1 – Spatial Strategy Policy H1 – Housing Requirement Policy E1 – Employment Strategy *Site Allocations* Policy SPN1: Diamond Place and Ewert House Policy SPN2: Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way Policy SPN3 Oxford North Remaining Phases	Policy E1 supports an element of housing on Key Employment Sites Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential	Sites were screened out of this part of the assessment where they were more than 1,900m from the SAC.

	Policy SPN4: OUP Sports Ground, Jordan Hill Policy SPN5: Pear Tree Farm Policy SPCW1: Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B Policy SPCW2: Botley Road sites around Cripley Road including River Hotel and Westgate Hotel Policy SPCW3: Canalside Land, Jericho Policy SPCW5 Jowett Walk (South) Policy SPCW8 Osney Mead Policy SPCW12 West Wellington Square <u>*Key Employment Sites*</u> *Oxford North* *Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ site)* *Oxford University Press* *Oxford University Science Area and Keble Road Triangle* *Osney Mead* *Jordan Hill Business Park* *Botley Road Retail Park*	Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential Mix of uses includes residential The Employment Strategy (Policy E1) creates an opportunity for housing to be delivered on the city's employment sites As such, all Key Employment Sites within 1,900m of the Oxford Meadows are taken forward for further consideration as part of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment	Where it was not possible to rule out residential on-site allocations proposed within the 1,900m "buffer zone", these sites were taken forward on a precautionary basis. Creeping marshwort (the Schedule 2 plant) found at Port Meadow is less sensitive to trampling. It relies on grazing (by cattle and horses in this instance) to limit competition and help create the conditions in which it can grow. However, dog fouling is considered more of an issue.
Water Quantity (groundwater flow and recharge)	<u>Policy Areas:</u> Policy S1 – Spatial Strategy Policy H1 – Housing Requirement <u>Sites:</u>	Where sites are located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace, it is important that the same amount of surface water is able to recharge the groundwater after development is completed.	These sites are all on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace. Policy provision exists in the adopted Local Plan 2036 to ensure groundwater flow and

	Policy SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House Policy SPN2: Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way Policy SPCW1: Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B	It is anticipated that all sites will be developed within the Local Plan period. Any impacts would therefore occur within this period. The sites listed are all on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace.	recharge are not impeded by development in this location. The Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment will consider further and make recommendations (as required) to ensure that there are no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC resulting from the the policies and site allocations proposed in the Oxford Local Plan 2045.
Water Quality (groundwater recharge)	<u>Policy Areas:</u> Policy S1 – Spatial Strategy Policy H1 – Housing Requirement <u>Sites:</u> Policy SPN1 – Diamond Place and Ewert House Policy SPN2: Elsfield Hall, Elsfield Way Policy SPCW1: Banbury Road University Sites – Parcel B	Where sites are located on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace, it is important that the quality of surface water that is recharged to groundwater is maintained after development is completed. It is anticipated that all sites will be developed within the Local Plan period. Any impacts would therefore occur within this period. The sites listed are all on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace.	These sites are all on the North Oxford Gravel Terrace. Policy provision exists in the adopted Local Plan 2036 to that the quality of surface water that is recharged to groundwater is not significantly affected by development in this location. The Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment will consider further and make recommendations (as required) to ensure that there are no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC resulting from the the policies and site allocations proposed in the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

Appendix 3: Oxford Meadows Visitor Survey Report

Oxford Meadows Visitor Survey Report

Introduction

A visitor survey of Oxford Meadows was commissioned to understand how the site is currently used by the population of Oxford and by visitors from outside of the city.

Method

Through discussions with Natural England and investigations of best practice examples, an onsite visitor survey questionnaire was designed.

The survey was carried out:

- on 6 days including a range of weekend and weekday dates (18 May 2025, 19 May 2025, 20 May 2025, 25 May 2025, 26 May 2025, 27 May 2025)
- both within and outside the school "summer" half term
- during four 2-hour periods each day (07:00-09:00, 10:00-12:00, 13:00-15:00, 16:00-18:00)
- at two locations (one to the north at the Wolvercote car park off Godstow Road, and one to the south at the car park off Walton Well Road)

The survey questionnaire asked a series of 11 questions:

<u>About you:</u>

- Question 1: How many adults, children and dogs make up your group?
- Question 2: Which postcode have you travelled from to visit this site?
- Question 3: Which best describes you?

<u>About today's visit:</u>

- Question 4: How did you get here today?
- Question 5: How long have you spent / will you be spending here today?
- Question 6: What is the main purpose of your visit today?

