



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

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TravelTelford



Telford & Wrekin Transport Plan

Habitats Regulations Assessment Summary 2026-2041



Executive Summary

Introduction

Background to this Assessment

Telford and Wrekin Council are required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Telford and Wrekin Transport Plan (TWTP). This is the Council's fourth Local Transport Plan, covering the period from 2027 to 2041.

An effective and efficient transport system is a fundamental part of life in Telford and Wrekin, for individuals travelling for work, education, shopping, healthcare and leisure, and for businesses and organisations to access customers and employees, and to transport goods from A to B.

Our networks of roads, footpaths, cycleways, bus routes, bus stops, railway stations and public spaces are all key parts of shaping Telford and Wrekin's communities, and it is essential that they meet our current and future needs.

The TWTP is applicable across the Telford and Wrekin unitary authority area, hereafter referred to as the 'Plan Area'.

Background to HRA

HRA is required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations') for all plans and projects which may have a likely significant effect on, and are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of, a European Site¹.

According to Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations'), before deciding to undertake or give any consent for a plan or project, '*..which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site,*' the Competent Authority must '*make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.*'

¹ This is defined as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA), which as a matter of government policy (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 194) also includes possible SACs (pSAC), potential SPAs (pSPA), listed or proposed Ramsar sites (wetland sites of international importance, as designated under the Ramsar Convention 1971) and any site identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on any of the above listed designations.

Following the changes made to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, SACs and SPAs in the UK no longer form part of the EU's Natura 2000 network, but form the UK's national site network. The term 'Habitats Sites' is sometimes now used instead of 'European Sites' following the UK's departure from the EU.

Furthermore, the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 amends the Habitats Regulations to include Ramsar sites, thereby protecting them through the Habitats Regulations.

The TWTP is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Site. Therefore, a HRA is required. The assessment comprises Stage 1 - HRA Screening of the plan and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

Stage 1 Screening

Three European Sites were scoped in for consideration in the assessment:

- Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 Ramsar site
- Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site
- Motte Meadows SAC.

The Screening identified a potential for LSEs associated with two policies within the TWTP as they may lead to development that, depending on the location, scale and timing of the works, could have an effect on a European Site.

The two policies are:

- Policy IA2: Broaden travel choices in suburban and rural areas
- Policy UP4: Support the current Local Plan.

These policies sit under the goals of 'Thriving and healthy local communities' and 'Sustainable, mixed-use developments' respectively.

An in-combination assessment was also undertaken at Screening stage to determine if any of the policies assessed as having 'no LSE' could act in combination with other plans and projects to have a significant effect on the identified European Sites. Taking the precautionary approach, potential effects in-combination with the Stafford Local Plan could not be ruled out.

Both policies and consideration of in-combination effects from the Stafford Local Plan were taken forward to Appropriate Assessment.

Appropriate Assessment

Introduction

Following more detailed consideration, the following impact pathways were considered relevant to the two policies brought forward to Appropriate Assessment:

- Changes to water quality
- Changes to air quality
- Changes to surface and groundwater hydrology
- Recreation.

Given the absence of any European Sites within the Plan Area, it is considered that there is only potential for impacts on Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site, due to its proximity (370 m) from the Plan Area boundary.

Protective Policies

The TWTP includes a number of protective policies under the goal 'Sustainably and inclusively designed networks', **Policy FF6: Protect areas that are recognised for their importance to conservation and biodiversity**, is considered to have a positive impact on the natural environment and biodiversity and states:

“We will continue to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment where required to ensure that transport schemes avoid adverse effects on internationally important sites”

The inclusion of this policy means that where there is a risk of development arising from the TWTP, a HRA will be undertaken at project stage to ensure there will be no adverse effects on site integrity.

Mitigation and Control Measures

It is recommended that potential adverse impacts are avoided and/or ‘designed out’ during the early stages of projects or scheme development, and where necessary consultation with Natural England can facilitate this process.

Mitigation and control measures were recommended to avoid and reduce ecological impacts from development (construction and operation) that may result in adverse effects on a European Site. Each of the four potential impact pathways were considered, taking into account relevant specific information and mitigation measures.

It was concluded that with appropriate mitigation measures no adverse effect on the integrity of the European Sites identified will result from the TWTP alone through changes in water quality, changes in air quality, changes in surface and groundwater hydrology or recreational pressures.

In-combination Effects

The in-combination assessment undertaken at Screening stage identified potential for significant in-combination effects with the Stafford Local Plan.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Stafford Local Plan² identified potential LSEs on Motte Meadows SAC, Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 Ramsar site, Midland Mere and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site (Aqualate Mere and Cop Mere) as a result of changes to water issues and air quality.

Aqualate Mere is the component of the Midland Mere and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site that lies in proximity to Newport and, therefore, potentially susceptible to development and change in that area. The HRA for Stafford Local Plan is an interim HRA and a full, complete assessment has not yet been produced as the plan is still in development. Consequently, sufficient uncertainty remains as to whether impacts from the Stafford Local Plan can be adequately mitigated. As similar impact pathways have been identified, and that adverse effects on site integrity could not be discounted, without mitigation, there is a higher risk of combined effects.

However, it is considered that with the application of mitigation outlined above, including the protective policies within the TWTP, that any combined effects between the two plans could either be avoided or would not result in adverse effects on site integrity.

Transport Delivery Plan (2027-2030)

The Transport Delivery Plan sits alongside the Vision and Strategy and sets out the schemes and strategies that will be delivered to achieve the aims and objectives of the

² Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040 (Preferred Options)

transport plan. The interventions proposed are driven by the policies in the Vision and Strategy and as such, the theoretical impact of those on European Sites has been assessed through the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the TWTP Vision and Strategy.

The HRA concluded that many of the policies leading to minor development or improvement work within existing transport corridors or urban centres could be ruled out from having a Likely Significant Effect due to the localised impact and absence of European Sites within the Plan Area. This finding applies to many of the proposed interventions within the Transport Delivery Plan where there is no development or minor localised development that will be unlikely to have an impact on a European Site due to an absence of impact pathway.

However, the A518 Corridor Improvement Scheme is located 1.75 km south west of the Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site and will result in development. The scheme will support economic growth and improve congestion, whilst adding safe walking and cycling options to provide a viable alternative to car travel, encourage mode shift and support the mitigation of carbon impacts. Provided the protective policies and mitigations set out in the TWTP Vision and Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment are adhered to, including the need for project-level assessment, it is considered that adverse effects on the integrity of the Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site could reasonably be avoided.

It should be noted that this conclusion is based on the information currently available for the interventions within the Transport Delivery Plan. Where required, further project-level HRA will be undertaken to ensure appropriate assessment as further design detail emerges.

Conclusion

Detailed information is not yet available about the nature and extent of any works or actions that are likely to arise out of the TWTP. However, it is considered reasonable to anticipate from the information available that the development or other environmental change, could be delivered in a manner which avoids any adverse effects on the integrity of the European Sites through the use of avoidance, standard mitigation techniques and adherence to the protective policies in the TWTP that commit to a project-level HRA where necessary.

Taking the above information into account, it can therefore be concluded that the TWTP will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European Sites, either alone or in combination.

Notice: This is a draft executive summary and may be subject to change following the finalising of the source document: Telford & Wrekin Transport Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment.