

Belfast City Council

Habitats Regulations Assessment Report

for

Inner North West Masterplan

In accordance with The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations
(Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)

November 2018

Shared Environmental Service has prepared this Report in conjunction with Belfast City Council.

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Non-technical Summary

Overview of Inner North West Masterplan

The Inner North West is bounded to the west by Carrick Hill and Millfield Road; to the north by Donegall Street, to the east by Royal Avenue leading to Donegall Place; and to the south by College Street leading from Fountain Lane. The overall area is approximately 17 hectares and stretches 1.65km north to south and 0.7km east to west. The topography of the area is relatively uniform except for a sharp change of level towards Carrick Hill where the landscape slopes up to meet the main road, creating a raised edge of approximately 2.5m to the west.

The Masterplan contains proposals for how the area might be developed, enhanced and better connected to other parts of the city centre and adjacent neighbourhoods. Chapter 3 presents the Masterplan vision and objectives.

Our vision is that:

“The INW will be transformed to create a vibrant place to live, work, shop and relax across a series of mixed-use, shared neighbourhoods.

The existing heritage and community assets alongside new investment including commercial, residential and higher education developments will produce a welcoming quarter embodied by creativity, innovation, quality design, culture and well-being in the heart of the city centre.”

Chapter 4 of the Masterplan presents the design principles and illustrative masterplan while delivery proposals are in Chapter 7.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a provision of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). These Habitats Regulations require assessment of possible adverse effects on the integrity of sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) as a result of plans and policies; this is also carried out for Ramsar sites. The Regulations contribute to transposing the requirements of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives.

This report has been prepared in support of the preparation of the Inner North West Masterplan to record the HRA. The Inner North West Masterplan was reviewed in light of the assessment requirements of regulation 43 of the Habitats Regulations. Belfast City Council is the body responsible for publishing the Masterplan and is also the competent authority responsible for any assessment of the Inner North West Masterplan as required by the Habitats Regulations.

Outcome of the Assessment

In summary Step 1 found that no effect on any designated site can reasonably be predicted for the Masterplan vision, objectives, design principles, illustrative masterplan and delivery at this stage as the majority of proposals are general policy statements or proposals that are too general to assess. A few proposals can be concluded to have no likely significant effect. Where the plan indicates new development, for example landmark gateway buildings or new homes, it does not provide sufficient detail in terms of location, scale and construction to assess their potential impact on designated sites. Many elements of the Masterplan relate to general principles of development, layout and design and those elements will not increase the level of development.

The overall plan does however promote additional development in the Inner North West that could have a significant effect on designated sites and their selection features. Therefore this assessment was progressed to consider potential impacts of the greater level of development. Those additional elements that could have an effect are subject to planning permission and other regulations for which the relevant competent authority will need to ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations. For those projects that may arise from the Masterplan, and have a potential effect on designated sites, there are accepted ways to enforce appropriate and well-tested measures to minimise impacts such that projects cannot have a significant effect alone, or contribute to a significant effect in combination with other projects.

The overall level of development could be greater than the capacity to treat wastewater and lead to a decline in water quality in some designated sites. However all development must be within the levels set by extant or future adopted development plans. It is stated that the proposed density will be in line with the Local Development Plan housing and urban design policies which will be subject to the Habitats Regulations. In addition, NI Water is a statutory consultee for planning applications and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is a statutory consultee for specified planning applications. This will ensure that development will not be permitted unless there is sufficient capacity.

In light of the findings of this review the assessment is completed at Stage 1 and therefore Stage 2 appropriate assessment is not required.

1. The Inner North West Masterplan

Overview

The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (2015) and The Belfast Agenda (2017) collectively set out a vision for the future development of the city centre which provides a strategic context for the city's regeneration activity for the next 10-15 years. The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy identifies five Special Action Areas where there is a pressing need for change and where detailed development frameworks and/or masterplans should be developed to facilitate growth.

These Special Action Areas include the 'Inner West' along with parts of the 'Inner North', an area that encompasses part of the core retail area of Belfast and which sits adjacent to the new Ulster University, and the Cathedral Quarter, as well as long-standing communities to the north and west. The Inner North West (INW) represents a key area of Belfast's inner urban core which is reasonably consistent in scale, use and character but is currently underdeveloped and in need of significant investment to ensure coherent proposals come forward on the many vacant sites in the area.

Within the masterplan area there are a large number of underdeveloped sites which are attracting investment. This is driven by adjacent investments in Ulster University's Belfast city campus, student housing, and the need for both office and residential development. By considering this area holistically, the Council seeks to promote the development of a high quality and interconnected built environment which will stimulate investment, growth, wellbeing and broad opportunities for the city and region. At the same time, the INW needs to be developed mindful of wider linkages and connections with other parts of the city centre and adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

The INW Masterplan therefore seeks to create a new city centre mixed neighbourhood that:

- incorporates a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, retail and leisure, all integrated through a strong and cohesive public realm;
- takes into consideration the heritage of the area and the historic urban grain;
- reinstates the historically vibrant economy of the Inner North West area;
- promotes 'city centre living', with its social and environmental benefits;
- provides another component in terms of the city centre's urban fabric; and
- delivers the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

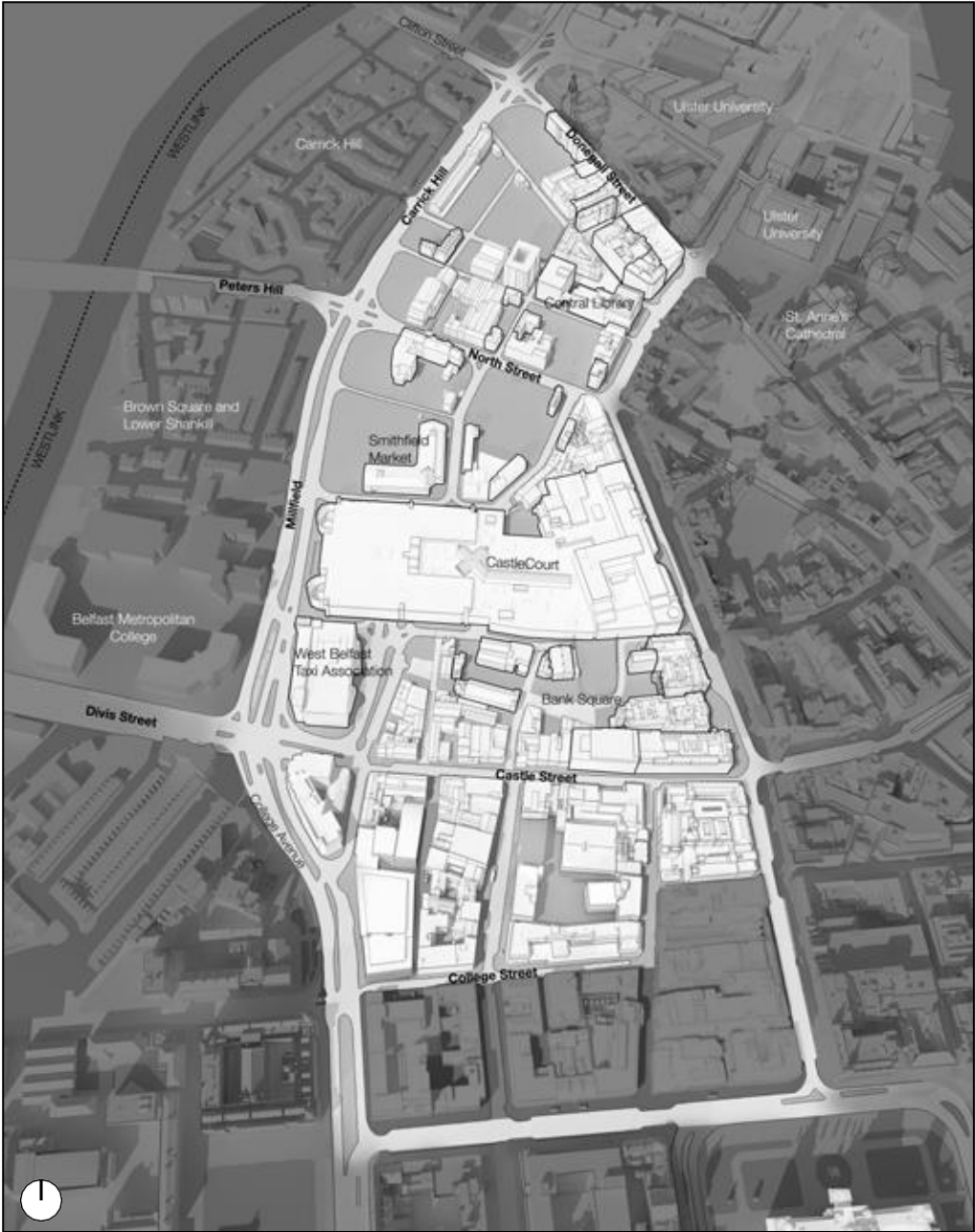
The approach to the regeneration of the INW is intended to be both considered and flexible in order to maximise the opportunity of the various potential land uses, without undermining the existing businesses and enterprises which have grown in the area over the years. The specific location of new homes, shops, workspaces and amenities will be decided as proposals come forward and as developers and investors engage with the statutory planning process. The public sector will play its part through investment of its own, such as public realm schemes, and by bringing forward its own land holdings. The ultimate goal of the Masterplan is to help encourage, inform, influence and direct the activity of both the public and private sectors in the INW.

