

**Sunderland
City Council**



South Tyneside Council

Habitat Regulations Assessment – Stage 1 (Screening)

International Advanced Manufacturing Park Area Action Plan

1 Introduction

The report details the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) undertaken by Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council in respect of the revised International Advanced Manufacturing Park Area Action Plan (IAMP AAP) pursuant to Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is a screening assessment (stage 1 assessment), which seeks to understand whether the proposals are likely to have a significant effect on any European sites and therefore whether an appropriate assessment (stage 2 assessment) is required to understand the implications of the plan in respect of European sites.

2 Methodology

2.1 Gathering Information

Prior to undertaking any assessment, information has been gathered that is pertinent to the potential for the proposals to impact on European sites. This has included information used to support the HRA for the previous iteration of the IAMP AAP.

As well as previous HRA information, survey information for species groups that include any mobile qualifying features of European sites within the study area has also been gathered. The study area is defined as the area within 20 km of the IAMP AAP boundary.

In this instance the study area includes the following European sites. This list also includes Ramsar sites, which, although not designated through European legislation, are an international designation and by convention are treated in same manner as European sites.

- Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area
- Northumbria Coast Ramsar Site
- Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation

Ramsar sites and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for their ornithological value therefore bird survey information for the plan area has been gathered.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) can be designated for habitats listed under Annex I of European Council Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) and species listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive. The qualifying feature of the Durham Coast SAC is an Annex I habitat, which is not a mobile feature.

2.2 Purpose of the Plan

Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 requires the competent authority to consider, alongside the potential for likely significant effects, whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site. This consideration has been made and is detailed below.

2.3 Description of the Plan

Details of the proposals are required to form a view on the likelihood of significant effects to the European sites within the study area. This information is taken from the Regulation 18 draft of the revised IAMP AAP and is set out in the assessment below.

2.4 Characteristics of the European Sites

Information on the characteristics of the European sites within the study area has been obtained from Natural England's conservation advice packages. These are available for most European sites including:

- Northumbria Coast SPA – [Marine site detail \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk), and
- Durham Coast SAC - [Terrestrial site advice \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk).

For Northumbria Coast Ramsar Site the relevant information is taken from the Ramsar site information sheet available on the JNCC website ([Ramsar Sites | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](https://jncc.gov.uk/ramсар-sites)).

2.5 Assessment of Significance

Based on the above information, an assessment of the potential for the plan proposals to result in significant effects to the qualifying features of the European sites has been made. This consideration has been made across the five possible pathways listed below.

- Physical loss of habitat, including functionally linked habitat
- Non-physical disturbance, such as noise
- Air pollution
- Recreation and urban impacts
- Water quantity and quality

In addition to a consideration of the impacts of IAMP AAP in isolation, an assessment has also been made of the potential for in combination effects with other consented and proposed schemes within the vicinity of the IAMP area. Potential in-combination proposals are set out at paragraph 3.5 below.

3 Assessment

3.1 Purpose of the Plan

The IAMP AAP is not necessary for or solely conceived for the purpose of conservation management of any European Site. It is therefore necessary to consider the likelihood of significant effects to European sites occurring as a result.

3.2 Description of the Plan

The existing IAMP AAP allocates approximately 150 hectares of land to the north of the Nissan Sunderland automotive facility for the development of principal employment uses. The draft IAMP AAP proposes to extend the area covered by the existing AAP to include an additional 75 hectares of allocated employment land to the west of the existing AAP development areas. The draft IAMP AAP proposes to allocate land for the development of principal uses of advanced manufacturing, automotive excellence, green industries and clean energy.

3.3 Characteristics of the European Sites

3.3.1 Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area

The site consists of mainly discrete sections of rocky shore with associated boulder and cobble beaches. The SPA also includes parts of three artificial pier structures and a small section of sandy beach. In summer, the site supports internationally important populations of breeding little tern (*Sternula albifrons*) and Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), and two species of wintering waders occur in internationally important numbers, turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and purple sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*).

3.3.2 Northumbria Coast Ramsar Site

The Northumbria Coast Ramsar site comprises several discrete sections of rocky foreshore between Spittal, in the north of Northumberland, and an area just south of Blackhall Rocks in County Durham. These stretches of coast regularly support nationally important numbers of purple sandpiper and high

concentrations of turnstone. The Ramsar site also includes an area of sandy beach at Low Newton, which supports a nationally important breeding colony of little tern, and parts of three artificial pier structures which form important roost sites for purple sandpiper.

3.3.3 Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation

The only example of vegetated sea cliffs on Magnesian Limestone exposures in the UK. The plant communities are largely maintained by natural processes.

3.4 Assessment of Significance in Isolation

3.4.1 Physical loss of habitat, including functionally linked habitat

The IAMP AAP is located approximately 6.3 km to the west of the nearest point within the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar site, and approximately 6.5 km from nearest point within the Durham Coast SAC. Loss of habitat within the European sites will not occur as a result of the proposals.

Previous wintering and breeding bird survey data has been collected to inform the original IAMP AAP and in support of applications for planning permission within the plan area. These surveys span a period from 2014 to 2022. None of the qualifying features of the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar site have been recorded during the surveys. It is therefore concluded that the plan area is not functionally connected to these sites.

There is no likely significant effect in respect of physical loss of habitat, including functionally linked habitat.

3.4.2 Non-physical disturbance, such as noise

Breeding and wintering bird populations could be impacted by non-physical disturbance. However, due to the separation of the plan area from the European sites within the study area, this is not considered to be applicable in this case.

There is no likely significant effect in respect of non-physical disturbance.

3.4.3 Air pollution

The draft IAMP AAP proposes to allocate land for the development of principal uses of advanced manufacturing, automotive excellence, green industries and clean energy and therefore does not promote heavy industry or include use types that incorporate combustion or other processes that are expected to generate significant air quality emissions. Due to the strategic location of the plan area adjacent to the existing main transport network, and the distance between the plan area and the European sites, any roads that may experience large changes in traffic volume are located away from the European sites.

There is no likely significant effect in respect of air pollution.

3.4.4 Recreation and urban impacts

The IAMP AAP does not promote residential development within the plan area. As such the proposals are not expected to result in the generation of additional recreational visits to the European site within the study area.

There is no likely significant effect in respect of recreation and urban impacts.

3.4.5 Water quantity and quality

There is no direct hydrological connection between the IAMP AAP and the identified European sites.

There is no likely significant effect in respect of water quality and quantity.

3.5 Assessment of Significance in Combination

In addition to the development that has already occurred under the existing IAMP AAP, there are a number of other proposed and recently implemented developments within the vicinity of the IAMP AAP that have and will affect similar habitats located in the general area. These developments include:

- Completed works to upgrade the A19 Testos Roundabout and the Downhill Lane junction on the A19;
- Ongoing development around Infinity Drive, collectively known as Hillthorn Farm; and
- The proposed allocation of Land North of Town End Farm for residential development in South Tyneside's Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan.

As no likely significant effects have been identified under the separate pathways discussed above, there is not considered to be any in-combination impact with recent or proposed development in the wider area.

3.6 Conclusion

It can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects on any European site as a result of the revised IAMP AAP.