

# Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 Publication Version

## Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Background Paper

June 2014



**GOSPORT**  
Borough Council

# **Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Background Paper**

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# Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Background Paper

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is a Background Paper to the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011- 2029 relating to biodiversity and geological conservation issues. It also has relevance to the issues relating to green infrastructure. The Background Paper sets out the relevant national and local policy context. It includes a summary of evidence and consultation responses to various issues related to biodiversity and geological conservation.

## 2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

### National Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG March 2012)

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that the purpose of the planning system is the achievement of sustainable development which comprise of economic, social and environmental considerations.
- 2.2 The NPPF sets out a number of core planning principles including the following which are of relevance to planning for biodiversity and geological conservation:
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value;
  - encourage multiple benefits from the use of land, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);
  - be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with local plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area;
  - find ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
  - always seek to secure a high quality design and a good standard of amenity;
  - take account of the different role and character of different areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
  - take account of and support strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all.
- 2.3 The NPPF includes a section relating to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Importantly it recognises that the planning system should contribute to this objective by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soil;
  - recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
  - minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
  - remediating and mitigating contaminated land.

- 2.4 It states that local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geological sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance.
- 2.5 Local planning authorities should:
- set out a strategic approach in their local plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure;
  - maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast.
- 2.6 To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity planning policies should:
- plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale across local authority boundaries;
  - identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and local sites as well as wildlife corridors which connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;
  - promote the preservation, restoration and creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan; and
  - aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests.
- 2.7 The NPPF sets out a number of principles which should be incorporated in local plan policies to assist in determining a planning application. These include:
- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
  - Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around development should be encouraged.
  - The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds and Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.
  - Proposed development on land within or outside a SSSI likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either alone or in combination) should not be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh both the impacts that are likely to have on the important features of the site and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSIs.
- National Planning Practice Guidance (DCLG 2014)
- 2.8 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published to support the NPPF and to provide further guidance where appropriate. It provides signposts to other guidance on the statutory basis for planning to minimise the impacts on biodiversity and to provide net gains where possible.

Circular 06/05 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and their impact within the Planning System

- 2.9 This document sets out the legal provisions for wildlife sites and is still applicable for most types of wildlife sites.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010'

- 2.10 The 'Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010'<sup>1</sup> are the principal means by which the European Habitats Directive is transposed in England and Wales. It includes an update to the legislation and consolidates the many amendments which have been made since the Regulations were first made in 1994.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan

- 2.11 Section 74 (2) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the Government to produce a list identifying habitats and species which are considered of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England. This list forms the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)<sup>2</sup>.

**Sub-regional policy/strategy**

- 2.12 The formulation of the Local Plan has been guided at the sub-regional level by a consortium of South Hampshire authorities, which came together to form the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). PUSH through local consultation produced its own sub-regional strategy for south Hampshire which was submitted to the former South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and was included (largely unchanged) in the South East (SE) Plan (2009) following an Examination in Public.

- 2.13 Despite the proposed revocation of the SE Plan it is considered that the South Hampshire Strategy is still a valid consideration because it has been devised at a local level by a group of local authorities and has been subject to public consultation and examination. It forms the basis of the PUSH South Hampshire Strategy (October 2012) which provides a policy framework to guide the preparation of the Local Plan.

South Hampshire Strategy (October 2012)

- 2.14 The South Hampshire Strategy (October 2012) includes a policy on Green Infrastructure (Policy 14) which recognises the multi-functional benefits of open space and that the authorities will work together to plan, provide and manage a connected network of green spaces to deliver a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits space

Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan

- 2.15 The Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership 1998 onwards) identifies species and habitats of priority concern and sets out details relating to current status, factors affecting the habitat, current action and proposed action. Its objectives for the urban area includes:

- to protect key sites of nature conservation importance in urban areas; and
- to identify and evaluate the natural features of urban areas to provide a sound basis for their protection and management.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1379>

<sup>2</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155>

The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy 2010

- 2.16 The Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust et al 2010)<sup>3</sup> relates to the internationally important Brent Goose and wading bird populations within and around the Special Protection Areas and Ramsar wetlands of the Solent Coast (Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex) including a number of sites within Gosport. The Strategy provides an evidence base for use in decision-making processes that may impact on the ecological network of sites used by these birds. The underlying principle of the Strategy is to wherever possible conserve extant sites, and to create new sites, enhancing the quality and extent of the feeding and roosting resource.

**Local policy/strategy**

Sustainable Community Strategy (Gosport Partnership)

- 2.17 The Gosport Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy (2008) aims to ensure that nature conservation sites will be protected and biodiversity encouraged, in particular along the coast and within Portsmouth Harbour.

Corporate Plan (GBC)

- 2.18 The most applicable Strategic Priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan include:

- enhancing Gosport's unique character and heritage;
- responding to the challenges of climate change; and
- promoting health and well-being.

Gosport Borough Local Plan Review

- 2.19 The Gosport Borough Local Plan Review (2006) includes saved policies to protect designated sites and protected species (Policies R/OS10-R/OS13) as well as species and habitats identified in the UK and Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (R/OS14).

**Useful Guidance**

- 2.20 The TCPA's, 'Biodiversity by Design' is useful and cites a number of benefits provided by nature in the urban environment (see Appendix 1). The more recent guide Planning for a Healthy Environment (2012) produced by the TCPA and the Wildlife Trusts also provides additional useful guidance.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gosport.gov.uk/sections/your-council/council-services/planning-section/local-development-framework/gosport-borough-local-plan-2029/gosport-borough-local-plan-2011-2029-publication-version-july-2014/evidence-studies/nature-conservation/>

### **3.0 EVIDENCE**

3.1 The Borough has a significant amount of biodiversity interest which is of international, national and local significance. This is summarised below.

#### **Total extent of nature conservation designations**

3.2 Nature conservation designations protect approximately 626 hectares within the Borough, which forms nearly 23% of its total area including water.

#### **Internationally and Nationally Important sites**

3.3 265 hectares is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (see Figure 1) including 165 hectares which are internationally important including Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

#### Internationally important sites

3.4 The three international designations are summarised below:

- Special Protection Area (SPA): Parts of Portsmouth Harbour have been designated an SPA including areas within Gosport Borough, Fareham Borough and Portsmouth City. SPAs are designated under the European Union Birds Directives and Member States are required to take special measures to protect migratory, rare and vulnerable species of birds. SPAs are particularly important for birds which depend on specialised or restricted habitats for breeding, feeding, wintering or migration;
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Gilkicker Lagoon is a SAC, designated under the European Union Habitats Directive. This requires Member States to protect important wildlife habitats and the rare or threatened plants and animals that they support; and
- Ramsar site: Gilkicker Lagoon and parts of Portsmouth Harbour are identified as Ramsar sites. These sites are designated as wetlands of international importance under the 1971 Ramsar Convention. Gilkicker Lagoon is also important for the assemblages of rare plants and invertebrates. Where the sites are identified for waterfowl interest, the criteria are similar to those for SPAs.

3.5 The key interest features for the internationally important sites have been set out in Natural England's advice for the Solent European Marine Sites (English Nature 2001) under Regulation 33(2) of the Habitat Regulations<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Prepared under the previous 2004 Habitat Regulations.

**Figure 1: International and National Nature Conservation Designations in the Borough**



3.6 There are a considerable number of other internationally important sites in the sub-region and consequently in accordance with the 2010 Habitat Regulations. It has been necessary to consider the impacts of the policies and proposals of the emerging Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 on these sites in combination with other policies and proposals in the sub region and beyond. In order to consider this the Borough Council has undertaken Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan (prepared by Urban Edge 2012). This report uses a number of evidence studies to help inform the assessment including:

- Assessing the Impact of the Harbour Authorities LDF Proposals in the Strategic Highway Network (PBA 2009)
- Changing Patterns of Visitor Numbers within the New Forest National Park, with particular reference to the New Forest SPA (J Sharpe, J Lowen and D Liley 2008)
- Daedalus- The Aviation Study (York Aviation 2011)

- Road Transport Emissions Impacts on Nature Conservation Sites (AEA Technology 2010)
  - South Hampshire Integrated Water Management Strategy (for PUSH) (Atkins 2008)
  - Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment for Daedalus SPD (Drivers Jonas for SEEDA 2009)
  - Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (Solent Forum on-going)
  - Water Resource Plans for Portsmouth Water and Southern Water
- 3.7 The findings of the HRA have been incorporated into the policies and proposals of the Plan. This has been an iterative process at each stage of plan-making. Key issues addressed include:
- atmospheric pollution (particularly from road traffic);
  - disturbance to birds from recreation;
  - sites specific, often design-related issues;
  - coastal squeeze resulting from flood pollution;
  - demand for water resources and water abstraction; and
  - waste water pollution.
- Recreational disturbance*
- 3.8 The issue of recreational disturbance created by new development has been a particular area of concern and has consequently led to a number of organisations commissioning research in order to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. This research known as the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation project has been coordinated by the Solent Forum and involved the local planning authorities around the Solent, harbour groups, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the RSPB.
- 3.9 The project has included three phases. The first two phases involved the gathering of evidence and the third looking at mitigation. Phase 2 of the project involved the collection of primary data, including bird surveys to look at levels of disturbance, and visitor and household surveys to gather an understanding of the level of recreational use of the Solent coast and identify the catchment area for visitors. This data was fed into a computer model simulating the impact of disturbance on bird survival rates to enable predictions to be made of the likely effects of additional recreational use of the Solent coast in the future as a result of additional residential development (based on the South East Plan housing figures). The modelling showed a likelihood that additional bird deaths would arise as a result of additional development in the area surrounding the Solent coast. All the detailed reports of the SDMP have been published on the Solent Forum website<sup>5</sup>.
- 3.10 Natural England<sup>6</sup> have concluded that the SDMP work represents the best available research and therefore measures are required in order to ensure a significant effect, in combination, arising from new housing development around the Solent, is avoided.
- 3.11 As a result of the need for mitigation a broad level suite of mitigation measures has been produced. These measures will form the basis of a fully costed action