Location and topography

The INW is bounded to the west by Carrick Hill and Millfield Road which create a physical and challenging barrier for the local residential communities; to the north by Donegall Street, to the east by Royal Avenue leading to Donegall Place; and to the south by College Street leading from Fountain Lane.

North Street splits the area into two parts and delineates two different types of urban fabric. The Union St/Library St area has a tighter grain characterised by historic buildings, terraced houses and industrial buildings while the Smithfield area is characterised by larger urban blocks with some remaining finer grain retail and residential buildings. To the south of CastleCourt, the area consists of a finer grain around Bank Square. The topography of the area is relatively uniform except for a sharp change of level towards Carrick Hill where the landscape slopes up to meet the main road, creating a raised edge of approximately 2.5m to the west.

Figure 1: Area of the Inner North West Masterplan



Context

Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001

Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) was adopted in 1990. The INW is within a wider Inner City Priority Area for environmental improvement. Given the position described for Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, BUAP is still in operation.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) was a development plan prepared by the Department for the Environment for six of the former Council areas, Belfast City, Carrickfergus Borough, Castlereagh Borough, Lisburn City, Newtownabbey Borough and North Down Borough Council. Draft BMAP was published in November 2004 for consultation. A Public Inquiry led by the Planning Appeals Commission took place in 2007/2008 with the reports released in stages until 2012. The plan was adopted on 9 September 2014.

In May 2017 the Court of Appeal delivered its decision on an appeal made by Belfast City Council regarding a remedy previously agreed by the High Court relating to the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) challenge. The Court of Appeal found that the remedy accepted by the High Court was impermissible. Consequently a revised Order was issued confirming that the decision of the then Environment Minister to direct adoption of the plan was unlawful and the purported adoption was of no force or effect, therefore BMAP remains unadopted. In light of the Court of Appeal's judgement the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan has been made available for information along with other departmental development plans for the Belfast Metropolitan Area which are now extant as a result of the judgement. Despite BMAP not being operational the HRA carried out in support of it is instructive in relation to the Inner North West Masterplan and is described in more detail in Appendix 5.

Local Development Plan

The Inner North West Masterplan is intended to support and complement the existing planning policies and guidance as relevant to the area and its immediate context and is cognisant that the new Local Development Plan draft Plan Strategy was published for formal consultation on 20 September 2018. Therefore, at this period of transition, the INW has been developed in line with current policy including the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and the Regional Development Strategy and complies with Belfast City Council's Preferred Options Paper (2017) and the Purpose Built and Managed Student Accommodation Supplementary Planning Guidance (2016).

Regeneration Proposals and Plans

The area has previously been identified for regeneration in the following Department for Communities (then DSD) documents:

- BT1 Gateway Site Development Proposal (2016)
- Belfast City Centre Westside Regeneration Masterplan (2009)
- Northside Urban Village Regeneration Framework (2009)
- Belfast City Centre North West Quarter Masterplan (2005)

Preparation - the process, timetable and progress

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (FCBS) was appointed in December 2016 as Masterplanner and Urban Designer to lead a team of Consultants (JUNO planning, Systra transport and The Paul Hogarth Company landscape) with an in depth knowledge of Belfast and regeneration issues and challenges. The design team worked in collaboration with the Belfast City Council to produce a masterplan for Inner North West (INW). Preparation included engagement with many people including government departments, community groups, businesses, developers and elected representatives and consideration of prior plans. The Inner North West Masterplan was issued for public consultation from February to May 2018. A report on the response to the public consultation has been prepared. The final Masterplan is expected to be published in late 2018.

2. Habitats Regulations Assessment: The Approach

Introduction

This section describes the overall approach taken to carry out Habitats Regulations Assessment for plans in general and how that approach has been applied to the Inner North West Masterplan. The tools for this assessment were developed in accordance with the Directives and Habitats Regulations described below and informed by the Habitats Regulations Handbook and further reference material (Appendix 1). Note that the guidance refers to European sites which is the same in meaning as designated sites as referred to in this report.

The Directives

These are Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version). These Directives are referred to as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive respectively and together are called the Directives for the purposes of this report.

The overall aim of the Directives is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to habitats and species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives. These designations form a suite of sites that are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

Habitats Regulations – The Requirements

Habitats Regulations Assessment is a provision of Regulation 43 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations (Appendix 2). The Habitats Regulations require assessment of possible adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) as a result of plans and projects; this is also carried out for Ramsar sites. For the purposes of this report these are collectively referred to as designated sites.

Habitats Regulations Assessment – The Stages and Steps

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is normally described in four stages

- Stage 1: Screening for likely significant effects
- Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test
- Stage 3: Alternative Solutions
- Stage 4: Imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures

The stages and steps for each are detailed in Appendix 3.

Stage 1 involves firstly deciding whether a plan or project should be subject to HRA (Step 1). This involves reviewing the nature of the plan and its proposals to determine whether there is a requirement to carry out HRA. The following questions help determine whether the document being reviewed is a plan in the context of the Directives.

- Is the whole of the plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation purposes?
- Is the plan a strategic development plan, local development plan, supplementary guidance?
- Is the plan a general statement of policy showing only the general political will or intention of the plan making body, and no effect on any particular European site can reasonably be predicted?

- Does the plan contain a programme, or policies, or proposals which could affect one or more particular European sites?

If through the review there is found to be a requirement for HRA, those proposals with potential likely significant effects are identified along with the types of impact that they may have. Steps 2, identifying European sites, and 3, gathering information about those sites, help to identify the European sites which the plan may affect and compiles information about those sites.

Analysis of the information collated in steps 1 to 3 enables steps 4, discretionary discussion with the statutory nature conservation body, and 5, screening for likely significant effects on the selection features of European sites, to be carried out. If it is found that the plan is not subject to the Habitats Regulations then it is not necessary to progress beyond step 1.

A number of plans related to the INW have previously been subject to HRA and some are referred to in Appendix 5. These HRAs can be informative, however it is important to ensure that the current assessment uses the most recent information available.

3. Stage 1 Screening for likely significant effects

Step 1: Deciding whether a plan should be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment

Review of the Plan Proposals

The EC Guidance (reference in Appendix 1) does not specify the scope of a plan which should be subject to the Directive and related transposing legislation but does state that the key consideration is whether it is likely to have a significant effect. Guidance on application of HRA (referenced in Appendix 1) recommends reviewing proposals against a number of criteria. These may lead to plans being exempted, eliminated or excluded from the need for HRA. The criteria are explained in more detail in Section 2 of this report and Appendix 4.

The nature of the Inner North West Masterplan and its vision, objectives, design principles, illustrative masterplan and delivery were therefore reviewed to determine whether there is a requirement to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The Inner North West Masterplan does not directly relate to the management of any designated site therefore it cannot be exempted from the requirement of the Habitats Regulations.

While it is proposed to use this Masterplan to inform the drafting of the Local Development Plan and the various policies within it is not a strategic development plan, local development plan or supplementary guidance, therefore HRA is not required on this account.

The Masterplan vision, objectives, design principles, illustrative masterplan and delivery were reviewed to assess whether any proposals could affect designated sites and features with the findings presented in Appendix 6 and summarised here. The Vision for the Inner North West in Chapter 3 is as follows.

The INW will be transformed to create a vibrant place to live, work, shop and relax across a series of mixed-use, shared neighbourhoods.

The existing heritage and community assets alongside new investment including commercial, residential and higher education developments will produce a welcoming quarter embodied by creativity, innovation, quality design, culture and well-being in the heart of the city centre.

This is too general to assess for HRA; the vision does promote development however this is within the context of Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (adopted 1990) and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (published 2004). Potential impacts of development arising through achieving the vision are considered further in Steps 2 to 5.

The Masterplan objectives are as follows.

HERITAGE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT To reuse and integrate the existing heritage and respect the natural environment

HOMES To deliver a variety of residential accommodation or tenures

WORK SPACES To provide high quality and distinctive work and employment spaces

RETAIL To support city centre retail activity

LEISURE and CULTURE To improve and support the existing offer and create links to new and existing creative and cultural activity

PUBLIC REALM To provide a high quality public realm to create green, walkable and cyclable spaces

WELL-BEING To promote sustainable communities, quality urban design and help create a welcoming and attractive place for everyone

TRANSPORT To upgrade and manage the transport and parking facilities and promote active and sustainable transport

No further detail is provided on the objectives and again these are too general to assess although some may lead to development.

