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Waverley Borough Council

## Appropriate Assessment Proforma

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### Case Officer:

#### 1. Proposed Development Background

1.1 Planning Application Number: WA/2020/1213

Address: Land Coordinates 490217 132204 Scotland Lane, Haslemere

Description: Erection of a residential development including associated parking, landscaping, open space and infrastructure

1.2 The scheme will deliver 50 net new dwellings.

1.3 The scheme will deliver NIL new employment/ industrial space.

1.4 The proposal is located within 5km of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA

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## 2. Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA

2.1 Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA) comprises four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

- Devil's Punch Bowl
- Bramshott and Ludshott Commons
- Broxhead and Kingsley Commons
- Woolmer Forest

2.2 Of these SSSIs only the Devil's Punch Bowl lies within Waverley Borough. Bramshott and Ludshott Commons SSSI lie within 1km of Waverley Borough, alongside the A3. Broxhead and Kingsley Commons and Woolmer Forest (also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)) are approximately 5km from the Borough, with the latter directly accessible via the A3.

Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA is designated for breeding:

- Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*;
- Woodlark *Lullula arborea*; and
- Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*.

### 2.3 Recreational Pressure

2.4 In connection with assessment of recreational access the Devil's Punchbowl and Hindhead Common as a result of the tunnelling of the A3 that has historically run through the SPA/SSSI, a visitor survey was commissioned. Among the main findings of the report were that the site receives approximately 1830-1930 visitors per week (the survey was carried out between June-October). Most visitors were relatively local, with 75% of dog walkers and 54% of visitors generally coming from within 5km, and the majority of the remaining visitors origins (those outside 5km) showed clear correlation with the A3 corridor. Haslemere, Grayshott and Beacon Hill were clearly foci from which visitors journeyed. Eighty percent of visitors travelled to the site by car. Once on the site, 82% of visitors travelled 1km, with 70% travelling over 2km. 60% of dog walkers were found to travel over 2.8km. Surveys undertaken for the Whitehill-Bordon project focussing on other parts of the SPA have concluded that approximately 75% of visitors derive from within 5km.

2.5 As with Thames Basin Heaths SPA, it is the change in population within this zone that is of greatest importance in influencing impacts on the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA. A substantial increase in residents of this zone would be likely to relate to a substantial increase in visitors to the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA and an adverse effect on the interest features; this would apply principally to the interest features of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA as the birds for which the SPA is designated are more easily disturbed. However, if the increase in pressure was sufficiently great an adverse effect on the heathland features of the overlapping SAC could also begin to occur.

2.6 Natural England recommend that the Council undertake HRA on all major developments located within 5km of Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA to confirm the continuing validity of the assessment contained within the Local Plan HRA.

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## 2.7 Urbanisation

- 2.8 The delivery of large amounts of new development within 400m of a European site designated for nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler could result in adverse effects on the integrity of that site. Around Thames Basin Heaths SPA the scale of existing residential development within 400m is already high; as such, it was considered that a policy specifically prohibiting further net residential development within 400m was required, otherwise historic development patterns indicated that a large amount of further residential development would come forward in that zone, exacerbating the existing situation. However, the same pattern of historic development intensity does not apply to Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA. The number of dwellings within 400m is considerably smaller around Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, even adjusted for the greater size of the other two SPAs.
- 2.9 Wealden Heaths Phase II is a smaller SPA than the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, but is also un-fragmented, consisting of six large contiguous parcels of land: Woolmer Forest (which is split into two parcels by the A3), Ludshott Common/Bramshott Common, Kingsley Common, Broxhead Common and Hindhead Common. The smallest parcel is Kingsley Common, measuring almost 40ha. The largest parcel is Woolmer Forest, measuring over 820ha. In general this means that its designated bird populations are much less vulnerable to edge effects than the designated bird populations of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
- 2.10 This means that a) Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA is currently under much lower pressure from residential development immediately surrounding the site than Thames Basin Heaths SPA and b) there is a much lower likelihood of anything other than small quantities of further residential development coming forward within the 400m zone, thus rendering a policy completely prohibiting net residential development within that zone unnecessary; rather, the likely scale is such that impacts can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as applications come forward.
- 2.11 Local Plan Part 1 Policy NE1 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity Conservation) includes the text that provides explicit protection for European sites as a result of any proposed development within 400m of the site: *'Where new development is proposed that would result in a net increase in residential accommodation within 400m of the boundary of Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons (Wealden Heaths Phase I) SPA and Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, the Council will need to be satisfied that there will be no significant adverse effects on the ecological integrity of the SPA through a project level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).'* The same policy also states: *'Development within the Hindhead Concept Statement Area will be required to make appropriate contributions in accordance with the Hindhead Avoidance Strategy (2011) unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not have a likely significant adverse effect on the ecological integrity of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA'.*
- 2.12 Natural England request that the number of new dwellings being granted permission within 400m of the SPA is included as a monitoring criterion. This would provide a further safeguard to ensure that the assumption made in this part of the HRA remain valid, and has been included in the LPP1 as a monitoring method.

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## 2.13 Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA: Appropriate Assessment: Recreational Pressure and Urbanisation

Proforma number	Question
WH1	<p>The proposed residential scheme is to provide a <u>net</u> increase in residential development that is located between:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Between 400m and 5km from Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. The scheme has <b>provided appropriate mitigation</b> in the form of an off-site permissive footpath to an off-site 2.3k circular walk in full control of the applicant. The competent authority <b>is satisfied</b> that the development will not affect the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects in relation to urbanisation and recreational pressure effects.</li></ol></li></ol>

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## 2.14 Wealden Heaths Phase II: Appropriate Assessment: Additional Impact Pathways

Owing to the distance of the development from Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, the proposed development will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site due to any other additional impact pathways such as noise, atmospheric pollution or light (separate to urbanisation and recreational pressure).

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## 3. Natural England Consultation

- 3.1 In accordance with Regulation 63(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Natural England must be consulted upon this HRA before the application can be consented.

<b>Proforma number</b>	<b>Delete the following as appropriate:</b>
<b>NE1</b>	1. Natural England <b>has</b> concurred with the conclusions of this HRA;