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub\\_groups/Natural\\_Environment\\_Group/Disturbance\\_and\\_Mitigation\\_Project/](http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/)

<sup>6</sup> The letter to local planning authorities can be viewed at [http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub\\_groups/Natural\\_Environment\\_Group/Disturbance\\_and\\_Mitigation\\_Project/Advice\\_to\\_PUSH\\_and\\_Solent\\_Forum%20310513.pdf](http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/Advice_to_PUSH_and_Solent_Forum%20310513.pdf)

plan produced by a delivery officer which will identify priorities for action. This could include the provision of suitable alternative natural greenspaces (SANGs) to deflect pressure from sensitive coastal sites, education and awareness initiatives and a range of access management. The first set of measures will include the development of the Alver Valley Country Park as a pilot project to become a SANG as well as a number of wardens and the implementation of a dog project will be the first set of initiatives prior to the implementation of the action plan (in 2-3 years). A Solent project group has been set up to manage the project and determine how funds secured from developers will be spent. The latest details are outlined on the Solent Forum's website<sup>7</sup>

#### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 3.12 The Plan area contains all or part of five SSSIs, which are outlined below:
- Portsmouth Harbour (also a Ramsar and SPA site) contains a number of important habitats including inter-tidal mudflats and marshes which support internationally important wetland bird species;
  - Gilkicker Lagoon (also a Ramsar and SAC site) is a saline lagoon, which is a rare habitat in Britain. It supports specialised flora and fauna including several national rarities;
  - Browdown Range is an extensive shingle beach with areas of rare grass heath habitat supporting specialised plants and invertebrates;
  - The Wildgrounds is largely an acid oakwood, a type of habitat which was formerly widespread on coastal commons in Hampshire (the site is also a Local Nature Reserve); and
  - Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary includes the coastline at Lee-on-the-Solent which is important for geological reasons, particularly for bird fossils.
- 3.13 Of the total 265 ha of SSSIs in the Borough 96.8% are considered by Natural England as being in a 'favourable or recovering' condition in Gosport (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012) (13.9% favourable, 82.9% recovering). 1.5% is classed as 'unfavourable no change'. Importantly no areas are classified as 'unfavourable and declining'<sup>8</sup>.

#### **Locally Important sites**

- 3.14 In addition to the internationally and nationally important sites, the Borough has a significant number of locally designated sites. The Borough has two designated Local Nature Reserves, the Wildgrounds, which is also a SSSI and the West of the River reserve, both located within the Alver Valley. There are also a number of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). These have been proposed by the Hampshire Biodiversity information Centre and confirmed by a panel which includes the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust using set criteria. These are identified by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre following an ecological assessment and are considered by

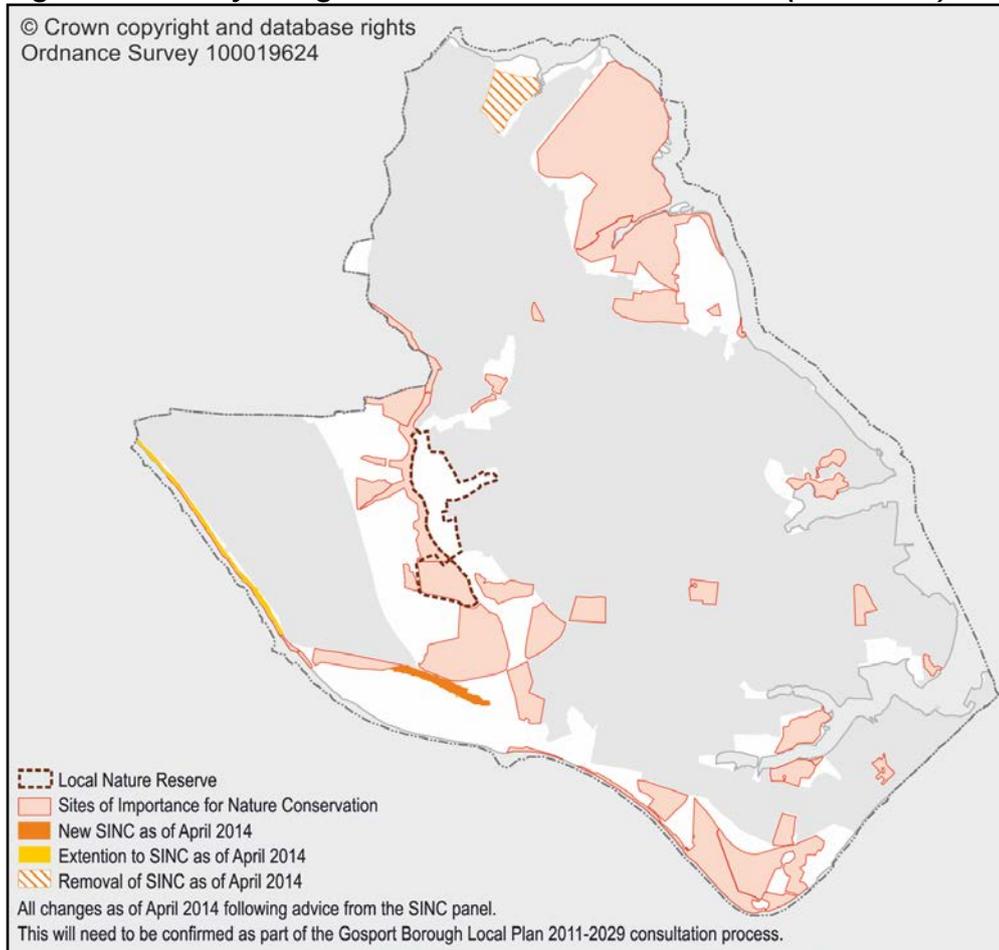
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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub\\_groups/Natural\\_Environment\\_Group/Disturbance\\_and\\_Mitigation\\_Project/](http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/)

<sup>8</sup> These figures are supplied by HBIC based on Natural England (NE) surveys. However for the first time the data used has been supplied by HBIC which is more accurate in terms of district-level information because NE do not always assigned separate portions of SSSIs to the correct District; where the majority of a SSSI occurs within another District (and hence is assigned to that District) HBIC clips the SSSI management units exactly to the District boundaries. Consequently a direct comparison with last year's figures is not possible.

the Local Sites Panel. The panel comprises representatives from Natural England, Hampshire County Council and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust for ratification, in accordance with local sites guidance<sup>9</sup> issued by Defra in 2006. Importantly the ecological information on these sites is updated as part of a rolling programme of ecological surveys.

**Figure 2: Locally designated nature conservation sites (June 2014)**



### Priority Habitats

- 3.15 The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) has produced revised data relating to the presence of priority habitats for each district in Hampshire, as outlined in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2006). Table 1 includes the latest known information for Gosport. Further surveys are being undertaken through the Hampshire Habitat Survey Programme on the extent of priority habitats. The most significant habitats in terms of the proportion of the Hampshire total are: coastal vegetated shingle (with 28.5% of the Hampshire total); saline lagoons (16%) and reedbeds (6.4%). The most sizeable type of priority habitat is intertidal mudflats (111 ha) followed by lowland mixed deciduous woodland (85ha), coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (82ha) and coastal vegetated shingle (65ha).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/hampshire/sincs/important-sites-sinc-criteria.htm>

**Table 1: Hampshire Priority habits found in Gosport Borough (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013)**

Priority Habitat	Comments on Status	Ha. in GBC	% of total Hants area
<b>Lowland Dry Acid Grassland</b>	Comprehensive. Some overlap with Heath	3	0.1
<b>Lowland Meadows</b>	Comprehensive. Possible overlap with Wood-Pasture and Parkland.	16	1.0
<b>Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures</b>	Comprehensive. Some overlap with Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh.	1	0.1
<b>Lowland Heathland</b>	Comprehensive. Some overlap with Lowland Dry Acid Grassland.	4	0
<b>Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland</b>	Further work is needed as currently all semi-natural deciduous woodland (both ancient & non-ancient) has been included yet not all of it has been surveyed for the qualifying NVC types.	85	0.2
<b>Wet Woodland</b>	Other areas may exist that have yet to be surveyed for qualifying NVC types.	19	0.9
<b>Wood-Pasture and Parkland</b>	Further work is needed to identify additional areas.	2	0.4
<b>Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh</b>	Further work is needed to identify all qualifying grazing marsh from survey data. Some overlap with Lowland Meadows & Rush Pastures.	82	0.8
<b>Lowland Fens</b>	Comprehensive	0.22	0
<b>Reedbeds</b>	EA data to be verified/ NE data to be added & verified.	16	6.4
<b>Coastal saltmarsh</b>	EA data to be verified	26	2.9
<b>Coastal Vegetated Shingle</b>	EA data to be verified	65	28.5
<b>Intertidal mudflats</b>	EA data to be verified	111	2.5
<b>Maritime Cliff and Slopes</b>	EA data to be verified	1	2.4
<b>Saline lagoons</b>	EA data verified & saline lagoons added back in	9	16