Part 4, 'The INW Design Principles and Illustrative Masterplan', set out 10 urban design principles with a series of proposals which set out how the objectives will be delivered:

4.1 Create a Network of Open Spaces

4.2 Improve North South Connections

4.3 Improve East West Connections

4.4 Heritage to Inform the Masterplan

4.5 Identify the Key Opportunity Sites

4.6 Mixed Uses to Support City Centre Living

4.7 Create Density for Population Growth

4.8 Create a Strong Street Hierarchy and Active Frontages

4.9 Provide Appropriate Public Parking

4.10 Support Public Transport

Each proposal has introductory text followed by key principles which are analysed in Appendix 6.

All of the proposals for: *Create a Network of Open Spaces; Improve North South Connections; and Improve East West Connections* were found to be too general to assess. It is possible that, where demolition is required to create open space, there could be a risk of releasing contaminants. Where the extent of an open space project is such that it involves major construction then planning permission will be required and any planning determination would be subject to the Habitats Regulations.

All of the proposals regarding *Heritage to Inform the Masterplan; Identify the Key Opportunity Sites; Mixed Uses to Support City Centre Living and Create Density for Population Growth* were found to be too general to assess. It is possible that there could be a risk of releasing contaminants or other pollutants when constructing new development arising from the proposals for example on the opportunity sites. A large proportion of the area north of CastleCourt is identified as contiguous opportunity sites. Consideration will need to be given in HRAs to the in-combination effects of concurrent development in the northern part of the Masterplan area. Where there is new development then planning permission will be required and determinations will be subject to the Habitats Regulations which include consideration of in combination effects.

Of the proposals for *Create a Strong Street Hierarchy and Active Frontages, Provide Appropriate Public Parking and Support Public Transport* were found to be too general to assess. It is possible that, where demolition is required to address parking, there could be a risk of releasing contaminants. Where there is a need for new development then planning permission would be required and determinations would be subject to the Habitats Regulations. The remaining proposals are not likely to have a significant effect as they will not lead to development.

The themes and proposals are followed by the Illustrative Masterplan which presents an 'Urban Design Principles Summary'. As would be expected there is overlap between the themes and proposals earlier in Chapter 4 and the Urban Design Principles. Therefore the assessment in Appendix 6 cross references the earlier findings. It found that one of the principles is unlikely to have a significant effect and the remainder are too general to assess.

Finally, the proposals for delivery presented in Chapter 7 were reviewed. Most of the proposals are unlikely to have a significant effect in themselves. For example proposal 8, which directs business support and economic regeneration, in itself is unlikely to have a significant effect. The delivery proposals are however part of promoting and supporting greater levels of development in the area but it was concluded that all were too general to assess.

In summary, no effect on any designated site can reasonably be predicted for the Masterplan vision, objectives, design principles, illustrative masterplan and delivery. While there are many general policy statements and proposals that are too general to assess, the Masterplan does seek to facilitate a greater level of development than might otherwise occur. Therefore, this assessment is being progressed to the next step to consider potential impacts of the greater level of development.

Step 2: Identifying the European sites that should be considered in the Appraisal

Baseline information on designated sites that are connected with the Belfast City Council Area is presented in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report accompanying the Preferred Options Paper for the Local Development Plan. This includes sites within or adjacent to the Council area, with an ecological connection such as a hydrological link, those within 15km as a precautionary approach and those that are connected by infrastructure, in particular water supply and wastewater treatment. The sites and pathways to these sites are detailed in Table A7.1 which provides a 'long list' of sites to be considered as follows:

- Antrim Hills SPA
- Aghnadarragh Lough SAC
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
- Belfast Lough Ramsar
- Belfast Lough SPA
- Copeland Islands SPA
- East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA
- Eastern Mourne SAC

- Larne Lough SPA
- Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar
- Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
- Murlough SAC
- North Channel cSAC
- Outer Ards Ramsar
- Outer Ards SPA
- Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
- Strangford Lough Ramsar
- Strangford Lough SAC
- Strangford Lough SPA
- The Maidens SAC

Step 3: Gathering information about the European sites

Information for each site on the long list identified at Step 2 was compiled in Table A7.2 to include the designation status, qualifying interests and conservation objectives. Available information on factors currently affecting sites which may be affected and vulnerabilities to potential effects of the plan is included.

Step 4: Discretionary discussions on the method and scope of the appraisal

NIEA has already provided input in relation to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Masterplan and conservation objectives are published on its website therefore it was not considered necessary to consult NIEA further at this stage. Although there is not a statutory requirement to consult NIEA for Stage 1 HRA, any comments that NIEA submits during the public consultation on the SEA and HRA will be taken into account and incorporated as appropriate in the final HRA. NIEA comments on recent planning applications in or near the Inner North West were also referred to.

In its response on 14 May 2018 to consultation on the SEA Screening Report for the Inner North West Masterplan NIEA provided the following advice in relation to designated sites.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

“The North West Area is hydrologically connected to a number of European Designated Sites and will therefore require a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to be carried out alongside the SEA.”

“In section 6.0 under wastewater capacity we note that investment in wastewater infrastructure has been highlighted as an issue. Belfast City Council should contact NI Water for information on current and future Waste Water Treatment Works capacity in Belfast.”

Marine Environment

“The Council has recognised that seals are evident in Belfast Lough and because they are mobile species SAC’s further afield outside the council boundary from which seals are site selection features have to be considered.

We welcome inclusion of North Channel cSAC, The Maidens SAC and East Coast Marine pSPA European designated sites in the assessment process.”

Step 5: Screening the draft / proposed plan for likely significant effects

Potential impacts and effects

Potential development impacts that could arise as a result of any plan or project which may need to be assessed in relation to designated sites and their features are listed in Table A7.3. These impacts were reviewed to determine which could arise from the Masterplan. Impacts that could be a consequence of the Inner North West Masterplan are recorded and highlighted in bold on Table A7.3 and are discussed below.

Some impacts were discounted, for example aerial pollution is discounted as the Masterplan in itself will not lead to development that will increase aerial emissions to the extent that designated sites, the nearest of which is 2.6km, could be affected. Direct loss of habitat within designated sites will not arise nor will there be loss of supporting habitat for site selection features. The nearest point to the River Lagan is 1.2km therefore there cannot be disturbance to marine mammals from noise and vibration during construction.

In summary the potential impacts arising from the Masterplan are listed here and discussed below:

- Construction: Chemical impacts on water quality
- Construction: Sediment release
- Operation: Insufficient Wastewater treatment

Sites and Features subject to impacts

These impacts were then reviewed in relation to the 'long list' of designated sites above. The findings are presented in Table A7.4.

Potential pathways between the Masterplan area and designated sites are not evident however this should be reviewed on a project by project basis as there may be pathways created during construction to subsurface drainage. The nearest designated sites are Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site 2.6km away. The historical use of the land means that there is a risk of release of contaminants during construction which could cause pollution to habitats and species. Although the River Lagan leads to Belfast Lough, the nearest point to the River Lagan is 1.2km.

The outcome was that a potential pathway for impacts on the sites and features below cannot be discounted. The conservation objectives for these sites were reviewed to assess whether these impacts could affect achievement of the conservation objectives. Links to the conservation objectives are provided in the footnotes; conservation objectives have not been published for Ramsars so those for the related SPA was referred to.

Belfast Lough Open Water SPA ¹	Bird features
Copeland Islands SPA ²	Bird features
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA ³	Bird features
Larne Lough SPA ⁴	Bird features
Outer Ards Ramsar	Bird features
Outer Ards SPA ⁵	Bird features
Strangford Lough Ramsar	Bird features
Strangford Lough SPA ⁶	Bird features
Belfast Lough Ramsar	Birds and supporting habitat
Belfast Lough SPA ⁷	Birds and supporting habitat

¹ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/belfast-lough-open-water-spa-conservation-objectives-2015.pdf>

² <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/copeland-islands-SPA-conservation-objectives-2015.pdf>

³ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/doe/east-coast-%28northern-ireland%29-marine-proposed-special-protection-area-conservation-objectives.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/larne-lough-spa-conservation-objectives-2015.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/outer-ards-spa-conservation-objectives-2015.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/strangford-lough-spa-conservation-objectives-2015.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/belfast-lough-spa-conservation-objectives-2015.pdf>

There are several sites listed for bird features as Belfast Lough, which is to be subsumed in the East Coast (Northern Ireland) proposed Marine SPA, provides feeding and loafing areas for species from the other SPAs and Ramsars. Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar include intertidal mudflats and an effect on birds and supporting habitats cannot be discounted. The following discussion considers the potential effects identified on these sites and species; for each impact the finding is underlined at the end of the discussion. In the context of the Habitats Regulations a likely significant effect is an effect that cannot be ruled out on the basis of objective information. 'Likely' in this context means there is a risk or possibility that an effect will be significant. An effect is significant if it would undermine a site's conservation objectives.

