



Doncaster  
Council

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Doncaster Local Plan Submission (updated February 2020)

# Habitat Regulations Assessment – Submission Version



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## **Executive Summary**

This report is the completed Habitat Regulations Report for the Council's Local Plan. The potential impact on European Sites, of the policies within the document and the location of proposed housing, employment, mixed use and minerals sites that are proposed for Doncaster up to the year 2035 are assessed. The European sites considered are: Thorne Moors, Hatfield Moors, Lower Derwent Valley, River Derwent and Humber Estuary. During the initial screening exercise 11 policies were identified as having the potential for to have a likely significant impact on one or more European Site. These policies were examined in more detail within an appropriate assessment and impacts were ruled out in the majority of cases. A previous draft of the HRA suggested small amendments are suggested to policies 16 (Lorry Parking), 26 (Development in the Countryside), 62 (Providing for and Safeguarding Mineral Resources), 63 (Minerals Development Proposals, Borrow Pits and Incidental Extraction) and 65 (Providing for Energy Minerals - Gas Shale and Oil Hydrocarbons). These amendments have been made and make it explicit that activities which damage the integrity of Thorne Moor SAC, Hatfield Moor SAC or Thorne and Hatfield Moors SPA will not be supported.

Minor and major modification to the plan proposed since publication have been reviewed. In terms of the HRA these are not considered to have any impact on the conclusions of this document.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Habitat Regulations Assessment of Development Plans**

1.1.1 Under the provisions of the Habitats Directive, and translated into UK law by the Habitats Regulations<sup>1</sup>, a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

1.1.2 This report is the completed Habitat Regulations Report for the Publication version of the Council's Local Plan Document. This HRA takes on board comments from Natural England following consultation on an earlier draft of the Local Plan and screens new policies that have been added. The Local Plan includes both strategic and detailed policies, as well as site allocations on a Proposals Map. This report screens both the sites and policies for their potential to impact upon European sites. It also carries out an appropriate assessment of aspects of the plan that after screening are considered likely to have a significant effect on any European sites in view of their conservation objectives.

1.1.3 This report has been prepared in light of the April 2018 Court of the European Union ruling in the case of People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teroranta. As a result mitigation and avoidance measures are not considered at the screening stage and instead discussed fully within appropriate assessments.

### **1.2 Historical Context**

1.2.1 In May 2012 Doncaster Council Adopted its Core Strategy. The Core Strategy set out the principles for the level, type, broad locations and timescales for development in Doncaster for the 17 year period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028. During the development of the Core Strategy a

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<sup>1</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

continual process of assessment under the Habitat Regulations was undertaken that examined the potential impact of the plan on Thorne and Hatfield Moors SPA/SAC, Lower Derwent Valley SPA/SAC/Ramsar and Humber Flats SPA /candidate SAC/Ramsar. Following discussions with Natural England the final Habitat Regulations Assessment was signed off as fit for purpose in March 2011.

1.2.1 In September 2014 Full Council took the formal decision to withdraw the Local Development Framework Sites & Policies DPD and commence work on a single Local Plan for the borough. Once it is adopted the Local Plan will replace the Core Strategy. This document will form the necessary assessment under the Habitat Regulations for this new Local Plan.

### **1.3 Natura 2000 Sites**

1.3.1 Natura 2000 sites are a network of sites spanning Europe that are considered to represent natural habitats of the highest value for nature conservation. The sites can be important for plants and animals that are rare or considered threatened in a European context. The network of sites were established under the 1992 Habitats Directive<sup>2</sup> and 1979 Birds Directive<sup>3</sup> and consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These sites are often simply referred to as 'European Sites'. SACs are designated for their importance for habitats while SPAs are designated for their importance for birds. In addition to SPA and SAC sites, Ramsar<sup>4</sup> sites are designated areas important for their wetland habitats. The National Planning Policy Framework states that Ramsar sites should receive the same level of protection as SPA and SAC sites. This means that any Ramsar sites should be taken into account in the HRA process.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

<sup>3</sup> Council Directive 79/409/ECC on the conservation of wild birds (as amended and subsequently codified in Directive 2009/147/EC).

<sup>4</sup> Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Ramsar (Iran), 2nd February 1971.

## **1.4 Report Aims**

1.4.1 This report aims to:

- Identify the sites within the 15km of the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough boundary.
- Summarise the reasons for designation of each of these sites.
- Screen each of the policies within the Local Plan Document to determine if there is a likely significant effect on any European Site.
- Screen each of the housing, employment and minerals sites within the Local Plan document to determine if there is a likely significant effect on a European Sites.
- Undertake an appropriate assessment of policies or site allocations that have been identified at the screening stage to determine whether or not these would adversely affect the integrity of any European Site.

## **2. Sites Information**

### **2.1 European Sites to be Considered**

2.1.1 Two European Sites lie within the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough boundary (Thorne Moor and Hatfield Moor). In addition three sites have been identified that lie within 15km<sup>5</sup> of the boundary:

- Hatfield Moor SAC
- Humber Estuary SAC
- Lower Derwent Valley SAC
- River Derwent SAC
- Thorne Moor SAC
  
- Thorne & Hatfield Moors SPA
- Lower Derwent Valley SPA
- Humber Estuary SPA
  
- Humber Estuary RAMSAR
- Lower Derwent Valley RAMSAR

Appendix 1 contains a map showing the location of the above sites in relation to the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough boundary.

2.1.2 Previous habitat regulations assessment work has considered whether any European sites outside the 15km radius have the potential to be impacted by the development plan. Consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency concluded that an adverse impact on any European sites outside this boundary was unlikely.

### **2.2 Conservation Objectives**

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<sup>5</sup> No set distance is prescribed in the HRA process, however 15km is considered reasonable in this instance.

2.2.1 Information on each of the above sites was collected to help inform the Habitat Regulations Assessment process. This included citations for SAC's and SPA's and Information sheets for Ramsar sites. Details of the conservation objectives of each of the sites were also reviewed. Together this information was used to identify whether any of the policies in the Local Plan document have the potential to affect site integrity.

2.2.2 The reasons for site designation for each site are detailed below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Reasons for site designation**

<b>Site</b>	<b>SAC Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	<b>SPA Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	<b>Ramsar</b>
Thorne Moors	The site qualifies due to the presence of degraded raised bog habitat capable of regeneration.	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats.</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and</li> </ul>	The site qualifies as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain breeding population of European nightjar	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely</li> </ul>	n/a

Site	SAC Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	SPA Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	Ramsar
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The population of each of the qualifying features, and,</li> <li>The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</li> </ul>	
Hatfield Moors	The presence of degraded raised bog habitat capable of regeneration.	As above	The site qualifies as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain breeding population of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European nightjar</li> </ul>	As above	n/a
Lower Derwent Valley	The presence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alluvial forests with Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>.</li> <li>Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus</i>)</li> </ul>	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;	The site qualifies as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the UK wintering population of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bewick's swan</li> <li>Golden plover</li> </ul>	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;	A traditionally managed species rich alluvial flood meadow. A rich assemblage

Site	SAC Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	SPA Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	Ramsar
	<p><i>pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely</li> <li>• The populations of qualifying species, and,</li> <li>• The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruff</li> <li>• Eurasian wigeon</li> <li>• Eurasian teal</li> </ul> <p>The site qualifies as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the UK breeding population of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern shoveler</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely</li> <li>• The population of each of the qualifying features, and,</li> <li>• The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</li> </ul>	<p>of wetland invertebrates.</p> <p>The site is a staging post for passage of birds in spring. The site supports an internationally important assemblage and populations of waterfowl.</p>