Source: Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (2013)

#### *Extents of ancient woodlands*

- 3.16 The Borough has a number of small areas of ancient woodland which are protected as either SSSI or a SINC. There are 25.7ha of ancient woodland within the Borough (19.8ha classed as ancient and semi-natural and 5.9ha classed as ancient replanted). All of the ancient woodland is located within the Alver Valley and virtually all is located within the Wildgrounds SSSI.

#### **Biodiversity Opportunity Areas**

- 3.17 The Hampshire Biological Information Centre in consultation with a variety of organisations has identified a number of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) in Hampshire. This forms part of the South East Biodiversity Forum's (SEEBF)

project to map opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the Region, Two broad areas have been identified in the Borough as areas where opportunities should be sought to enhance biodiversity. These broad areas are identified in Figure 3 along the Solent and Portsmouth Harbour and outlined in Appendix 2 of this Background Paper.

**Figure 3: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas**



**Distribution of Hampshire BAP species**

3.18 The Borough has a number of BAP Priority Species which are being monitored by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. Further details are available in the Gosport Sustainability Profile (GBC 2012) and records held at the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre.

**Green infrastructure**

3.19 The PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy (UE Associates 2010) highlights the need to plan for green infrastructure including preserving and enhancing biodiversity in the sub region in order to satisfactorily accommodate the proposed growth in South Hampshire. A key aim of the Strategy is to identify sub-regional strategic initiatives and project proposals to provide a high quality of life for the people who live and work in the sub-region. It seeks to maximise

multifunctional use of open space and natural spaces for a range of benefits including biodiversity, climate change, economic investment, health, landscape, recreation and well-being.

3.20 The PUSH Green infrastructure Strategy proposes five sub-regional initiatives based on the findings of various evidence studies:

- ‘The Green Grid initiative’ seeks to establish a network of linear features and provide connectivity between assets that perform a variety of functions. It includes rivers, roads, recreational routes, hedges and other corridors;
- ‘The Coast for People, Wildlife and Improved Water initiative’ relates to recreational and nature conservation issues along the coast and the need to plan for sea-level rise;
- ‘The Forest of Bere Land Management initiative’ aims to take a comprehensive and integrated approach to the creation and management of a number of GI assets in this landscape area;
- ‘The Country Parks and Woodlands initiative’ seeks to identify a network of country parks and woodland sites; and
- ‘The Greener Urban Design initiative’ aims to enhance local assets which can improve the built environment and support local communities. It is likely to manifest itself as a series of smaller scale projects that seek to address identified deficits, opportunities and need.

3.21 The Strategy identifies a number of strategic projects across the sub-region including within Gosport that relate to one or more of the above strategic initiatives. In Gosport the following schemes have been identified. Of particular relevance for biodiversity are:

- Alver Valley Country Park: The Strategy recognises the work the Borough Council has carried out to date and that a masterplan is in place to create a range of multi-functional facilities. It is also acknowledged that the site can be linked with adjoining areas and has a number of areas which support significant biodiversity.
- Gosport Ranges: The MoD sites at Frater and Bedenham have significant ecological value and that opportunities exist to manage these areas for wildlife; and
- Gosport Waterfront (Haslar to Priddy’s Hard): There are a number of projects along the Gosport Waterfront which link closely to the development of key strategic sites in the Borough. These have the potential to improve recreational opportunities for local residents, improve the management of sensitive habitats, protect historical features and improve the Borough’s distinctive maritime heritage. Projects include:
  - Royal Hospital Haslar - including reinstating the coastal walk along the Solent frontage as well as public access to the nationally important historic park and garden with measures to enhance biodiversity;
  - The creation of the Priddy’s Hard Ramparts Park;
  - Improve the appearance and quality of access around the creeks (Haslar, Workhouse and Stoke lakes) with improved interpretation of natural features with the involvement of local communities.