Construction: chemical impacts on water quality

There has been significant former industrial activity in the Inner North West including eight records of textile works and dye works, five sites relating to fuelling and transport, three metal manufacturing and one listed as a power station at Chapel Lane. There is potential for contaminants to become mobilised and a pathway to designated sites created during construction through excavation or piling. There is therefore potential for increased transport of chemical contaminants reaching the aquatic environment during the construction of development arising from the Masterplan and causing pollution and deterioration of water quality.

Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar include intertidal mudflats and an effect on birds and supporting habitats cannot be discounted. A major pollution incident could have a conceivable impact on bird habitat although this would be likely to be a short duration event rather than a persistent form of pollution. It is not considered that the construction impacts could affect bird features in the other SPAs or Ramsars as any impact would be temporary and de minimis taking account of distance to and the extent of the Lough. It is advisable to avoid significant pollution as a result of projects arising from the Masterplan.

There are standard approaches that can be required by planning conditions for assessing the risk of contamination and carrying out remediation through Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination (CLR11) as advised by NIEA⁸. Conditions relating to contamination are only appropriate to apply at the planning application stage. It is therefore considered that the risk of contamination can be avoided on a case by case basis. Although the Masterplan may increase the extent of development in the Inner North West, providing that all proposals are subject to HRA and the requirement for risk assessment and remediation conditioned where applicable, then cumulative effects on designated sites should not occur.

It is not the place of the Inner North West Masterplan to stipulate planning conditions and there are accepted ways to enforce appropriate and well-tested measures to minimise chemical pollution impacts. Therefore the impact of chemical pollution arising during construction is not considered further in this assessment.

Construction: Sediment release

Surface run off and sediment release from construction works and operational activities associated with a plan or project can increase sediment deposition and turbidity within aquatic systems. This can adversely impact on associated wildlife by causing shading effects that can inhibit plant and algal growth and smother organisms thereby limiting productivity and survival.

A major sediment release could have a conceivable impact on bird habitat in Belfast Lough although this would be likely to be a short duration event and very small in terms of extent or severity. It is however advisable to avoid significant sediment release as a result of the Masterplan.

It is not the place of the Inner North West Masterplan to stipulate planning conditions and there are accepted ways to enforce appropriate and well-tested measures to minimise sediment impacts. Therefore the impact of sediment runoff arising during construction is not considered further in this assessment.

⁸ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/model-procedures-management-land-contamination>

Operation – insufficient wastewater treatment capacity

Belfast Lough provides feeding and loafing areas for species from the other SPAs therefore a number of sites are listed for this potential impact. The conservation objectives for SPAs do not rank the severity of impacts but the document for Belfast Lough cites a threat as *“Alteration of habitat quality through diminution of water quality or invasive species.”* It also notes *“Historically impacted by industrial and sewerage effluent. Vulnerable to pollution incidents from both industry and shipping.”* The Masterplan will not increase industry or shipping.

Increased demands on wastewater treatment works could lead to increased nutrient enrichment of waterbodies which could change water quality and increase eutrophication. This in turn could have a harmful effect on the ecological functioning of these systems. The Habitats Regulations Assessment for BMAP, Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Development Plan (LDP) and NI Water responses suggest that there is short-term capacity for wastewater treatment for new development. The LDP Plan Strategy, a draft of which is due for publication this year with a HRA, will need to address wastewater treatment capacity to ensure that no adverse effects on designated sites can arise from the LDP.

The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the Belfast Preferred Options Paper⁹ suggests that there is conflicting information available about the capacity of wastewater treatment for Belfast and overall a concern that growth figures cannot be supported with current infrastructure. It reports that the Living With Water Programme states *“The main WWTW (Waste Water treatment works) serving Belfast is above its theoretical design capacity.”* Elsewhere *“As regards Kinnegar, NI Water has indicated that it expects that the planned growth will be able to be accommodated (capacity confirmation awaited from PFI operator). NIEA are currently highlighting concerns regarding further connections to Belfast WWTW, in our planning responses.”*

All development must be within the levels set by extant or future adopted development plans. It is stated in the Masterplan that the proposed density of development will be in line with the LDP housing and urban design policies which will be subject to the Habitats Regulations. There is also reference to an Infrastructure Study which will look at WWTW needs. The Council’s preferred option for growth took into account waste water treatment capacity but it concludes *“However, the significant future growth of the Plan area will require careful consideration and assessment to address potential capacity issues.”* It goes on to say *“It is recognised investment/ alternative methods of treatment will be required during the plan period to support that level of growth projected. The ongoing engagement will ensure that the plan development is informed by the most up to date information as it becomes available and if appropriate, addressed through plan review and phasing.”*

It is not the place of the Inner North West Masterplan to stipulate requirements for wastewater treatment. However all development must be within the levels set by extant or future adopted development plans. The LDP will be subject to review and phasing of development. In addition NI Water is a statutory consultee for planning applications and NIEA is a statutory consultee for specified planning applications. These will ensure that development will not be permitted unless there is sufficient capacity. Therefore this impact will not be further considered in this assessment.

Outcome of screening for likely significant effects

In summary, the impacts that may arise as a result of proposals in the Inner North West Masterplan are important to highlight. Pollution from chemicals or sediment runoff during construction can be avoided or controlled by conditions applied to planning permissions or controls applied through other regulations. Likewise the issue of waste water treatment can be addressed on a project by project basis and development would not be allowed to proceed unless there is sufficient treatment capacity. This will also be reflected at a strategic level through the LDP.

4. Findings of Habitats Regulations Assessment

In summary Step 1 found that no effect on any designated site can reasonably be predicted for the Masterplan vision, objectives, design principles, illustrative masterplan and delivery at this stage as the majority of proposals are general policy statements or proposals that are too general to assess. A few proposals can be concluded to have no likely significant effect. Where the plan indicates new development, for example landmark gateway buildings or new homes, it does not provide sufficient detail in terms of location, scale and construction to assess their potential impact on designated sites. Many elements of the Masterplan relate to general principles of development, layout and design and those elements will not increase the level of development.

The overall plan does however promote additional development in the Inner North West that could have a significant effect on designated sites and their selection features. Therefore this assessment was progressed to consider potential impacts of the greater level of development. Those additional elements that could have an effect are subject to planning permission and other regulations for which the relevant competent authority will need to ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations. For those projects that may arise from the Masterplan, and have a potential effect on designated sites, there are accepted ways to enforce appropriate and well-tested measures to minimise impacts such that projects cannot have a significant effect alone, or contribute to a significant effect in combination with other projects.

The overall level of development could be greater than the capacity to treat wastewater and lead to a decline in water quality in some designated sites. However all development must be within the levels set by extant or future adopted development plans. It is stated that the proposed density will be in line with the Local Development Plan housing and urban design policies which will be subject to the Habitats Regulations. In addition, NI Water is a statutory consultee for planning applications and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is a statutory consultee for specified planning applications. This will ensure that development will not be permitted unless there is sufficient capacity.

In light of the findings of this review the assessment is completed at Stage 1 therefore Stage 2 appropriate assessment is not required.

⁹ <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol-environment/Planning/pop.aspx>

Glossary

Adverse effect on site integrity	An effect on the qualifying features of a European site which would undermine the achievement of the conservation objectives for that site and which would have a negative effect on the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitats, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which the site is or will be designated.
Competent Authority	For the purposes of the Habitats Regulations the expression 'competent authority' includes government departments, district councils and statutory undertakers, and any trustees, commissioners, board or other persons who, as a public body and not for their own profit, act under any statutory provision for the improvement of any place or the production or supply of any commodity or service.
De minimis	Having no appreciable effect
Designated site	Collective term for this report that includes SACs, SPAs, cSACs, pSPAs, SCIs and Ramsar sites.
The Directives	Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. These Directives are referred to as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive respectively and together are called 'The Directives' for the purposes of this report.
European sites	Collective term referred to in guidance that includes SACs, SPAs, cSACs, pSPAs, SCIs and Ramsar sites (although the latter is a wider international designation).
Favourable Conservation Status	In summary conservation status is favourable when conditions are right to sustain habitats and the population and range of species. This term is fully defined in the Habitats Directive.
Habitats Regulations	The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)
In combination	Refers to effects that may be likely significant effects when considered in combination with effects from other plans or projects.
Likely significant effect	An effect that cannot be ruled out on the basis of objective information. Likely in this context means there is a risk or possibility that an effect will be significant. An effect is significant if it would undermine a site's conservation objectives.
Natura 2000	The European network of special areas of conservation and special protection areas under the Wild Birds Directive, provided for by Article 3(1) of the Habitats Directive
Ramsar site	Sites listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance adopted at Ramsar, Iran in 1971. As a matter of policy these sites are treated in the same way as European sites.