<u>About other visits:</u>

- Question 7: How often do you visit this site?
- Question 8: Do you tend to visit this site at a certain time of day?
- Question 9: What time of year do you visit this site?

- Question 10: Aside from this location do you visit any other places for similar purposes?
- Question 11: What facilities do you think are important to your enjoyment of open spaces in the Oxford area?

Results

486 interviews were conducted, comprising a total of 908 visitors.

Question 1: Size of group as percentage of all interviews (486); and percentage of all interviews (486) with 1 or more dogs

Group size	1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5+ people
Total	48%	37%	7%	4%	4%

With dog
32%

Age of visitors, as percentage of responses given (905 visitors)

Age	Under 18	18-40	41-65	65+
Total	9%	36.4%	40.2%	14.5%

Question 2: Postcode of visitor origin, as percentage of responses given (486)

Oxfordshire	%	Outside Oxfordshire	%	Outside UK	%	Combinations	%
OX1	14.6	BS7	0.4	Canada	0.2	OX1/BS9	0.2
OX2	55.8	CB24	0.2	France	0.2	OX3/Manchester	0.2
OX3	6.6	Canterbury	0.2	Germany	0.4		
OX4	7.6	HP17	0.4	Luxembourg	0.2		
OX5	1.6	HP19	0.2	Russia	0.2		
OX7	0.4	HP22	0.2	Slovakia	0.2		
OX10	0.2	LE1	0.2	South Africa	0.2		
OX11	1	LE6	0.2				
OX12	0.4	Leamington	0.2				
OX13	0.8	London	0.2				
OX14	0.6	NN7	0.2				
OX16	0.4	NN11	0.2				
OX17	0.4	NN13	0.2				
OX20	0.2	RG6	0.2				
OX26	0.8	SL6	0.2				
OX29	0.2	SN1	0.2				

OX33	0.4	SO52	0.2				
OX44	0.2	SW3	0.2				
OX1/OX2	0.6						
OX1/OX4	0.2						
OX2/OX4	0.4						
OX2/OX3/OX5	0.2						
OX2/OX10	0.2						
OX5/OX29	0.2						
Total	**94**		**4**		**1.6**		**0.4**

Question 3: Resident or visitor, as percentage of responses given (908)

	Permanent resident of Oxford	Temporary resident of Oxford	Resident elsewhere in Oxfordshire	Visitor/holiday maker
Total	75.6%	9.2%	6%	9.1%

Question 4: Mode of travel to arrive at site, as percentage of responses given (819)

	Walk	Cycle	Bus	Car	Other
Total	49.5%	6.2%	3.7%	37.2%	3.4%

Question 5: Length of visit, as percentage of responses given (483)

	Less than 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours
Total	50.1%	38.9%	11%

Question 6: Purpose of visit, as percentage of responses given (504)

	Dog walking	Walking	Jogging/ running	Cycling	Family outing	Nature	Other
Total	30.4%	49.8%	5.4%	2%	3.8%	1%	7.7%

Question 7: Frequency of visit(s), as percentage of responses given (635)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Don't know
Total	26%	45.7%	10.9%	11.7%	5.8%

Question 8: Time(s) of visit(s), as percentage of responses given (845)

	Before 09:00	09:00-12:00	12:00-14:00	14:00-16:00	After 16:00	Don't know/ First visit
Total	20.4%	15.6%	13.7%	19.1%	21.4%	9.8%

Question 9: Season(s) of visit(s), as percentage of responses given (520)

	Year-round	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Total	74.4%	9.4%	11%	4.8%	0.4%

Question 10: Other site(s)/area(s) visited for similar purpose(s), and number of independent mentions (279)

Site/Area	# of mentions	Site/Area	# of mentions
Uni Parks	148	Sunnymead	2
Cutteslowe	26	Acorn Field	1
Shotover	18	Bagley Woods	1
Christchurch	17	Bernwood	1
Florence Park	13	Godstow Nunnery	1
Wytham Woods	11	Iffley Lock	1
South Parks	7	Marston	1
Hinksey Park	5	New College	1
Botanical Gardens	4	Osney	1
Boars Hill	3	Otmoor	1
Cumnor Hurst	3	Radley	1
Abbey Meadows	2	River	1
Burgess Field	2	Thrupp	1
Marston Meadow	2	Trap Grounds	1
Oxford Canal	2	Warneford Meadow	1

Question 11: Rating of importance of individual factors in enjoyment of open spaces in Oxford area, as percentage of responses given (485)
(Key: V: very important / Q: quite important / N: not important)