<b>Site</b>	<b>SAC Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	<b>SPA Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	<b>Ramsar</b>
Humber Estuary	<p>The presence of the following habitats and species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows</li> <li>• Coastal lagoons</li> <li>• Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i></li> <li>• Embryonic shifting dunes</li> <li>• Estuaries</li> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide Fixed dunes</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats</li> </ul>	<p>The site qualifies as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the UK wintering population of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great bittern</li> <li>• Common shelduck</li> <li>• Hen harrier</li> <li>• Pied avocet</li> <li>• European golden plover</li> <li>• Red knot</li> <li>• Dunlin</li> <li>• Ruff</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely</li> </ul>	<p>The site contains near natural estuary habitat with the following habitats – dune systems and humid dune slacks, estuarine waters, intertidal mud and sand flats, saltmarshes</p>

Site	SAC Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	SPA Qualifying Features	Conservation Objectives With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	Ramsar
	<p>with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes').</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand.</li> <li>• Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time.</li> <li>• Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes').</li> <li>• Grey seal</li> <li>• River lamprey</li> <li>• Sea lamprey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species</li> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species rely</li> <li>• The populations of qualifying species, and,</li> <li>• The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black-tailed godwit</li> <li>• Bar-tailed godwit</li> <li>• Common redshank</li> </ul> <p>The site qualifies as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the UK breeding population of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little tern</li> <li>• Great bittern</li> <li>• Eurasian marsh harrier</li> <li>• Pied avocet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The population of each of the qualifying features, and,</li> <li>• The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</li> </ul>	<p>and brackish coastal lagoons. The second largest grey seal breeding colony. Migration route for lamprey species. Internationally important assemblages and populations of waterfowl and waders.</p>

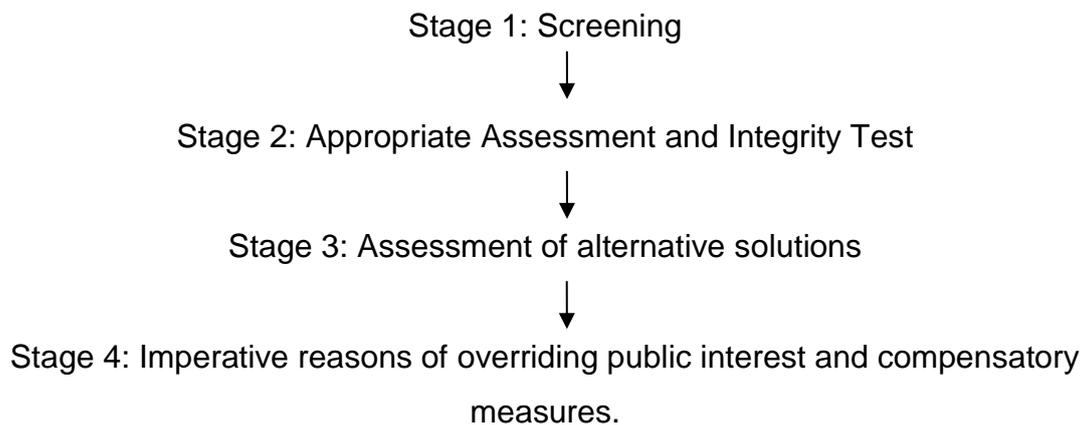
<b>Site</b>	<b>SAC Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	<b>SPA Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	<b>Ramsar</b>
River Derwent	<p>The presence of the following habitats and species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water course of plain to montane levels with floating vegetation often dominated by water crowfoot.</li> <li>• Bullhead</li> <li>• River lamprey</li> <li>• Otter</li> <li>• Sea lamprey</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species.</li> <li>• The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.</li> <li>• The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species.</li> </ul>	n/a	n/a	n/a

<b>Site</b>	<b>SAC Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features'), and subject to natural change:	<b>SPA Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Conservation Objectives</b> With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the Qualifying Features), and subject to natural change:	<b>Ramsar</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The supporting processes on which qualifying species.</li> <li>• The distribution of qualifying species within the site.</li> </ul>			

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 This report uses guidance from the Habitat Regulations Assessment Handbook. To summarise briefly, an assessment under the Habitat Regulations can be split into three stages:



#### **3.2 Stage 1: Screening for Likely Significant Effects**

3.2.1 The screening stage identifies if a policy or plan will have an impact on a European Site and therefore if an 'Appropriate Assessment' is needed. The first stage is to identify which policies or parts of a plan will have no likely significant effect on any European Site. Categories A-H listed in Table 2 identify common reasons why a policy is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site. Categories I to L identify reasons why a policy might impact upon a European Site. These screening categories are taken from the Habitat Regulations Assessment Handbook. In chapter 4 each policy is considered in turn and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

**Table 2: Screening Categorisation**

<b>Screening category</b>	<b>Justification</b>
<b>A.</b> General statement policy / general aspiration (screened out).	Policies which are no more than general statements of policy or general political aspirations should be screened out because they cannot have a significant effect on a site.
<b>B.</b> Policy listing general criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals (screened out)	General policies designed to test proposals in the plan for their general acceptability or for their general sustainability credentials cannot have any effect on a European site.
<b>C.</b> Proposals referred to but not proposed by the plan (screened out)	Screen out any references to specific proposals for projects such as those which are identified, for example, in higher policy frameworks relating perhaps to nationally significant infrastructure projects.
<b>D.</b> Environmental protection / site safeguarding policy (screened out)	Policies where the obvious purpose is to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity, or to conserve or enhance the natural or historic environment. They can be screened out because the implementation of policies is likely to protect rather than adversely affect European sites and not undermine their conservation objective.
<b>E.</b> Policies or proposals which steer change in such a way as to protect European sites from adverse effects (screened out)	These types of policies or proposals will have the effect of steering change away from European sites whose qualifying features may be affected by the change and they can therefore be screened out.
<b>F.</b> Policy that cannot lead to development or other change (screened out)	Many policies are included in plans of many kinds which will not themselves lead to development or other change, for example, because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development or other kinds of change.
<b>G.</b> Policy or proposal that could not have any conceivable effect on a site (screened out)	Policies which make provision for change but which could have no conceivable effect on a European site, because there is no casual connection or link between them and the qualifying features of any European site.
<b>H.</b> Policy or proposal the (actual or theoretical) effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives (either alone or in combination with other aspects of this or other plans or projects) (screened out)	Policies or proposals which make provision for change but which could not have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination can be screened out. These may include cases where there are some potential effects which would plainly be insignificant and could not undermine the conservation objectives.

<b>I.</b> Policy or proposal with a likely significant effect on a site alone (screened in)	There are many reasons why a policy may have a likely significant effects on a site alone.
<b>J.</b> Policy or proposal with an effect on a site but not likely to be significant alone, so need to check for likely significant effects in combination.	Aspects of the plan which would have some effect on a site, but the effect would not be likely to be a significant effect; so they must be checked for in combination (cumulative) effects.
<b>K.</b> Policy or proposal not likely to have a significant effect alone or in combination	Aspects of the plan assigned to J which turn out to not be significant in combination.
<b>L.</b> Policy or proposal likely to have a significant effect in combination	Aspects of the plan assigned to J which turn out to be significant in combination.

### **3.3 Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment**

3.3.1 If stage 1 identifies any of the policies as having a likely significant effect then these will be subject to an appropriate level of assessment to establish exactly what the potential impacts of the plan are on European site integrity. An iterative process is then undertaken that aims to change the policy or include mitigation in a manner that removes any risk of a negative impact on a site.

3.3.2 In making the assessment of how site integrity is impacted by a project or plan then it is essential that the precautionary principle is adopted. The key premise of the precautionary principle is that in situations where an impact on site integrity cannot definitely be ruled out, then an adverse impact should be assumed.

### **3.4 Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions**

3.4.1 If after stage 2 negative impacts on site integrity cannot be ruled out then it must be demonstrated objectively that there are no feasible alternative solutions which are less damaging.

### **3.5 Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest**

3.5.1 In the unlikely scenario that it is not possible to adapt a plan or policy sufficiently to avoid any adverse impact on a European site then it would be necessary to establish whether there are any imperative reasons of overriding public interest that mean the plan should progress. If it is considered that such reasons exist, which outweigh the damage that will be caused to the site, then the next stage is to notify the Secretary of State who will consider whether the plan or project should proceed.

## **4. Stage 1 - Screening**

### **4.1 Screening Results**

4.1.1 Table 3 below contains the full results of the screening exercise on each of the policies within the Publication Version of the Local Plan document. The majority of policies are identified as having no likely significant impact on a European Site. However some were identified as needing a more detailed assessment of their impacts in order to determine whether or not they will adversely affect the site integrity of a European Site. These policies, and where relevant site allocations, are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

**Table 3: Policy and Site Screening Results**

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Chapter 3 Our Vision for the future	A. The vision statement and objectives are political aspirations that will cannot themselves have an impact on a European Site.
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
Policy 1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development (Strategic Policy)	B. The policy discusses the presumption in favour of sustainable development and will not itself have an effect on a European site.
Policy 2 Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy (Strategic Policy)	I. The policy sets out the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy and is designed to direct the decisions on the location and scale of development when considered in conjunction with a series of other policies in the Local Plan. Dependent on the locations and scale of this growth there is the potential for a negative impact on European sites. Increased housing growth and some types of employment could result in a greater demand for water. This could impact on Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor, the Lower Derwent Valley, and the Humber Estuary as these sites are vulnerable to changes in hydrology. In addition increased housing will mean a greater capacity is needed to deal with waste water. If the existing network is not able to accommodate this then there could be a negative impact on Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor and the Humber Estuary. Increased housing levels could increase visitor pressure on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Land take associated with housing and employment developments has the potential to result in a loss of foraging habitat for nightjar and birds from the Humber Estuary and Lower Derwent Valley. More houses are likely to lead to more car owners living in the Doncaster area hence

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
	causing increases in air pollution. This could detrimentally impact Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the lower Derwent Valley and River Derwent.
Policy 3 Level and Distribution of Growth (Strategic Policy)	I. The policy sets out the strategic aim of delivering at least 481 hectares of employment land over the plan period (2015 – 2035) to accommodate business, light industry and manufacturing, and distribution and warehouses. It also sets out the delivery 920 new homes each year (18,400 over the plan period). In line with the settlement hierarchy 50% of this new housing growth is proposed within the main urban area, while the Main towns of Dunscroft, Dunsville, Hatfield and Stainforth, Thorne and Moorends, Conisbrough and Denaby, Mexborough, Armthorpe, Rossington and Adwick and Woodlands will share around 40% of the growth. Service towns and Larger villages will deliver the remaining 10%. Again, dependent on the locations and scale of this growth there is the potential for a negative impact on European sites. Increased housing growth and some types of employment could result in a greater demand for water. This could impact Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor, the Lower Derwent Valley and the Humber Estuary as these sites are vulnerable to changes in hydrology. In addition increased housing will mean a greater capacity is needed to deal with waste water. If the existing network is not able to accommodate this then there could be a negative impact on Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor and the Humber Estuary. Increased housing levels could increase visitor pressure on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Land take associated with housing and employment developments has the potential to result in a loss of foraging habitat for nightjar and birds from the Humber Estuary and Lower Derwent Valley. More houses are likely to lead to more car owners living in the Doncaster area hence causing increases in air pollution. This could detrimentally impact Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the lower Derwent Valley and River Derwent.
Policy 4 Employment Allocations (Strategic Policy)	I. The policy allocates land for employment uses as shown on the proposals map. Dependent on the location of these allocations and the type of development that comes forward there is the potential for a negative impact on European Sites.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
	<p>Some types of employment could result in a greater demand for water. This could impact Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor, the Lower Derwent Valley and the Humber Estuary as these sites are vulnerable to changes in hydrology. Land take associated with employment developments has the potential to result in a loss of foraging habitat for nightjar from Thorne and Hatfield Moors and birds from the Humber Estuary and Lower Derwent Valley. Dependent on the location and nature of an employment site there is the potential for an increase in air pollution. This could be a result of car journeys to and from the site, HGV movements or an industrial process on site acting as a point source of air pollution. This could detrimentally impact Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the lower Derwent Valley and River Derwent.</p>
<p>Policy 5 Employment Policy Areas (Strategic Policy)</p>	<p>B. The policy seeks to ensure that employment policy areas are primarily used for employment uses. It sets out criteria that would need to be met for other uses to be considered acceptable. It will not itself lead to development.</p>
<p>Policy 6 Housing Allocations (Strategic Policy)</p>	<p>I. The policy allocates housing sites that are necessary to deliver the housing requirement set out in Policy 3. These include sites with planning permission and sites without planning permission that are proposed for housing or mixed use. The policy also indicates sites that are suitable for housing or mixed use including housing but area not currently considered developable within the plan period. If these were to come forward then they would be additional to the allocated land supply. Increased housing growth could result in a greater demand for water. Increased housing growth could result in a greater demand for water. This could impact on Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor, the Lower Derwent Valley, and the Humber Estuary as these sites are vulnerable to changes in hydrology. In addition increased housing will mean a greater capacity is needed to deal with waste water. If the existing network is not able to accommodate this then there could be a negative impact on Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor and the Humber Estuary. Increased housing levels could increase visitor pressure on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Land take associated with housing developments has the potential to result in a loss of foraging habitat for nightjar</p>

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
	and birds from the Humber Estuary and Lower Derwent Valley. More houses are likely to lead to more car owners living in the Doncaster area hence causing increases in air pollution. This could detrimentally impact Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the lower Derwent Valley and River Derwent.
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
Policy 7 Doncaster Sheffield Airport	I. The policy sets out principles to support the development and expansion of the airport. These include expanding infrastructure for aviation purposes, improving access to the airport, providing employment sites (allocated in Policy 4), allocating land for 280 new houses near the airport and identifying land for an additional 920 homes, delivery of which is subject to the creation of new jobs at the airport site. The potential for negative impacts on European sites of new employment and housing sites are discussed above in connection with policies, 4 and 6. In addition the expansion of airport infrastructure and an associated increase in the number of flights and car journeys to and from the airport have the potential to increase nitrous oxide emissions that could detrimentally impact Thorne and Hatfield Moors.
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
Policy 8 Delivering the necessary Range of housing (Strategic Policy)	F. The policy sets out expectations with respect to delivering a range of housing types, sizes, styles and tenures. It considers qualitative factors of housing development and will not itself lead to development.
Policy 9 Removal of Occupancy Conditions	F. The policy sets out conditions for the removal of occupancy conditions on rural dwellings. It will not itself lead to development.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Policy 10 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	B. The policy lists criteria for determining where proposals for houses in multiple occupation will be supported. This cannot have an impact on a European site.
Policy 11 Residential Policy Areas	E. The policy sets out criteria for when new residential development will be supported within existing residential policy areas. By directing new housing development towards existing residential policy areas this will steer development away from sensitive sites.
Policy 12 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People.	H. The policy seeks to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People. It directs development to existing sites, new sites within the defined development limits of existing settlements suitable for residential land and potentially small extensions to existing sites or small sites outside of green belt. Given this policy is only going to lead to a limited number of very small scale developments and predominantly these developments will be close to existing sites (5 of which are within 5km and all of which are further than 2.5km from Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor) it is considered the potential effects of this policy would be insignificant and could not undermine the conservation objectives of any European sites.
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	
Policy 13 Strategic Transport Network	I. The policy supports a range of enhancement priorities to the road network, rail transport, bus transport and freight transport. Increases in traffic on the road network will result in increases in air pollution. Damage from air pollution arising in Doncaster has the potential to have a negative impact on the conservation objectives of Thorne Moor and Hatfield Moor.
Policy 14 Promoting sustainable transport in new developments	B. The policy sets out requirements regarding sustainable transport in new developments and details expectations regarding financial contributions to projects that increase road capacity or deliver mitigation measures. This will not have an impact on a European site.

<b>Section of document, policies or objectives being screened</b>	<b>Screening category with explanation</b>
Policy 15 Doncaster Town Centre Car Parking	G. The policy considers parking in Doncaster town centre. There is no conceivable way that town centre parking could impact on a European site.
Policy 16 Lorry Parking	I. The policy sets out principles for the provision of lorry parking facilities. There is the potential for increased levels of air pollution from traffic movements to and from these sites. Dependent on the location of these facilities this could have a detrimental impact on the conservation objectives of Thorne Moor and Hatfield Moor.
Policy 17 Cycling in Doncaster	B. The policy is designed to help improve cycling provision in Doncaster. Promoting sustainable transport in this manner will not have an impact on a European Site.
Policy 18 Walking in Doncaster	B. The policy seeks to enhance walking provision in Doncaster. Promoting sustainable transport in this manner will not have an impact on a European Site.
Policy 19 Development affecting public rights of way	B. The policy sets out principles for improving the number and quality of opportunities for walking, cycling and riding. It will not impact upon a European Site.
Policy 20 Access, design and layout of public rights of way	F. The policy sets out design criteria for public rights of way and will not itself lead to development.
Policy 21 Public Rights of Way Crossing Roads, Railways, Canals and Rivers	B. The policy sets out how applications should be dealt with that involve public rights of way where they cross roads, railways, canals or rivers. This will not lead to impacts upon a European Site.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Policy 22 Telecommunications and Utilities Infrastructure	B. The policy sets out criteria to be used in considering telecommunications and utilities infrastructure. These will be linked to new development or existing infrastructure and will not have an impact on a European Site.
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	
Policy 23 Locating Town Centre Uses (Strategic Policy)	E. The policy seeks to steer retail, leisure, office, cultural and tourist developments towards town centres as well as setting out special criteria that would need to be met for out of centre developments to be permitted. This will help to steer development towards urban areas and away from European Sites.
Policy 24 Development within Town, District and Local Centres	G. The policy sets out the types of uses considered acceptable at ground floor level in primary and secondary shopping frontages as well as main shopping areas. It also considers where betting shops, pay day loan units and pawnbrokers will be acceptable. This policy could have no conceivable effect on a European Site.
Policy 25 Food and drink uses	G. The policy directs food and drink uses towards town and district centres and will have no conceivable effect on a European Site.
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	
Policy 26 Development in the Countryside	<p>G. Parts 1 and 2 of the policy consider conversion and replacement of buildings in the countryside while Part 3 considers new dwellings in the Countryside. These parts of the policy essentially relate to small scale development of residential dwellings for very small numbers of people. It is not conceivable that this type of small scale development would lead to a negative impact on a European Site.</p> <p>I. Part 4 of the policy considers non residential development in the countryside. Depending on the type of proposal that came forward and its precise location this policy has the potential to lead to development that is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.</p>

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
CHAPTER 10	
Policy 27 Green Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)	D. The policy aims to protect the natural environment protecting, enhancing and extending Doncaster's green infrastructure. It is therefore likely to protect rather than adversely affect European Sites.
Policy 28 Protecting Open Space and Non Designated Open Space	D. The policy aims to protect open spaces and the natural environment. It is therefore likely to protect rather than adversely affect European Sites.
Policy 29 Open Space Provision in New Developments	D. The policy seeks to address local green open space needs and deficiencies by requiring the provision of open space in new developments. Provision of new open spaces is likely to steer recreational activities away from European Sites and to within developments. This will help to protect the interests of European Sites.
Policy 30 Ecological Networks (Strategic Policy)	D. The policy is designed to protect the natural environment by ensuring development proposals deliver a net gain for biodiversity and enhance the boroughs ecological networks. This will help to protect the interests of European Sites.
Policy 31 Valuing Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Strategic Policy)	D. The policy is designed to protect the natural environment by ensuring development proposals protect and enhance the boroughs habitats, species and sites both designated and non designated. This will help to protect the interests of European Sites.
Policy 32 Local Wildlife and Geological Sites	D. The policy concerns the identification of local wildlife and geological sites. It will help to protect the natural environment and hence should benefit European Sites.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Policy 33 Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows	D. The policy lists general criteria with respect to how trees, hedgerows and woodlands should be considered by planning proposals. Overall it is expected that this would have a positive effect on the natural environment.
Policy 34 Landscape (Strategic Policy)	B. The policy sets out criteria to protect landscape character and local distinctiveness. It will not lead to a negative impact on a European Site.
<b>CHAPTER 11</b>	
Policy 35 Valuing our Historic Environment (Strategic Policy)	D. The policy concerns protecting the historic environment. It will not have an adverse impact on a European Site.
Policy 36 Understanding and Recording the Historic Environment	B. The policy sets out the requirements applications that affect known or potential heritage assets will need to meet. It will not lead to a negative impact upon a European Site.
Policy 37 Listed Buildings	B. The policy sets out the requirements developments that affect listed buildings will need to meet. It will not lead to a negative impact upon a European Site.
Policy 38 Conservation Areas	B. The policy sets out the criteria that developments that affect conservation areas will be assessed against. It will not lead to a negative impact upon a European Site.
Policy 39 Historic Parks and Gardens	B. The policy sets out the criteria that developments that affect historic parks and gardens will be assessed against. It will not lead to a negative impact upon a European Site.
Policy 40 Development affecting archeology	D. The policy aims to protect archeological remains and sets out principles for developments that affect archeological assets. It will not have an impact on European Sites.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Policy 41 Buildings or Structures of Local Historic Interest	B. The policy considers applications where development may affect buildings of local historic interest and sets out principles against which they will be assessed. It will not lead to a negative impact on a European Site.
<b>CHAPTER 12</b>	
Policy 42 Character and Local Distinctiveness (Strategic Policy)	F. The policy relates to promoting imaginative design, contemporary architecture and public art. It will not itself lead directly to development and hence not adversely impact upon a European Site.
Policy 43 Good Urban Design (Strategic Policy)	F. The policy relates to promoting good urban design. It will not itself lead directly to development and hence not adversely impact upon a European Site.
Policy 44 Views, Gateways and Taller Buildings	F. The policy sets out design criteria in relation to important views, gateways and taller buildings. It will not itself lead directly to development and hence not adversely impact upon a European Site
Policy 45 Residential Design (Strategic Policy)	F. The policy sets out design criteria for residential developments. It will not lead directly to development that could adversely impact a European Site.
Policy 46 Housing Design Standards (Strategic Policy)	F. The policy sets out housing design standards that developments will be required to meet. It will not lead directly to development that could adversely impact a European Site.
Policy 47 Design to Non Residential, Commercial and	F. The policy sets out design standards in relation to non residential, commercial and employment proposals that developments will be required to meet. It will not lead directly to development so will not adversely impact a European Site.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Employment Developments (Strategic Policy)	
Policy 48 Safe and Secure Places	F. The policy is about design of new developments and aims to reduce the risk and fear of crime. It will not itself lead to development and hence will not impact a European Site.
Policy 49 Landscaping of New Developments	F. The proposal is about providing good landscaping within developments. It will not lead directly to development and hence wont adversely impact a European Site.
Policy 50 Advertisements and signage	F. The policy is about the design of advertisements and signage and will not lead directly to development that might adversely impact a European Site.
CHAPTER 13	
Policy 51 Health (Strategic Policy)	F. This policy is about creating high quality environments that promote healthy communities. It will not itself lead directly to development.
Policy 52 Protection of Education, Community and Leisure Facilities	B. This policy is about ensuring that existing school sites, and community facilities remain being used for the same purpose and sets out criteria for when a change from this type of use would be permitted.
Policy 53 New Education facilities	B. This policy sets out the requirements for new or improved education facilities.
Policy 54 Provision of new Indoor	E. This policy sets out criteria for when new indoor recreation and leisure facilities will be supported. Where these will attract large numbers of people the policy directs them towards them towards large urban areas and hence away from European Sites.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Recreation and Leisure Facilities	
Policy 55 Pollution	D. The policy sets out criteria with respect to pollution and aims to protect the natural environment.
Policy 56 Contamination and Unstable Land	D. The policy is about mitigation of contaminated or unstable land. It is designed to protect the natural environment.
CHAPTER 14	
Policy 57 Drainage	B. The policy sets out criteria to ensure development deals with its drainage impacts including waste water and surface water run off.
Policy 58 Flood Risk Management	B. The policy sets out criteria with respect to requirements for different types of applications in different flood zones.
Policy 59 Low Carbon and Renewable Energy (Strategic Policy)	D. The policy sets out principles aimed at increasing the supply of low carbon and renewable energy generated in the borough. This should help to reduce CO <sub>2</sub> emissions which will help to reduce climate change and will benefit European Sites.
Policy 60 Wind Energy Developments (Strategic Policy)	E. The policy directs medium to large scale wind energy developments towards areas with the highest relative landscape capacity. This will direct such development away from European Sites.
Policy 61 Protecting and Enhancing	D. The policy is designed to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land and water resources including surface and groundwater. It will help to protect the natural environment.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Doncaster's Soil and Water Resources	
Policy 62 Providing for and Safeguarding Mineral Resources (Strategic Policy)	I. The policy sets out principles for supporting the extraction and production of aggregate, industrial, building stone and energy minerals. It identifies existing mineral sites, newly proposed or preferred areas, areas of search and safeguarded areas. Extraction of sand and gravel in close proximity to Thorne and Hatfield Moors has the potential to impact water levels in the Sherwood Sandstone Aquifer.
Policy 63 Minerals Development Proposals, Borrow Pits and Incidental Extraction	I. The policy discusses instances where incidental mineral extraction and creation of borrow pits will be supported. Dependent on the location of the proposal there is the potential for the creation of mineral extraction such as this to have an impact on the water table. As Thorne and Hatfield Moors are sensitive to water levels this has the potential to negatively impact upon the the conservation objectives of these sites.
Policy 64 Reclamation of Minerals Sites (Restoration and Aftercare)	B. The policy discusses criteria for aftercare, restoration and afteruse on mineral sites. It will not negatively impact upon a European site.
Policy 65 Providing for Energy Minerals (on-shore Gas and Oil (Hydrocarbons))	I. The policy sets out that applications for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon mineral resources will be judged in line with national policy. Extraction of shale gas can have negative impacts on air quality <sup>6</sup> . Subject to the location of a proposal there is therefore the possibility of negative impacts on the conservation objectives of Thorne and Hatfield Moors.
CHAPTER 15	

<sup>6</sup> Potential Air Quality Impacts of Shale Gas Extraction in the UK. Air Quality Expert Group 2018.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Policy 66 Developer Contributions (Strategic Policy)	B. The policy sets out when developer contributions will be sought to mitigate the impacts of development. It will not have an impact on a European Site.
Policy 67 Development Viability (Strategic Policy)	B. The policy sets out how the Council will consider whether planning obligations will impact upon viability. It will not have an impact on a European Site.
<b>CHAPTER 16</b>	
Policy 68 Doncaster Town Centre (strategic Policy)	B. The policy sets out criteria for when developments in the town centre will be supported. Given the distance of the town centre from any of the European Sites it will not have an impact on their conservation objectives.
Policy 69 Key Doncaster town centre and main urban area mixed use sites.	F. The policy sets out design criteria for how various key sites in the town centre and main urban area will be developed. It will not itself lead to development so will not impact upon any European Sites.
Policy 70 Unity regeneration project (Strategic Policy)	F. The policy sets out broad design requirements for a large mixed use site that already has planning permission. It will not itself lead to development so will not impact upon any European Sites.
Policy 71 Mexborough Town Centre	G. The policy sets out the type of proposal that will be supported in Mexborough Town centre and aims to preserve and restore features of historic interest, improve retail provision, and enhance various features of the public realm. This will not lead to negative impacts on any European Sites.

Section of document, policies or objectives being screened	Screening category with explanation
Policy 72 Thorne Town Centre	G. The policy sets out the type of proposal that will be supported in Thorne Town centre and aims to preserve features of historic interest, greenspaces as well as improving the public realm. This will not lead to negative impacts on any European Sites.

## **5. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and Integrity Test**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 This chapter examines in more detail issues arising from the policies that were identified during the screening exercise in Chapter 4 as having the potential to have a negative impact on a European Site. It considers whether, in view of each European Site's conservation objectives, any aspects of the plan will have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European Site. Where amendments to the policies or land allocations, that have been suggested in earlier drafts of the HRA, would remove the possibility of a negative effect on the integrity on a European Sites, these are discussed.

### **5.2 Increased demands for water**

5.2.1 Thorne Moor, Hatfield Moor, the Humber Estuary and Derwent Valley are vulnerable to changes in hydrology due to the types of habitats and species that they support. Increased housing growth across the Borough as well as the development of certain types of employment sites that require a lot of water could result in a greater demand for water and hence have a negative impact on Thorne Moors, Hatfield Moors, the Humber Estuary and Derwent Valley.

5.2.2 Policy 3 supports the development of 18,400 new homes over the plan period. Policy 6 allocates the land for 16,022 of these new homes during the first 15 years of the plan period. In addition to this Policy 7 allocates land for 280 new homes at the airport, and up to an additional 920 houses subject to the delivery of significant numbers of new jobs at the site. Policy 3 also supports the delivery of 481 hectares of employment land as set out in the allocations in policy 4.

5.2.3 In planning for how to meet future needs for water, Yorkshire Water has undertaken a Water Resource Management Plan. The Yorkshire Water, draft Water Resource Management Plan 2019 (WRMP19) has been informed

by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). As a result, the draft revised WRMP19 includes primarily distribution management options. A summary of the HRA findings in the SEA stated that:

*“The selected distribution management schemes typically involve relatively small-scale and temporary activity and are largely concentrated within urban and suburban areas. As a result of this, they are unlikely to be in close proximity to a European site and impacts will be small-scale and geographically confined at the point of delivery. Impacts resulting from the distribution management options, both alone and in-combination, are therefore assessed as unlikely to have a significant effect on qualifying features of any European sites.”<sup>7</sup>*

5.2.4 No possible impacts were identified on any of the European Sites considered in this Habitat Regulations Report. It is therefore considered that it will be possible to meet the demands for water arising from this plan, and that there will be no impact on a European site, arising from changes in hydrology.

### **5.3 Dealing with Waste Water**

5.3.1 As well as requiring a supply of clean water new development also generates waste water which needs treatment. The Humber Estuary will ultimately receive treated waste water discharged into water courses in Doncaster. Water companies have a duty to accept waste water from new developments. This has the potential be an issue for the Humber Estuary if the capacity of existing infrastructure for treatment of waste water is exceeded.

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<sup>7</sup> Environmental Report, Yorkshire Water Services Limited, Revised draft Water Resource Management Plan 2019, Strategic Environmental Assessment. ER 98391 Issue Number 3 03/09/2018.

5.3.2 Three water companies deal with waste water generated in different parts of Doncaster. Primarily this falls to Yorkshire Water, with the exception of a section of the south east of the borough covered by Severn Trent and a very small area round the airport dealt with by Anglian. As part of the most recent consultations on the Local Plan comments were sought on the proposed allocations and policies from each of these utilities companies. To date, comments have been received from Severn Trent. These comments identified areas where the proposed level of development would exceed the existing capacity of the treatment network and hence improvement works would be required. These works would be delivered by Severn Trent if required, once there is certainty over the timeframe for the need for such infrastructure. It is therefore considered that this will not lead to a detrimental impact on water quality in the Humber Estuary.

5.3.3 Comments from Yorkshire Water and Anglian have not been received due to capacity issues on dealing with consultation responses. However Policy 57 requires developments to ensure they have an adequate means of foul sewage disposal. This policy will remove the threat to designated European Sites as without an adequate means of foul sewerage disposal a development would not be allowed to proceed.

## **5.4 Visitor Pressure**

5.4.1 Increased amounts of housing could result in an increase in the number of visitors to European Sites. Given the distance to the Humber Estuary and Derwent Valley it is not anticipated that increased housing in Doncaster will have a significant impact on these sites. However increased housing in Doncaster may lead to a rise in the number of visitors to Thorne and Hatfield Moors. This could be a problem through trampling of vegetation and disturbance to nesting nightjar, especially if visitors bring dogs to the site and these are not kept under control.

5.4.2 Of the 18,400 new homes proposed in Doncaster in policy 3 a range of between 510-1020 are directed to Thorne and Moorends and 575-1085 to

Dunscroft, Dunsville, Hatfield and Stainforth over the plan period. Looking in more detail at the proposed allocations set out in policy 4 for Thorne and Moorends there is land for a total of 736 new homes. Of these 391 already have planning permission (but have not yet been built/completed) and 345 are spread across six new sites. All the new sites and those with existing planning permission are either within or closely adjoin the existing urban area. The closest site to Thorne Moors that is proposed for allocation is number 501. This is the only site proposed in Moorends. It has room for 23 homes and it is over 1.5km from Moors. The next closest site is number 081/343 which is approximately 2.7km from Thorne Moors and located in Thorne. This site has room for 207 houses. After Thorne and Moorends the next closest settlement to Thorne or Hatfield Moors with a significant amount of housing proposed is Hatfield, Stainforth Dunscroft and Dunsville. While the housing allocation proposed for this area is substantial at 4142 new homes (4034 from existing permissions and 108 from new allocations), it is a significant distance from the designated sites. With the closest allocations being 3.5km from Hatfield Moors and over 5.4km from Thorne Moors. They are also separated from the site by the M18 motorway.

5.4.3 While the amount of housing proposed for Doncaster overall is large, the vast majority of this is a significant distance from the designated European Sites. Only one new housing site (Number 501) is within 1.5 km of Thorne Moors, and all the others are over 2.5km away. While within the type of distance a dog walker may travel, it is certainly in excess of the distance that children would be expected to walk to access a green space for recreational purposes. Thorne Moors also has no formal car parking facilities close to the site so is less attractive to people visiting by car. Hatfield Moors does have a car park and consequently would be more attractive to people visiting from greater distances. However it also has better facilities for dealing with such visitors.

5.4.4 Natural England has produced an Access Management Strategy and a Management Plan for the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve. This includes measures that will help to alleviate the pressure of increased

numbers of visitors on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Specifically the plan includes splitting the sites into three access zones. The first a visitor priority area at the edge of Hatfield Moor where less sensitive habitats are located. This allows general access, for things not directly related to enjoying the NNR features. Here the access is easy going and there is provision of information to engage visitors to the NNR's features. The second area is on and adjacent to waymarked routes on both Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Here there is no easy going access but simply a provision to make the use of these paths safe. Finally the majority of the area of the sites are managed as wilderness areas. These are not promoted for access and while people can choose to walk through this open access land, facilities are limited to mitigating potential safety hazards.

5.4.5 In addition to the three access zones, the management plan includes measures to ensure dogs are kept under close control on the site. This will be enforced through both signage and on site staff and volunteers.

5.4.6 Finally, policy 29 (Open Space Provision in New Developments) requires new housing developments above 20 or more family dwellings to provide 10-15% of the site as open space. Smaller schemes or those close to existing large open spaces may be required to provide a commuted sum to improve existing open spaces. This will help to reduce the number of visitors to the moors by providing good alternative provision for open space.

5.4.7 While a significant distance from Doncaster, at over 70km away, European sites on the Lincolnshire coast such as Saltfleetby-Theedlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point SAC may potentially see visitors from the Doncaster area. Similarly to at Thorne and Hatfield Moors there are management plans in place on these sites to help manage visitor numbers. These include measures such clearly waymarking and maintaining footpaths and controlling the size of car parks to limit potential visitor numbers (Pers. Comm. Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust). Given the distance of Doncaster from these sites and the fact visitor pressure is being managed it is not anticipated

that an increase in housing growth in Doncaster would have a negative impact on the conservation objectives of these sites.

## **5.5 Pet predation**

5.5.1 Policies 2, 3 and 6 will all lead to new housing. As a ground nesting bird, nightjar has the potential to be negatively impacted by nest predation from domestic cats. If large areas of land close to the Thorne and Hatfield Moors SPA were allocated for housing this could have a negative impact on the integrity of the breeding population.

5.5.2 A study of the home ranges of UK domestic cats in suburban environments recommended that a buffer of 300-400m was required from housing to important wildlife sites in order to limit the impact of cat related predation<sup>8</sup>. Policy 6 allocates land for housing. On examining the sites that have been proposed, the closest to the SPA is site 501 in Moorends which is allocated for 23 homes and is approximately 1.5km from the site boundary. It is therefore considered that cat predation will not have an impact on nightjar populations.

## **5.6 Loss of Foraging Habitat**

5.6.1 Thorne and Hatfield is designated for its breeding population of nightjars. While breeding sites are within the SPA it is known that birds fly off the site to feed. Potential foraging habitats include hedgerows, scrub, ditches, grassland and wetland, but any habitat that is rich in flying invertebrates such as moths has the potential to be used. Foraging flights can be up 3km from breeding grounds meaning that a large area of land surrounding the designated sites at Thorne and Hatfield Moors has the potential to be used by foraging nightjars.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas, R.L., Baker, P.J. and Fellowes, M.D.E. (2014) Ranging characteristics of the domestic cat (*Felis catus*) in an urban environment. *Urban Ecosystems*, 17 (4). pp. 911-921.

5.6.2 Land take associated with housing allocations (policy 6) and employment allocations (policy 4) and mineral extraction (policy 62) has the potential to result in a loss of foraging habitat used by nightjar.

5.6.3 This loss of habitat will be mitigated by policy 31 (Valuing Biodiversity and Geodiversity - part D) which required proposals located within 3km of Thorne and Hatfield Moors Special Protection Area, that impact habitats that nightjars may use for feeding on, to deliver a net gain in nightjar foraging habitat.

5.6.4 Given it is over 10km from the Humber Estuary and 19km from the Lower Derwent Valley to the nearest sites in Doncaster allocated by policies 4, 6 and 62 it is considered unlikely that birds from these sites will be significantly impacted by losses of habitat in Doncaster. In addition, policy 31 will also contribute towards mitigating the impact of the loss of foraging habitat for birds from the Humber Estuary and Lower Derwent Valley as it requires all applications to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity and apply the mitigation hierarchy, avoiding, reducing and then compensating for any losses to biodiversity.

## **5.7 Air Pollution from Traffic**

5.7.1 Nitrogen deposition is a process whereby nitrogen containing particles present in the air are dissolved in water and fall as precipitation (wet deposition), or through direct input of particles into the soil (dry deposition). In this section the impacts of dry deposition are considered.

5.7.2 Various sources of pollution produce nitrogen containing gases, but in particular emissions from vehicles. Policies 2, 3, 4 and 6 will all lead to an increase in housing or employment sites. HGV movements and car journeys to and from employment or housing sites will mean an increase in vehicles using the existing road system, and hence an increase in air pollution. Policy 13 (Strategic Transport Network) supports the creation of new roads or road

improvements at eleven locations in the borough. Finally policy 16 sets out principles for the provision of lorry parking facilities.