Abbreviations

BMAP	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
BUAP	Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001
cSAC	Candidate SACs are sites that have been submitted to the European Commission, but not yet formally adopted.
DAERA	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
EC	European Commission
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
INW	Inner North West
LDP	Local Development Plan
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
pSPA	Proposed SPA
SAC	Special Area of Conservation (Site that has been adopted by the European Commission and formally designated by the government of the country in whose territory the site lies.)
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPA	Special Protection Area
WWTW	Wastewater treatment works

Appendix 1: References

Further references are provided in the end notes.

In the absence of specific Northern Ireland guidance on carrying out Habitats Regulations Assessment for plans and programmes reference has been made to other sources of guidance and relevant documents including those listed below.

Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans Guidance for Plan-Making Bodies in Scotland Version 3.0, (2015) Scottish Natural Heritage (Initially Prepared by David Tyldesley and Associates)

Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) *The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook*, December 2017 edition UK: DTA Publications Ltd

JNCC Standard data forms (2015) generated from the Natura 2000 Database submitted to the European Commission on 22/12/2015. jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-0

NIEA Conservation Objectives www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/biodiversity-land-and-landscapes/protected-areas

Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (2001), European Commission Environment DG

Belfast Metropolitan Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment, (2015), Department of the Environment Northern Ireland
www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/development_plans/devplans_az/bmap_2015.htm

Appendix 2: The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), Regulation 43

Assessment of implications for European site

43.—(1) A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which—

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site in Northern Ireland (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

(2) A person applying for any such consent, permission or other authorisation shall provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment.

(3) The competent authority shall for the purposes of the assessment consult the Department and have regard to any representations made by it within such reasonable time as the authority may specify.

(4) The competent authority shall, if it considers it appropriate, take such steps as it considers necessary to obtain the opinion of the general public.

(5) In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 44, the authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

(6) In considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site, the authority shall have regard to the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposed that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

(7) This regulation does not apply in relation to a site which is a European site by reason only of regulation 9(1)(c) (site protected in accordance with Article 5(4)).

Appendix 3: The Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment for Plans

Stage 1: Screening for likely significant effects

Step 1: Deciding whether a plan should be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment

This involves considering the nature of the plan and its proposals to determine whether there is a requirement to carry out a HRA. If in the review there is found to be a requirement for HRA those proposals with potential likely significant effects are identified along with the types of impact that they may have. If on the other hand it is found that the plan is not subject to HRA then it is not necessary to progress beyond this step.

Step 2: Identifying the European sites that should be considered in the Appraisal

European sites that are within the plan area, within a zone of influence beyond the plan area or connected to the plan area through ecology or infrastructure are identified creating a long list of sites. This is presented in Appendix 7 for the Inner North West Masterplan area.

Step 3: Gathering information about the European sites

Information for each site on the long list identified at Step 2 is compiled to include the designation status, qualifying interests, conservation objectives and site condition. Available information on factors currently affecting sites which may be affected and vulnerabilities to potential effects of the plan is included.

Step 4: Discretionary discussions on the method and scope of the appraisal

The Statutory Nature Conservation Body, represented by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) of the Department of Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) may be consulted informally to ensure that the information at Step 3 is up to date and reflects known issues for the European sites. This provides the opportunity to invite comment on the scope of the HRA and potential in combination considerations.

Step 5: Screening the draft / proposed plan for likely significant effects

This step is divided into a higher level review of proposals against sites followed by a detailed assessment of proposals and their potential impacts against site qualifying features. Presentation of this step may vary according to the complexity and spatial scale of the plan under consideration.

5a. Those proposals identified at Step 1 as having potential likely significant effects are assessed in relation to the long list of sites from Step 2. This is presented as a matrix of potential impacts against sites in which impacts are categorised as having no likely significant effect, a likely significant effect or an uncertain effect. Some of the potential effects identified at Step 1 may be discounted at this stage if there is no pathway by which they could impact on a European site or its selection features or because the location or scale is such that any effect would be de minimis. The outcome of this part is a short list of proposals and a short list of sites for which more detailed assessment is required.

5b. A detailed assessment considers the potential modes of impacts against all site selection features for short listed sites. This identifies whether there are likely significant effects and whether, taking account of existing mitigation, residual effects are removed, minor and insignificant, or significant.

If there are likely significant effects, either alone or in-combination, then the sites and features which may be affected and potential impacts should be summarised in preparation for Stage 2.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment and the Integrity Test

Step 6: The appropriate assessment

The summary from Step 5 is the starting point for the appropriate assessment. Step 6 assesses whether any likely significant effect could lead to an adverse effect on site integrity for each site. Where it is found that there could be such an adverse effect then measures are identified to remove any potential for adverse effects. This may include case-specific policy restrictions or caveats; adding mitigation in a further plan that will deliver the current plan; removing proposals that could have an adverse effect on site integrity; specific mitigation plans or a large scale mitigation strategy which includes measures to mitigate adverse effects of the current plan.

Step 7: Amending the plan until there would be no adverse effects on site integrity

Any mitigation identified in Step 6 is incorporated in the plan.

Step 8: Preparing a draft of the Habitats Regulations Assessment Record

This is a draft report which records the HRA and supporting evidence.

Step 9: Consultation

If the HRA is concluded at Step 5 then a record of the review of the need for HRA is prepared which states whether the plan has been eliminated, excluded or exempted from the need for further assessment under the Habitats Regulations. Consultation is not required on the record in these circumstances. If a draft plan is subject to consultation then a draft of this review may be included in the consultation with a note that it will be updated to take account of any changes in the proposals or European sites before the plan is finalised.

If the HRA is concluded at Step 5 the HRA Report with a Statement of Finding of No Likely Significant Effects is published. Consultation is not required on this Stage 1 Test of Likely Significance in these circumstances however it is recommended that the record is published as a supporting document for the plan. If the draft plan is subject to consultation a draft Stage 1 HRA Report may be included in the consultation with a note that it will be updated to take account of any changes in the proposals or European sites before the plan is finalised.

If the HRA progresses to Step 8 then NIEA must be consulted on a draft Stage 2 HRA Report (also known as an Appropriate Assessment). Other stakeholders such as managers of European sites should be consulted where appropriate. Public consultation is not required on the draft Stage 2 HRA Report however it may be included as a supporting document for any public consultation on the draft plan with a note that it will be updated to take account of any changes in the proposals or European sites before the plan is finalised.

Step 10: Proposed modifications

Representations by NIEA and other consultees are recorded with a note on if and how they have been addressed. Further mitigation identified in Step 9 is incorporated in the plan.

Step 11: Modifying and completing the appraisal record

Steps 6 - 8 are updated to reflect any additional mitigation and adverse effects reviewed. If it is found that there are no adverse effects on site integrity then the HRA may be concluded and a Stage 2 HRA Appropriate Assessment Report published to include a Record of No Adverse Effect on the Integrity of Any European Site under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

Stage 3: Alternative Solutions

If Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment finds that there would be an adverse effect on site integrity then alternative solutions which are financially, legally and technically feasible need to be considered further.

Alternative solutions are already considered in preparation of many plans, for example through the Preferred Options Paper for Local Development Plans and in carrying out Strategic Environmental Assessment which requires consideration of reasonable alternatives. Compliance with regional policies and strategies also means that environmental effects will have been taken into account. It is therefore rare for HRAs for plans to progress beyond Stage 2.

Stage 4: Imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures

In the event that there is an imperative reason of public interest which overrides the risk and harm to sites, and priority features where appropriate, then compensatory measures to protect the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network must be identified, delivery detailed and the government notified. As already noted it is rare for HRAs for plans to progress beyond Stage 2.

Appendix 4: Criteria for assessing whether a plan is subject to the Habitats Regulations

1. General Policy Statements

These include:

- General strategic and political aspirations (often includes plan objectives)
- Ambitions which state a direction without details
- General criteria based policies, for example relating to design, social considerations, public safety, which do not relate to measures that may protect or affect European sites.

If the whole plan falls into this category and does not include detail about how it will be delivered then it is reasonable to record that it would not be likely to have a significant effect and not to assess it any further under the Habitats Regulations.

2. Plans or projects referred to but not proposed

- Existing projects or plans that will support delivery of the current plan (may include infrastructure plans which have a bearing on the current plan but are not delivered by it)
- Projects or plans in preparation or proposed to be prepared to support the current plan but which are not included within it (these should be considered under the Habitats Regulations by the relevant competent authority)
- Existing projects, plans or programmes which are referenced in the current plan but which do not necessarily support its delivery
- Plans or projects that would be likely to proceed under another plan irrespective of the current plan.

If the current plan will influence other projects or plans, for example by adding detail, then further consideration is required. Development that is an inevitable consequence of the current plan also requires further consideration although this may not be necessary if it has been or will be subject to HRA.