	Benches			**Litter bins**			**Dog bins**		
	V	Q	N	V	Q	N	V	Q	N
Total	35.7%	14%	50.3%	75.3%	8%	16.7%	57.1%	7.6%	35.3%
	Information boards			**Parking**			**Cycle parking**		
	V	Q	N	V	Q	N	V	Q	N
Total	35.3%	16.9%	47.8%	39.8%	5.4%	54.8%	32%	12.2%	55.9%

	Toilets			**Signed trails**			**Well-maintained paths**		
	V	Q	N	V	Q	N	V	Q	N
Total	54.2%	10.9%	34.8%	34.2%	10.1%	55.7%	50.9%	13.6%	35.5%
	Length/variety of paths			**Wheelchair/pushchair access**			**Views**		
	V	Q	N	V	Q	N	V	Q	N
Total	52.6%	9.1%	38.4%	23.9%	8.2%	67.8%	90.1%	5.2%	4.7%

	Wildlife			**Habitats**			**Water**		
	V	Q	N	V	Q	N	V	Q	N
Total	90.1%	5.4%	4.5%	89.1%	5.4%	5.6%	74.2%	10%	16.1%
	Feeling safe			**Quietness**			**Dog off lead**		
	V	Q	N	V	Q	N	V	Q	N
Total	89.1%	6.4%	4.5%	66%	16.1%	17.9%	46.4%	8.2%	4.5%

Analysis

In order to interpret the survey data and project the total number of visitors to the site the following calculation was carried out. The methodology broadly follows that used by Bracknell Forest DC in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA analysis as recommended by Natural England as best practice.

	Calculation and/ or reference		Result
Total number of visits over survey period	Taken from survey data	A	908
Percentage of visits over survey period from within postcode sectors OX1 and OX2	Taken from survey data	B	70.4%
Projected total number of visits, per annum	See "Table 1" below	C	306,600
Projected total number of visits from within postcode sectors OX1 and OX2, per annum	(C/100) x B	D	215,846
Population of postcode sectors OX1 and OX2	Taken from 2021 Census	E	68,549
Projected visits per head of OX1 and OX2 population, per annum	D/E	F	3.1
Projected future population arising from new potential development	See Table 2 below	G	2,208
Projected visits per annum arising from projected future population	G x F	H	6,951
% of projected future visits, as it relates to current projected total visits	(H/C) x 100	I	**2.27%**
Projected future population arising from 'in-combination impacts'	See Table 3 below	J	3,400
Projected visits per annum arising from projected future 'in-combination impacts' population	F x J	K	10,706
% of projected 'in-combination impacts' visits, as it relates to current projected total visits	(K/C) x 100	L	**3.49%**
% of projected 'alone' and 'in-combination impacts' visits as it relates to current total projected visits	I + L		**5.76%**

Table 1

Total number of visitors recorded during this survey	908
Number of surveyed access points	2
Mean number of visitors per surveyed access point	454
Number of hours of surveying per access point	48
Mean number of visitors per surveyed access point, per hour	10
Total active hours per day (06:00-20:00)	14
Projected mean number of visitors per surveyed access point, per day	140
Projected mean number of visitors per surveyed access point, per year	51,100
Total number of access points to the SAC	6
Projected total number of visitors per year to the SAC	306,600

Table 2 – Local Plan 2045 'alone' impacts

'Site'	Number of units	Number of residents
Oxford Local Plan 2045 (sites within 1,900m of SAC	883	2,208

Table 3 – Local Plan 2045 'in-combination' impacts

'Site'	Number of units	Number of residents
Cherwell DC (sites within 1,900m of SAC	1,360	3,400

Points to be Noted:

The interviews were conducted in early summer and visitor access patterns may be different when compared to the rest of the year. The surveys included the school half term period in order to reflect the difference between school holidays and term-time.

The data shows that people going for a walk visit the site the most frequently (dog-walking was the second most frequent purpose of visit). As dogs need exercising on a daily basis, the dog walkers interviewed are therefore likely to represent a relatively constant sample of visitors, and usage would be likely to be similar throughout the year. During the winter, the proportion of dog walkers to other users may be higher as the numbers of people cycling, picnicking, etc., would likely be less.

There are 6 access points to Oxford Meadows (via the Wolvercote car park; via the right of way at the entrance to Wolvercote off Godstow Road; via Godstow Road; via the bridge at Aristotle Lane; via the bridge across the river from Binsey; and via the car park off Walton Well Road). The two survey points that were selected are both car parks and so it is possible that the survey results are slightly skewed towards arrivals by car – although this does not seem to be particularly evident for the southern access point that was surveyed.