3.22 The Strategy then considers the delivery of the sub-regional initiatives and makes a number of recommendations relating to governance, incorporation into the LDF process and funding arrangements. The PUSH authorities have

produced an implementation plan (October 2012) with a short list of projects for sub-regional action which includes the Alver Valley as well as a proposal which deals with implementing the findings of the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation project when these are become available. <sup>10</sup>

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[http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub\\_groups/Nature\\_Conservation\\_Group/Disturbance%20and%20Mitigation%20Project/](http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Nature_Conservation_Group/Disturbance%20and%20Mitigation%20Project/)

## 4.0 CONSULTATION

### **Main Consultations to date including:**

- Consultation at each plan-making stage:
  - Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029: Consultation Draft (Dec 2012- Feb 2013);
  - Core Strategy : Preferred Options (GBC December 2009);
  - Core Strategy: Issues and Option (GBC December 2006);
  - The Community Strategy and Local Development Framework: Make Your Mark December 2006 events (held in December 2006 Gosport Partnership); and
- On-going meetings with key stakeholders

4.1 Through the previous consultation many of the comments made by Natural England and other environmental organisations had been incorporated into the Consultation Draft of the Local Plan (Dec 2012).

4.2 As a result of the consultation which took place between December 2012 and February 2013 there was significant support from Natural England, the Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency regarding the overall approach of the policies of the emerging Local Plan including:

- Recognition of the high nature conservation value of the Borough;
- The need to work in partnership with other organisations to deliver biodiversity and green infrastructure at a strategic level;
- The need for collaboration to deal with issues such as recreation disturbance generated by new development;
- Policy relating to internationally important habitats;
- Policy relating to locally important sites;
- Policy relating to protecting species and other features of nature conservation importance

4.3 Key issues that were raised by Natural England included:

- The need to include a policy reference to the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project;
- The need to ensure that any compensation relating to locally designated nature conservation sites need not lead to a net detriment to biodiversity;
- Reference the forthcoming south coast Marine Plan;

4.4 These issues have been addressed in the Publication version of the Local Plan.

4.5 Other issues raised by other organisations and individuals include:

- The Borough Council's management of some of its sites for biodiversity (local ecologist). This is more of a management issues and largely beyond the scope of the Local Plan itself;
- The Plan should include a separate policy relating to Brent geese and waders (Wildlife Trust). In this instance the Borough considers that the existing policies cover this issue and specific reference is made of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (2010) in the justification text.
- An audit of hedgerows is required. The Borough Council considers that the protection of hedgerows is covered by the emerging policies but notes further work could be undertaken with support of HBIC in the future.

- A number of site specific issues have also been raised which have been addressed by the wording of those particular policies.

4.6 The other main area for comments at the Consultation Draft stage had been those related to the accompanying Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Officer from the Borough Council together with officers from Natural England and HCC Ecology have met to try to resolve any outstanding issues with continuing dialogue. The outstanding issues relating to recreational disturbance, air pollution and waste water pollution have been resolved and these technical issues are set out in the latest HRA which accompanies the Pre-Submission version of the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029.

## **5.0 KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED BY THE LOCAL PLAN**

- 5.1 As a result of the available evidence, policy framework and comments received from consultation the Local Plan has been required to address a number of issues. These issues and an overview of how they have been addressed are set out below.
- 5.2 The Plan includes a number of policies which aim to protect international (Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation & Ramsar sites), national (Special Sites of Scientific Interest) and local important nature conservation sites (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) taking account for the overall hierarchy. It includes policies which protect legally identified species as well as those identified in national and local biodiversity action plans as well as features which have the potential to support biodiversity for example trees and hedges.
- 5.3 Importantly the Plan seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity as part of development proposals including the provision of a variety of green infrastructure which also helps to ameliorate the effects of climate change for people and wildlife. The Plan aims to incorporate biodiversity within new development as part of the Borough's overall green infrastructure, creating attractive and healthy places to live and work.
- 5.4 To ensure that the policies and proposals of the Local Plan do not have a detrimental impact on internationally important sites in the Borough and the wider Solent area, in-combination with other proposals in the sub region, the Borough council is required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 5.5 It has been recognised that the work carried out as part of the Solent Disturbance Mitigation project (outlined in the evidence section above) deals with the recreational disturbance issues. The issues of air pollution and water quality have also been resolved and these technical issues are set out in the latest HRA which accompanies the Publication version of the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029.
- 5.6 The HRA has concluded that the Local Plan will have no adverse effects on the ecological integrity of any European site, and that the plan is compliant with the Habitats Regulations.
- 5.7 The options for dealing with biodiversity-related issues and the preferred approaches are considered fully in the Sustainability Appraisal.

## Appendix 1: Benefits of Biodiversity (TCPA 2004)

### Ecological services

#### Carbon sink

Trees have a significant capacity to absorb carbon dioxide- 1 hectare of woodland can absorb emissions equivalent to 100 family cars.