5.7.3 Lowland raised bogs are nutrient poor systems. The bog habitats on Thorne and Hatfield Moors are ombrotrophic, meaning that they obtain all their water and nutrients from the air. This makes them particularly sensitive to nitrogen deposition as higher nutrient levels result in the growth of more competitive species rather than sphagnum mosses. Data from the Air Pollution Information System (ref – [www.apis.ac.uk](http://www.apis.ac.uk)) demonstrates that the critical load for nitrogen deposition at both Thorne and Hatfield Moors is already exceeded (Feb 2017). Increases in Nitrogen deposition could therefore have a significant negative impact on the habitats at these sites.

5.7.4 Research by Natural England<sup>9</sup> has shown that dry deposition of pollutants such as nitrous oxides is estimated to take place up to 200m from a source such as a dual carriageway. Beyond this the effects are considered to be negligible. The nearest major road to Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the A614, is over 350m away. The closest new housing allocation is just over 1.5km away and the closest new employment site (number 001) is over 2.7km away. Additionally the closest of the proposed new roads or road improvements is the West Moor Link scheme at over 3km away from Hatfield Moor. It is therefore considered highly unlikely that air pollution from traffic generated by the proposed housing or employment sites, new roads or improvement works would affect the integrity of Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor.

5.7.5 In terms of the impacts of lorry parking facilities on Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor this would depend on the precise location of such services as potentially a site located very close to either of these sites could have a detrimental impact in terms of nitrogen deposition. The impacts of such a scheme would be best assessed at the planning application stage and following recommendations from the previous version of the Habitat

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<sup>9</sup> The ecological effects of air pollution from road transport. Report Number 580. English Nature.

Regulations Assessment the supporting text of Policy 16 has been amended to make it clear that impacts on the European sites would make a scheme unacceptable.

5.7.6 Lowland meadow habitats present in the Lower Derwent Valley SAC are also sensitive to Nitrogen deposition because increased nutrient levels can lead to an increase in tall grasses and a corresponding decrease in species diversity. Data from the Air Pollution Information System<sup>10</sup> demonstrates that the critical load for nitrogen deposition is already exceeded at the site. Further increases in Nitrogen deposition could therefore have a significant negative impact on the habitat at this site. Critical load data is not available for the habitats and species present in the River Derwent SAC however they are also sensitive to nitrogen deposition. Geographically these sites are closely linked, with the River Derwent running through the Lower Derwent Valley. The sites are however situated in a largely rural area. The A63 crosses the River Derwent SAC and the A163 crosses the Lower Derwent Valley SAC/SPA but otherwise any roads within 200m of the sites are very minor.

5.7.7 The APIS website says road emissions account for 5.3% of the total nitrogen deposition on the Lower Derwent Valley while in comparison livestock and non agricultural waste account for 54%. For the River Derwent, 6.63% of the total nitrogen deposition on the site comes from road transport while 37.56% comes from livestock. Traffic generated by new housing or employment sites in Doncaster will potentially use the A63 or A163 but is extremely unlikely to generate traffic on the more minor rural roads near these sites.

5.7.8 In light of the Wealden<sup>11</sup> ruling it is important to consider the impact of air pollution in combination with impacts arising in other areas. Selby is the only neighbouring authority to consider the impact of air pollution on the River

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.apis.ac.uk>

<sup>11</sup> Wealden District Council v. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority [2017] EWHC 351

Derwent and Lower Derwent Valley. The draft HRA screening report for the Selby's allocations screened out the impacts of air pollution from traffic on the River Derwent and Lower Derwent Valley either alone or in combination.

5.7.8 Bearing this in mind, it is considered inconceivable that the even smaller contribution to air pollution from traffic generated in Doncaster would affect the integrity of either the River Derwent SAC or Derwent Valley SAC/SPA.

## **5.8 Expansion of the airport**

5.8.1 Policy 7 (Doncaster Sheffield Airport) supports development of land around the airport for airport uses, employment land (B1, B2 and B8) and housing (closely linked to the delivery of jobs). These would be subject to individual planning applications. While some industrial activities produce emissions, such as heavy industrial processes, it is not anticipated that this is the sort of development that would occur. It would be more appropriate for individual applications around the airport to be subject to an assessment under the habitat regulations at the planning application stage if the proposed activity warranted this.

5.8.2 The development of housing and jobs at the airport in line with policy 7 is likely to increase the number of car journeys locally and hence increase air pollution. However, the airport is over 4km from Thorne and Hatfield Moors and the Great Yorkshire Way runs from Junction 3 of the M18 to the airport approach road. As a fast new road the Great Yorkshire Way will help to direct road traffic travelling to and from the airport away from other smaller routes closer to the Moors, such as the A614. In addition the A614 is more than 350m from Hatfield Moors at it's closest point. It is therefore not anticipated that the impacts of air pollution from road traffic in the area of the airport will have an impact on Thorne or Hatfield Moors (see section 5.6 for discussion of air pollution).

5.8.3 Policy 7 also seeks to improve access to the airport in line with the Airport's Surface Access Strategy and allow access to the airport by a range of travel modes. By developing access by public transport and reducing the need for people to travel by car this will help to reduce the negative impacts of air pollution from car journeys.

5.8.4 Finally it is important to note that any increase in the number of flights at Doncaster Sheffield Airport in excess of that of the current planning permission would require a new planning application. It is however more appropriate that the ecological impacts of pollution from increased flights be subject to a separate assessment under the Habitat Regulations at the planning application stage when details are available for any potential impacts to be fully considered.

## **5.9 Hydrological impacts of mineral extraction near the moors**

5.9.1 Policy 62 sets out the principles for supporting the extraction of mineral resources. It identifies existing mineral sites newly proposed sites and areas of search. The minerals sites map identifies new mineral sites. Site 23 is 1.5km from Hatfield Moor and site 1011 is 3km from Hatfield Moor. In terms of areas of search, site number 47 is over 1.5km from Hatfield Moor and site 50 is 2.8km from Hatfield Moor. Extraction of sand and gravel in close proximity to Thorne and Hatfield Moors has the potential to impact water levels in the Sherwood Sandstone Aquifer. The habitats on the moors are sensitive to water levels it is important that the levels in the aquifer are maintained. Given the distances involved it is considered unlikely that there would be hydrological impacts on the designated sites from mineral extraction in these locations. It would be most appropriate for the detailed assessments under the habitat regulations to be undertaken at the planning application were firm proposals in these areas to come forward. Following recommendations in the previous draft of the Habitat Regulations Assessment the supporting text of Policy 62 has been amended to include reference to the fact minerals proposals will only be supported where they do not damage the integrity of

Thorne or Hatfield Moors and to direct applicants to Policy 31 which protects European Sites.

5.9.2 Policy 63 discusses instances where incidental mineral extraction and creation of borrow pits will be supported. Depending on their location there is the potential for applications such as this to have hydrological impacts on Thorne or Hatfield Moors. However again, it would be most appropriate for the detailed assessments under the habitat regulations to be undertaken at the planning application when firm proposals come forward. The supporting text of Policy 63 has also been amended to include reference to the fact minerals proposals will only be supported where they do not damage the integrity of Thorne or Hatfield Moors and to direct applicants to Policy 31 which protects European Sites.

## **5.10 Air Pollution from other sources**

5.10.1 Policy 65 sets out when exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon mineral resources will be considered acceptable. According to recently published research, extraction of shale gas can have negative impacts on air quality<sup>12</sup>. If located in close proximity to Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor this could have a detrimental impact on the conservation impacts of the these sites. It is suggested that the precise nature of such impacts is considered at the planning application stage when the details of a proposal are available. In light of the recommendation in the previous Habitat Regulations Assessment the supporting text of Policy 65 has been amended to reference that proposals will only be supported where they can demonstrate they have no negative impacts on the conservation objectives of Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor.

5.10.2 Policy 26, part 4 discusses situations when non residential development will be supported outside of the development limits and

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<sup>12</sup> Potential Air Quality Impacts of Shale Gas Extraction in the UK. Air Quality Expert Group 2018.

greenbelt. Certain types of development can result in air pollution and if located close to Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor this could have a negative impact on the conservation impacts of these sites. Without precise details of a particular planning proposal it is again impossible to assess such impacts at this stage. Therefore in line with recommendations from the previous Habitat Regulations Assessment reference is made in the supporting text of the policy to the fact proposals that have a negative impacts on the conservation objectives of Thorne Moor or Hatfield Moor will not be supported.

## 5.11 Consideration of in combination impacts

5.11.1 As part of a Habitat Regulations Assessment process it is necessary to consider the cumulative impacts of other plans and project that might have an in combination impact on a European Site. Table 4 below summarises the findings of Habitat Regulations Reports considered potentially relevant.

**Table 4: Review of other relevant plans or projects**

<b>Plan or Project</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Potential for in combination impacts?</b>
Bassetlaw LDF Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report (May 2010)	Impacts on Hatfield Moor from increased water use, air pollution, recreational pressure and climate change were screened out.	No possibility of in combination impacts.
East Ridings Local Plan HRA stage 1 and 2. East Ridings Allocations HRA stage 1 and 2.	The only issue identified within the HRA work of the Local Plan and its allocations is the allocation of an employment site that would result in the loss of functional land used by birds from the Humber Estuary SPA/Ramsar. Issues relating to other European sites were all screened out.	No. Due to the distance from the site in combination impacts from land allocations in Doncaster are not considered likely.
North Lincolnshire Council Habitat Regulations	Impacts on Thorne and Hatfield Moors SAC and SPA were screened out. The allocation of certain sites was	No. Due to the distance from the site in combination impacts from land allocations in

Assessment Stage 1 and 2 2014.	identified as having a possible impact on the Humber Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar due to loss of habitat, light spill, visual and noise disturbance. However an appropriate assessment outlined mitigation measures such that an adverse effect could be ruled out.	Doncaster are not considered likely.
Rotherham Intergrated Impact Assessment 2015 (including HRA screening)	Undertook an HRA screening exercise of the sites and policies document including impacts on Thorne and Hatfield Moors SAC/SPA. This concluded that there will be no significant effects on European Sites.	No possibility of in combination impacts.
Selby Draft Habitat Regulations Assessment of Selby Local Plan Possible Site Allocations 2018	The report identified possible in combination impacts arising from visitor pressure on Skipworth Common, the River Derwent and Lower Derwent Valley. It also could not rule out possible impacts of dealing with waste water on the River Derwent SAC.	No. Due to the distance from the River Derwent and Lower Derwent Valley visitor pressure from people arising in Doncaster is not considered likely. Similar issues with respect to the capacity to deal with waste water are identified in this HRA. However as Policy 57 requires developments to ensure they have an adequate means of foul sewage disposal. This policy will remove the threat to designated European Sites as without an adequate means of foul sewerage disposal a development would not be allowed to proceed.

## 5.12 Summary and Recommendations

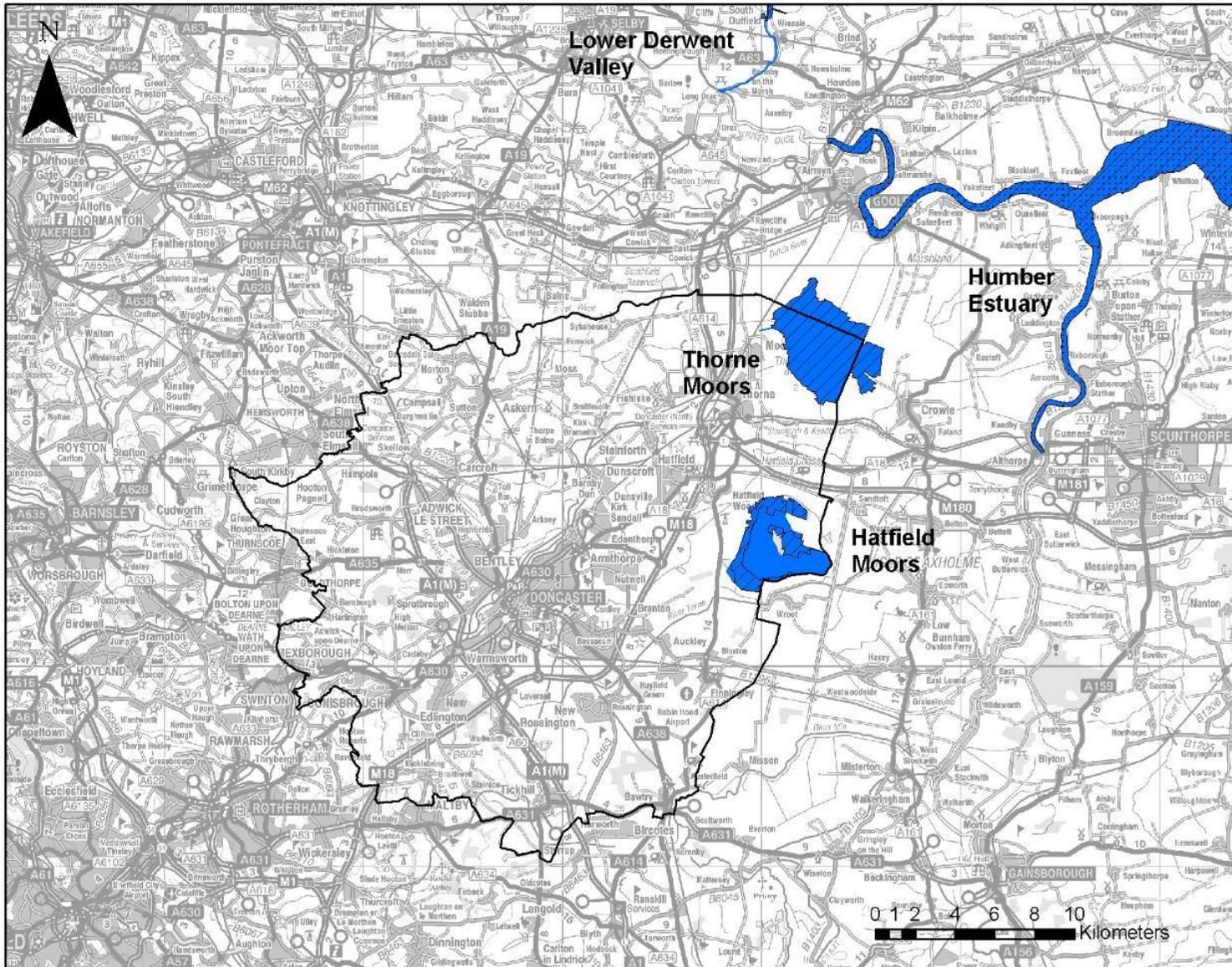
5.12.1 The screening exercise in section 4.1 identified 11 policies that could result in possible impacts on a European Site. The possible impacts of these

policies were considered in detail in sections 5.2 to 5.10 and for the majority, potential impacts on European Sites were ruled out.

5.12.3 Small amendments were suggested to policies 16 (Lorry Parking), 26 (Development in the Countryside), 62 (Providing for and Safeguarding Mineral Resources), 63 (Minerals Development Proposals, Borrow Pits and Incidental Extraction) and 65 (Providing for Energy Minerals - Gas Shale and Oil Hydrocarbons) in a previous draft of the Habitat Regulations Assessment. These have now been made and make it explicit that activities which damage the integrity of Thorne Moor SAC, Hatfield Moor SAC or Thorne and Hatfield Moors SPA will not be supported. Minor and major modification to the plan proposed since publication have been reviewed. In terms of this Habitats Regulations Assessment these are not considered to have any impact on the conclusions of this document. It is therefore considered that impacts from all policies on the European Sites can also be ruled out.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Map showing locations of European Site**



**Doncaster**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

Key :

-  Special Protection Area
-  Special Area of Conservation
-  RAMSAR Site

Title :  
**Location of European Sites**

Notes :

Date :  
22 October 2013

Scale :  
1:275,000

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