3. No likely significant effect

- a. The proposal or policy is intended to protect the environment and in doing so will not be likely to have a significant negative effect.
- b. Proposals or policies that will not lead to development or other change or include a presumption against effects on European sites.
- c. Proposals which may bring about change but could have no conceivable effect for example as there is no pathway to a European site or effects are likely to be positive and could not undermine conservation objectives. Baseline information about European sites such as that in Appendix 7 should be taken into account to ensure all pathways and links with qualifying features have been considered.

4. Proposals too general to assess

- The effect cannot be predicted because the policy is too general and, for example, how and where it will be implemented is unknown.
- Broad proposals where the implementation will be detailed and can be assessed at a later stage

These do not apply if the scale of the proposal or constraints mean it will be difficult to accommodate development without impacting a European site.

5. Potential minor effects

- Proposals which may bring about change but that change would be insignificant on its own for example due to distance, duration or scale. These will be reviewed for potential in combination effects.

6. Potential significant effects

- Potential negative effects that cannot be confirmed to be insignificant on the basis of objective information without mitigation.

Appendix 5: Habitats Regulations Assessment – The Belfast Context

The Inner North West Masterplan sits in the context of other plans including the Regional Development Strategy 2035 and the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015. While the previously adopted BMAP does not have any legal force as described in Section 1 of this report it is the only plan for the area which has been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment. The HRA was not published alongside or reflected in the draft BMAP. It was however published alongside BMAP and its findings were incorporated in the previously adopted BMAP. Despite BMAP not being operational the HRA is instructive in relation to Inner North West Masterplan.

BMAP, covered six council areas and therefore is much more extensive than the Belfast City Council or the Inner North West. However the HRA did consider urban development the nature of which is comparable to that proposed for the area of the Masterplan.

The BMAP HRA identified that the following impacts could have a potential adverse effect on site integrity of one or more designated sites.

- Aerial pollution
- Cumulative impact of increased boating activity
- Increased disturbance levels
- Loss of suitable foraging / feeding / roosting habitat
- Water quality
- Settlement Limits

The sites identified as potentially being adversely affected by one or more of these impacts were:

- Antrim Hills SPA
- Belfast Lough SPA
- Belfast Lough Ramsar
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
- Copeland Islands SPA
- Larne Lough SPA
- Larne Lough Ramsar
- Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
- Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar
- Montiaghs Moss SAC
- Outer Ards SPA / Ramsar
- Strangford Lough SAC
- Strangford Lough SPA
- Strangford Lough Ramsar

Further sites have been proposed or designated since the HRA was completed.

The Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) will be subject to HRA. A draft Plan Strategy was prepared taking account of representations on the POP and any further studies. Following further consultation and assessment, including Habitats Regulations Assessment, and Independent Examination the Plan Strategy will be finalised and adopted. This will be assessed in the HRA for the LDP Plan Strategy. The Belfast Agenda and East Bank Development Strategy were subject to the Habitats Regulations and those HRA reports were referred to in preparing this report.

Appendix 6: Detailed Review of Inner North West Masterplan Proposals

Note more than one category may apply, not all have been listed

Table A6.1 Assessment of INW Masterplan Proposals

Theme delivery	Category	HRA Finding
Vision		
<p>Vision: The INW will be transformed to create a vibrant place to live, work, shop and relax across a series of mixed-use, shared neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The existing heritage and community assets alongside new investment including commercial, residential and higher education developments will produce a welcoming quarter embodied by creativity, innovation, quality design, culture and well-being in the heart of the city centre.</p>	4. Proposals too general to assess	This outlines the aspiration for the area. It is intended to promote development in the area. Whether this can be subject to HRA is considered further below.
Objectives		
<i>HERITAGE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT</i> To reuse and integrate the existing heritage and respect the natural environment	1. General Policy Statement	This promotes integration and reuse of historic features and informs design and composition rather than the quantity of development and respect of the environment
<i>HOMES</i> To deliver a variety of residential accommodation or tenures	1. General Policy Statement	It is intended to promote residential development in the area. Whether this can be subject to HRA is considered further below.
<i>WORK SPACES</i> To provide high quality and distinctive work and employment spaces	1. General Policy Statement	It is intended to promote business development in the area. It also informs design and composition of employment related development. Whether this can be subject to HRA is considered further below.
<i>RETAIL</i> To support city centre retail activity	1. General Policy Statement	This largely relates to other activities than development although it may identify the need for new retail facilities which would be assessed at a project level.
<i>LEISURE and CULTURE</i> To improve and support the existing offer and create links to new and existing creative and cultural activity	1. General Policy Statement	This largely relates to other activities than development although it may identify the need for new cultural facilities which would be assessed at a project level.
<i>PUBLIC REALM</i> To provide a high quality public realm to create green, walkable and cyclable spaces	1. General Policy Statement	This informs design and composition rather than the quantity of development.
<i>WELL-BEING</i> To promote sustainable communities, quality urban design and help create a welcoming and attractive place for everyone	1. General Policy Statement	This informs design and composition rather than the quantity of development.

Table A6.1 Assessment of INW Masterplan Proposals

Theme delivery	Category	HRA Finding
TRANSPORT To upgrade and manage the transport and parking facilities and promote active and sustainable transport	1. General Policy Statement	This is not likely to have a long term effect but, depending on the location and nature of the the upgrade of facilities, there could be some construction effects. These will be assessed on a project by project basis.
Design Principles and Illustrative Masterplan		
4.1 Create a Network of Open Spaces	4. Proposals too general to assess	This is intended to provide a network of about four open spaces from Bank Square to Union Square. Some are already open space and some would require demolition. Where the extent is such that there is major construction required then planning permission would be required.
4.2 Improve North South Connections	4. Proposals too general to assess	The Masterplan seeks to improve and reinforce the north-south permeability and connectivity of the INW. This largely relates to enhancement of junctions for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists, providing a route through the area currently bisected by CastleCourt and provision of public realm schemes.
4.3 Improve East West Connections	4. Proposals too general to assess	The Masterplan contributes to the improvement of the east-west permeability through the area, linking the communities to the west with the city centre. This largely relates to design to promote visual and physical connections, enhancement of junctions for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists and provision of public realm schemes.
4.4 Heritage to Inform the Masterplan	4. Proposals too general to assess	This promotes integration and reuse of historic features to reinforce the character and entity of the area and informs design and composition rather than the quantity of development.
4.5 Identify the Key Opportunity Sites	4. Proposals too general to assess	Opportunity sites include underutilised sites such as surface car parks. The accompanying figure identifies a large proportion of the area north of CastleCourt as contiguous opportunity sites with a number of smaller separated sites south of CastleCourt. All will be subject to HRA at a project level through the planning process and consideration will need to be given in HRAs to any in combinations effects of concurrent development in the northern part of the Masterplan area.
4.6 Mixed Uses to Support City Centre Living	4. Proposals too general to assess	The Masterplan seeks to capitalise on INW's land use diversity and flexibility in order to support the population growth in the city centre. Much of this involves supporting and complementing existing businesses. It does refer to introducing new homes and mixed tenure housing through a range of residential types with proposed mixed uses at ground floor. There is also reference to potential for a new visitor attraction. Any new development would be subject to planning permission and the Habitats Regulations at the project level.

Table A6.1 Assessment of INW Masterplan Proposals

Theme delivery	Category	HRA Finding
4.7 Create Density for Population Growth	4. Proposals too general to assess	This aligns with the LDP Preferred Options Paper with a projected population growth of 66,000 new residents. In order to support the growth aspirations for the city the Local Development Plan proposes to allocate sufficient land to accommodate 37,000 new housing units to 2035. In line with the Strategic Planning Policy Statement’s Sequential Approach and Regional Development Strategy the highest density of development will be located in the city centre and will seek to accommodate density without ‘town cramming’. This is in part dependant on the provision of housing in specific areas of the INW. The proposed density will be in line with the LDP housing and urban design policies.
4.8 Create a Strong Street Hierarchy and Active frontages	3. No likely significant effect	This is about identifying the status of streets which in turn informs key routes and design aspirations for each level as detailed in 4.2 and part 5 of the Masterplan. This section also informs key routes and design aspirations for each level of street as detailed in part 5 of the Masterplan. This in itself will not have any effect on designated sites.
4.3.3 Provide Appropriate Public Parking	4. Proposals too general to assess	The Masterplan seeks to reduce the impact of the surface car parks and to improve the east-west permeability. It also proposes more provision of bike docking stations at strategic locations.
4.3.4 Support Public Transport	4. Proposals too general to assess	This seeks to promote use of public transport and active travel. This in itself will not have any effect on designated sites unless substantive new infrastructure is required which would be subject to future assessment.
4.4 Illustrative Masterplan		
4.4.1 Urban Design Principles Summary		
Enhance the existing and historic street network and permeability	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.1
Create a network of open spaces	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.1
Improve north south connections	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.2
Improve east west connections	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.3
Improve Carrick Hill / Millfield Road: public realm and junctions	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.4
Create a pedestrian/cyclist friendly environment	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.2
Maximise actives frontages on key corners, routes and places	3. No likely significant effect	See 4.8
Integrate and reuse historic buildings	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.4
Promote mixed use development to encourage the urban economy and city centre living	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.4
Integrate and reuse historic buildings	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.4
Introduce mixed tenure housing	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.7