#### Pollution control

Vegetation has a significant capacity to attenuate noise and filter air pollution from motor vehicles. Street trees can remove sulphur dioxide and reduce particulates by up to 75%. Noise attenuation can be as much as 30 dB per 100 metres. Wetland ecosystems are also effective in filtering polluted run-off and sewage.

#### Air conditioning

In urban areas the heat island effect can increase temperatures relative to open countryside by up to 5°C. Vegetation provides natural air conditioning. A single tree can be equivalent to five room air conditioners. Gosport benefits from onshore breezes due to its peninsula location but nonetheless trees can assist in ameliorating the effects of increased summertime temperatures.

#### Microclimate control

Vegetation can improve local microclimate conditions by providing shade in summer and can reduce wind effects created by streets and wind loads on buildings.

#### Flood prevention

Vegetation can reduce excessive run-off and increase rainfall capture. This reduces the risk of flooding in low lying areas and can also recharge soil moisture.

### Quality of life

Natural greenspaces can deliver a range of *quality of life* benefits:

- accessible green space creates opportunities for recreation and exercise increases children's creative play, social skills and concentration space;
- can encourage greater social interaction including more active use of green space including streets and communal spaces;
- participation in the design and stewardship of green space can strengthen communities
- nature reserves can create a focal point for life long learning about nature;
- can make higher density housing more attractive and liveable including improving health and well-being and encourage greater social interaction.

### Economic value

There are also potentially *economic benefits* generated by providing attractive environments for investors and visitors. This includes

- increasing property values
- reduce management costs- less use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides and intensive management
- reduce health costs.

## **Appendix 2: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Gosport - prepared by Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre**

### **Hampshire Biodiversity Opportunity Areas – Statements 19: Portsmouth Harbour**

**Landscape Character Area:** South Hampshire Coast

**Landscape Types:** Harbours / Settled Coastal Plain

**Geology:** The bedrock is predominantly chalk in the northern half, with Sand and Clay, Silt and Sand in the southern half. There are deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel in northern and central regions, Sand and Gravel to the south-west and north-east, and Sand, Silt and Clay to the north and eastern fringes.

**Biodiversity:** This area is centred on Portsmouth Harbour SSSI which is the westernmost of the three extensive and connected tidal basins - Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester Harbours. The harbour receives some fresh water from springs arising in the intertidal zone, and from a number of small streams, the largest of which is the River Wallington, which flows into Fareham Creek, the westernmost channel of Portsmouth Harbour. The intertidal area of Portsmouth Harbour includes 776ha of mudflats & eelgrass beds and about 173ha of cord-grass *Spartina* marshes. At the uppermost levels of the *Spartina* marshes is replaced locally by saltmarsh which then grades into tussocky grassland dominated by sea couch. The biological richness and productivity of Portsmouth Harbour is reflected in the nationally important numbers of several wetland birds, including grey plover, black-tailed godwit, and dark-bellied Brent geese which overwinter there. The SSSI includes two brackish lagoons adjoining Haslar Lake in the south-west of the Harbour; Little Anglesey Lake and Cockle Pond. The SSSI also includes a small area of terrestrial habitat extending along the southern side of Horsea Island, where chalk spoil dumped early in the 20th century supports a rich chalk grassland flora. The BOA has been extended to include further coastal habitats (many SINCs) along the perimeter of the harbour where opportunities exist to enhance and expand certain habitats.

**Targets and opportunities:**

- Coastal Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Salt Marsh
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures

### **Hampshire Biodiversity Opportunity Areas – Statements 20: The Solent**

**Landscape Character Area:** South Hampshire Coast

**Landscape Types:** Major Estuary and Solent / Settled Coastal Plain / Major River Valleys

**Geology:** A bedrock of Sand, Silt and Clay with just Clay to the north-west of the area. Clay and Silt and Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel deposits run along the length of the coastal edges with Sand and Gravel river terrace deposits found further inland. Gravel deposits are found at the south-eastern end of the area and Peat occurs in the Alver Valley.

**Biodiversity:** This area extends along the eastern shore of Southampton Water from Lee-on-the-Solent to the mid-Itchen estuary and includes the lower estuary of the River Hamble. The area comprises extensive intertidal muds with a littoral fringe of vegetated shingle, saltmarsh, reedbed, marshy grasslands, soft rock cliffs and deciduous

woodland. The site is an integral part of Southampton Water which is of international importance for over-wintering dark-bellied Brent geese, and of national importance for three species of wildfowl (great-crested grebe, teal and wigeon) and five species of wader (black-tailed godwit, dunlin, grey plover, ringed plover, redshank). The area also supports an outstanding assemblage of nationally scarce coastal plants. In addition, the cliffs at Brownwich and the foreshore at Lee-on-the-Solent are of national geological importance. SSSIs include the Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary, which includes Hamble Common, a mosaic of acidic grassland and wet heath, with neighbouring SINC's supporting species rich grassland, secondary woodland with relic heath, also grazing marsh and a reed fringed freshwater fleet at Hook Lake and ancient deciduous woodland extending inland along a former tidal re-entrant. Vegetated shingle, a nationally restricted habitat, is found fronting the reed bed at Hook Spit. Other SSSIs include Titchfield Haven which was formerly the estuary of the River Meon, and comprises an extensive freshwater marsh, supporting large reed beds, wet, unimproved meadows, pools and patches of fen. The area is important for surface-feeding ducks and possesses a rich wetland breeding bird community. Browndown Common SSSI, the Wild Grounds SSSI, other SINC's in the Alver Valley floodplain and at Gilkicker Point SINC are included, and include important areas of vegetated shingle/grass heath, acid oak woodland, wet woodland, swamp & reed beds and brackish grassland. Areas of less interesting vegetation are included where they are known to support over wintering Brent geese and other waders or are of high potential for re-creation of semi-natural coastal habitats.

**Targets and opportunities:**

- Coastal Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Salt Marsh

## Appendix 3: Evidence Studies and other references

### National Guidance

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)(2012) National Planning Policy Framework  
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) National planning Practice Guidance  
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

HM Government (2010) - Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi\\_20100490\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi_20100490_en.pdf)

HM Government (1994) – UK Biodiversity Action Plan and subsequent supporting documents  
[jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2005) - Government Circular 06/2005 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System  
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Town and County Planning Association (TCPA) (2004) – Biodiversity by Design - A Guide for Sustainable Communities  
[www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/bd\\_biodiversity.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/bd_biodiversity.pdf)

### Regional Planning Documents

English Nature (2001) - Solent European Marine Site - English Nature's advice given under Regulation 33(2) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994  
[www.ukmpas.org/pdf/Sitebasedreports/SolentRegulation33Advice.pdf](http://www.ukmpas.org/pdf/Sitebasedreports/SolentRegulation33Advice.pdf)

Forestry Commission & Natural England (2007) – An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in the South East  
[www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/accnatgreenrep-report.pdf/\\$FILE/accnatgreenrep-report.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/accnatgreenrep-report.pdf/$FILE/accnatgreenrep-report.pdf)

Government Office for the South East (GOSE) (2009) - The South East Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England  
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### Sub Regional Planning Documents

PUSH (October 2012)- South Hampshire Strategy: A Framework to Guide Sustainable Development and Change to 2026  
[www.push.gov.uk/south\\_hampshire\\_strategy\\_-\\_oct\\_2012-2.pdf](http://www.push.gov.uk/south_hampshire_strategy_-_oct_2012-2.pdf)

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership (1998 onwards) - The Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan  
[www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire\\_bap\\_vol\\_1.pdf](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire_bap_vol_1.pdf)  
[www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire\\_bap\\_vol\\_2.pdf](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire_bap_vol_2.pdf)

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership (2008) - Guidance on Biodiversity Policies for Local Development Frameworks in Hampshire (prepared by David Tyldesley and Associates)  
[www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/pdf/Other%20reports/Bio%20policies%20for%20LDF.pdf](http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/pdf/Other%20reports/Bio%20policies%20for%20LDF.pdf)

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust et al (2010) – Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy

<http://www.gosport.gov.uk/sections/your-council/council-services/planning-section/local-development-framework/gosport-borough-local-plan-2029/gosport-borough-local-plan-2011-2029-publication-version-july-2014/evidence-studies/nature-conservation/>

Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) / UE Associates (2010) - A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Urban South Hampshire

[www.push.gov.uk/push\\_gi\\_strategy\\_adopted\\_june\\_10-3.pdf](http://www.push.gov.uk/push_gi_strategy_adopted_june_10-3.pdf)

### **Local Planning and Supporting Documents**

Gosport Borough Council (GBC) / Gosport Partnership (Oct 2010) – Gosport Sustainability Profile

[www.gosport.gov.uk/sustainability-profile/](http://www.gosport.gov.uk/sustainability-profile/)

Gosport Borough Council (2006) – Gosport Borough Local Plan Review

[www.gosport.gov.uk/localplanreview](http://www.gosport.gov.uk/localplanreview)

Gosport Partnership (2007) - Gosport's 2026 Vision - Gosport's Sustainable Community Strategy

[www.gosport.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=19159](http://www.gosport.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=19159)

Urban Edge Environmental Consulting (2014) - Habitats Regulation Assessment for the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029

[www.gosport.gov.uk/localplan2029](http://www.gosport.gov.uk/localplan2029)

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