Table A6.1 Assessment of INW Masterplan Proposals

Theme delivery	Category	HRA Finding
Provide a variety of uses that supports urban living	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.6
Introduce landmark gateway buildings at arrival points into the city centre to improve legibility of the city and long distance orientation	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.7
Deliver density appropriate to location and quality of the built environment	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.7
Integrate car parking into building forms without creating dead street frontages	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.9
Integrate and promote sustainable travel modes	4. Proposals too general to assess	See 4.10
7.1 Delivery		
1. Work with DfC and the private sector to review their land holdings within the Inner North West, and consider which sites might be brought forward for development.	4. Proposals too general to assess	This applies to the whole area, in itself it will have no effect but it may contribute to greater levels of development.
2. Support DfC and DfI to bring forward additional public realm improvements where funding permits, including at the junctions and pedestrian crossing points along Millfield and Carrick Hill.	4. Proposals too general to assess	The location, scale and construction scale of any improvements is unknown and therefore cannot be assessed.
3. Incorporate improvements to public transport in and around the Inner North West within the forthcoming Infrastructure Study and as part of the potential Belfast Region City Deal.	4. Proposals too general to assess	The location, scale and construction scale of any improvements is unknown and therefore cannot be assessed.
4. Use this masterplan to inform the drafting of the Local Development Plan and the various policies within, and this document will also provide the basis for the Local Plan Policy for this area.	4. Proposals too general to assess	While it is proposed to use this Masterplan to inform the drafting of the Local Development Plan and the various policies within it does not represent a strategic development plan, local development plan or supplementary guidance.
5. Utilise this document to inform discussions with developers as they come forward for proposals in the Inner North West.	4. Proposals too general to assess	The location, scale and construction scale of any developments is unknown and therefore cannot be assessed. Developments arising will require planning permission and determinations would be subject to the Habitats Regulations.
6. Engage with private sector landowners in the Inner North West to understand potential barriers to development coming forward and how these might be addressed.	4. Proposals too general to assess	This in itself it will have no effect but it may contribute to greater levels of development.
7. Bring forward the development of the Belfast Telegraph building via its joint-venture partnership, Bel Tel LLP.	4. Proposals too general to assess	This major project, currently proposed as a commercial, retail and leisure complex capable of delivering 2,000 high-end jobs, will require planning permission and determinations would be subject to the Habitats Regulations. .

Table A6.1 Assessment of INW Masterplan Proposals

Theme delivery	Category	HRA Finding
8. Draw upon the wide range of business support and economic regeneration initiatives being delivered by the council and other bodies and direct these towards the Inner North West where applicable.	4. Proposals too general to assess	This in itself it will have no effect however it may promote or support development that could have an effect. Developments arising will require planning permission and determinations would be subject to the Habitats Regulations.
9. Explore opportunities for meanwhile or interim uses within the Inner North West, in consultation with landowners.	4. Proposals too general to assess	The location, scale and construction scale of any meanwhile or interim uses is unknown and therefore cannot be assessed. Meanwhile uses generally require limited construction however potentially demolition may be required therefore the need for HRA should be assessed on a case by case basis.
10. To bring forward cohesive regeneration initiatives for Castle St and the surrounding area to address the shorter and longer term impacts of the Bank Buildings redevelopment.	Proposals too general to assess	The location, scale and construction scale of proposals uses is unknown and therefore cannot be assessed.

Appendix 7: Baseline Information for Designated Sites Connected with the Inner North West Management Plan Area

Adapted from Report prepared by Shared Environmental Service to inform sustainability appraisal of Belfast LDP.

Introduction

This appendix provides a long list of sites against which effects of plans and projects can be reviewed. These are described in terms of how they are connected with the whole Belfast City Council area, their selection features and potential effects of plans and projects.

This long list takes a precautionary approach. There will be no conceivable effect from plans or projects on many of the long listed sites, for example on those that are over 10km away and have no ecological or infrastructure connection. None or only a few of the potential impacts may arise depending on the nature of the project or plan. Measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate for impacts may be incorporated in plans or projects where necessary and feasible, or proposals amended to avoid adverse effects on site integrity.

Projects and plans should be assessed to determine whether any of the potential impacts could occur. This involves consideration of the nature of the plan or project, sources of potential impacts, any pathways to European sites and whether the impact could have a significant effect on site selection features, their conservation objectives and site integrity alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Overview

This is a summary of the long list of sites, how they are connected to the Council area and potential issues. The sites listed are those for which there is a potential pathway allowing a connection with the plan area. Sites within 15km of the Council area have been considered on a precautionary basis. The sites are listed in Table A7.1. Definitions of each type of connection follow.

Within or Adjacent: All or part of the European or Ramsar Site is within or directly adjacent to the plan area.

Ecological: The European or Ramsar Site is ecologically connected to the plan area. Ecological connections include linkages by ecological corridors such as river systems; hydrological links between the Council area and peatland or wetland sites; known areas of land in the Council area which are regularly used by birds which also use a SPA or Ramsar Site; and sites that form part of the coastal ecosystem to which the Council area is connected.

Within 15km: The European or Ramsar Site is within 15km of the Council area so potential for aerial pollution may exist.

By Infrastructure: The European or Ramsar Site is connected by infrastructure with the plan area. Infrastructural connectivity is related to the potential linkage of sites to the Council area by infrastructure services such as water abstraction or wastewater discharges. Water supply for the Council area comes from Lough Neagh, the Mourne and Antrim Hills therefore this also brings Eastern Mourne SAC and Antrim Hills SPA into consideration as well. Wastewater treatment works ultimately discharge to a number of designated areas therefore the influence of plans or projects on this infrastructure needs to be considered.

Table A7.1: Potential Connections between Belfast City Council area and European Sites

European Site Name	Connection with Belfast City Council area			
	Within or Adjacent	Ecological	Within 15km	By Infrastructure
Belfast Lough SPA	•	•	•	•
Belfast Lough Ramsar	•	•	•	•
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	•	•	•	•
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA	•	•	•	•
North Channel cSAC		•	•	•
Outer Ards SPA		•	•	•
Outer Ards Ramsar		•	•	•
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA				•
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar				•
Strangford Lough SPA		•	•	
Strangford Lough SAC		•	•	
Strangford Lough Ramsar		•	•	
Larne Lough SPA		•		
Copeland Islands SPA		•		
The Maidens SAC		•		
Murlough SAC		•		
Aughnadarragh Lough SAC			•	
Eastern Mourne SAC				•
Antrim Hills SPA				•
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC				•

Table A7.2 presents more information about each of these sites describing how they relate to the Belfast City Council area, qualifying interests, conservation objectives and threats to site integrity. This however is a summary of information and www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/biodiversity-land-and-landscapes/protected-areas may be referred to for more detailed information about each site.

Overall Potential Impacts

More detailed description follows in Table A7.2 of all the potential development impacts that could arise as a result of plans or projects which may need to be assessed in relation to European sites and their features with a comment on if or how they may arise as a result of the Inner North West Management Plan. Note that this is a full list and some of the effects listed may not apply to the selection features of sites connected with the Council area.

Table A7.2: Details of Designated Sites Connected with Belfast City Council Area

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
Belfast Lough SPA	Ecologically connected. Belfast Lough is situated at the mouth of the River Lagan on the east coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough, part of which is within the Belfast City Council area, comprises a series of mudflats and lagoons. The brackish lagoon at the Harbour Estate (D2) together with the tidal channel at Dargan Road are included. The SPA is also designated as ASSI but excludes some areas within the immediate harbour area where permitted port related development and landfill has taken place. Some open grassland areas in parks and schools are important as high water roost sites for redshank.	Site selection features are Redshank and Great Crested Grebe	The overall site objective is to maintain each feature in favourable condition. The features objectives are: To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species. To maintain or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species. To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species and to ensure that the following are maintained in the long term: Population of the species as a viable component of the site; Distribution of the species within site; Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species; Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species.	Unfavourable	Negative impacts on the site are High: Shipping lanes, ports, marine constructions; Marine water pollution; Changes in abiotic conditions (relating to physical conditions); Medium: Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources; Pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish); Changes in biotic conditions (relating to other species) and LOW: Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities. The features already experience significant levels of disturbance within the Harbour area. The use of piling during construction may cause an additional disturbance factor but is one that is short lived and can be timed to avoid affecting bird features. There are many potential pollution sources; those that require the most careful attention are wastewater treatment works, landfill sites, large developments incorporating on site wastewater treatment; storage of chemicals and fuels; contaminated land if pollutants could be mobilised.
Belfast Lough Ramsar	Ecologically connected. The boundary is entirely the same as that for Belfast Lough SPA.	Common redshank Black-tailed godwit	Ramsar conservation objectives are not published however they can be assumed to be the same as those for Belfast Lough SPA.	Not applicable	In the absence of Conservation Objectives for the Ramsar and given the selection criteria it is considered to be subject to the same impacts as those for Belfast Lough SPA.
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	Adjacent to and ecologically connected. Will be subsumed by East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine Proposed SPA and therefore considerations for that site address all considerations for Belfast Lough Open Water SPA	Wintering populations of Great Crested Grebe	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Favourable	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed)	Public consultation on the proposed East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine Special Protection Area took place in early 2016. The proposed SPA is adjacent to and ecologically connected. It would subsume Belfast Lough Open Water SPA and includes coastal and near shore waters from Ringfad near Carnlough, Co. Antrim in the north, the marine area of Larne Lough, the marine area of Belfast Lough, waters around the Copleand Islands and offshore of the Ards Peninsula to Cloghan Head, near Ardglass in the south.	Wintering populations of Great Crested Grebe, Red-throated Diver and Eider Duck; Rafting Manx Shearwater in the breeding season originating from an adjoining colony; Foraging Sandwich, Common and Arctic Tern in the breeding season originating from adjoining tern colonies.	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Not applicable	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA
North Channel cSAC	Submitted to the EC as a candidate SAC January 2017. Connected via marine waters, small proportion within 15km of Council area. The northern part of the site would include the mouth of Belfast Lough the western boundary is about 15.5km from the Council area running approximately from the south of Whitehead to Orlock Point. Harbour porpoise are found all around the coast of Ireland including the Skerries near Portrush, Maidens (off Islandmagee), Belfast harbour and Strangford Lough. They may therefore venture into Belfast Lough, Belfast Harbour and the tidal Lagan.	Harbour porpoise	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the harbour porpoise or significant disturbance to the harbour porpoise, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to maintaining Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) for the UK harbour porpoise. To ensure for harbour porpoise that, subject to natural change, the following attributes are maintained or restored in the long term: 1. The species is a viable component of the site; 2. There is no significant disturbance of the species; 3. The supporting habitats and processes relevant to harbour porpoises and their prey are maintained.	Not applicable	The potential for disturbance and injury impacting on harbour porpoise populations needs to be considered. Disturbance during construction can normally be addressed through mitigation measures applied as conditions of planning permission such as requiring the use of marine mammal observers. As harbour porpoise are not frequently observed in Belfast Lough they are unlikely to be adversely affected by new or changed levels of recreational activities or boat traffic.
Outer Ards SPA	Connected via marine waters, small proportion within 15km of Council area. 9km from Council area to nearest point.	Breeding Arctic Tern; Wintering Golden Plover, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Ringed Plover, Turnstone	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Favourable	The site selection features most likely to be affected are those for which East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed) has been designated to protect the foraging area of species from these sites therefore the threats to Belfast Lough SPA also apply to this site.

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
Outer Ards Ramsar	Connected via marine waters, small proportion within 15km of Council area. 9km from Council area to nearest point.	Wintering Golden Plover, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Ringed Plover, Turnstone	Ramsar conservation objectives are not published however they can be assumed to be the same as those for Belfast Lough SPA.	Not applicable	The site selection features which could be impacted are those which forage in the area proposed as the East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA. The potential impacts for Belfast Lough SPA therefore also apply to this site.
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	A source for water supply therefore infrastructural connection.	Breeding Common Tern and Great Crested Grebe; Wintering Bewick's Swan, Golden Plover, Whooper Swan, Great Crested Grebe, Goldeneye, Pochard, Scaup, Tufted Duck; Passage Great Crested Grebe	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Unfavourable	Impacts that should be considered are development growth in the plan area to the extent that abstraction for water supply needs to be significantly increased such that water levels in Lough Neagh are impacted.
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar	A source for water supply therefore infrastructural connection.	Wetlands; rare plant and animal species; waterfowl populations as for SPA; pollen.	Ramsar conservation objectives are not published however they can be assumed to be the same as those for Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	Not applicable	Impacts that should be considered are those from a major development such as landfill or quarrying within the Lough Neagh catchment, or development growth to the extent that abstraction for water supply needs to be significantly increased.
Strangford Lough SPA	Ecological connection	Breeding Arctic Tern, Common Tern and Sandwich Tern; Wintering Bar-tailed Godwit	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Favourable	The site selection features most likely to be affected are those for which East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed) has been designated to protect the foraging area of species from these sites therefore the threats to that site also apply to this site. Otherwise only major developments in the catchment of the Enler River with substantial impacts during construction or long term emissions could have any impact.

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
Strangford Lough SAC	Strangford Lough is 66km away via marine waters. Common (Harbour) Seal is a mobile species and a significant colony has become established in recent years at the Musgrave Channel on the shore of East Twin Island. Peak counts of as many as 50 adults are reported and there was an estimated 20-25 pups in 2015. NIEA has advised that the screening distance for Common Seal is 50km. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the Belfast Lough population does not represent part of the population of Common Seal for which Strangford Lough SAC is designated.	Large shallow inlet and bay; Coastal lagoons; Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide; Reefs; Annual vegetation of drift lines; Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>); Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Common (Harbour) Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the site selection features to favourable condition.	Unfavourable	The potential for disturbance and injury impacting on seal populations needs to be considered. Disturbance during construction can normally be addressed through mitigation measures applied as conditions of planning permission such as requiring the use of marine mammal observers. While seals are coexisting with people in an urban area there may be certain forms of disturbance, for example from speed boats, that could cause a significant adverse effect on seals therefore there may need to be limitations on some types of development. Otherwise only a major development in the catchment of the Enler River with long term emissions is likely to have any impact.
Strangford Lough Ramsar	7km in direct line and 66km away via marine waters. Although seals are one of the designation criteria it is reasonable to assume that the Belfast Lough population of Common Seals does not represent part of the population of Common Seal for which Strangford Lough Ramsar is designated. There is limited information about the status of Grey Seal in Strangford Lough and they are not a SAC feature. Consideration of impacts on Grey Seal from the Maiden's will address any potential impact on Strangford Lough Grey Seals.	Wetland features including fringing saltmarsh; vulnerable and endangered wetland plants and animals including seals; Eel grass beds on the mudflats; waterfowl, wintering and breeding birds including those listed for the SPA.	Ramsar conservation objectives are not published however they can be assumed to be the same as those for Strangford Lough SPA and SAC.	Not applicable	The threats are as for Strangford Lough SPA for birds; as for Strangford Lough SAC for Common Seal. Otherwise only major developments in the catchment of the Enler River with substantial impacts during construction or long term emissions could have any impact.
Larne Lough SPA	More than 15km from the Council area however some birds that are site selection features forage or loaf in the East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA.	Breeding Common Tern, Roseate Tern, Sandwich Tern and Mediterranean Gull	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Favourable	The site selection features most likely to be affected are ones for which East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed) and Belfast Lough SPA have been proposed/designated to protect the foraging area of species from these sites. Therefore the threats for Belfast Lough SPA also apply to this site.

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
Copeland Islands SPA	More than 15km from the Council area however some birds that are site selection features forage or loaf in the East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA	Breeding Arctic tern and Manx Shearwater	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Favourable	The site selection features most likely to be affected are ones for which East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine SPA (Proposed) and Belfast Lough SPA have been proposed/designated to protect the foraging area of species from these sites. Therefore the threats for Belfast Lough SPA also apply to this site.
The Maidens SAC	30km via marine waters. A few Grey Seals are reported to occur within the Belfast Harbour area.	Grey Seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes and appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying interest. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term, subject to natural change: Extent of the habitats on site; Distribution of the habitats within the site; Structure and function of the habitats; Processes supporting the habitats; Distribution of typical species of the habitats; Viability of typical species as components of the habitat; No disturbance of typical species of the habitat.	Favourable	The potential for disturbance and injury impacting on seal populations needs to be considered. Disturbance during construction can normally be addressed through mitigation measures applied as conditions of planning permission such as requiring the use of marine mammal observers. While seals are coexisting with people in an urban area there may be certain forms of disturbance, for example from speed boats that could cause a significant adverse effect on seals therefore there may need to be limitations on certain types of development.
Murlough SAC	77km via marine waters to the Council area. Common (Harbour) Seal is a mobile species and a significant colony has become established in recent years at the Musgrave Channel on the shore of East Twin Island. Peak counts of as many as 50 adults are reported and there was an estimated 20-25 pups in 2015. NIEA has advised that the screening distance for Common Seal is 50km. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the Belfast Lough population does not represent part of the population of Common Seal for which Murlough SAC is designated.	Common (Harbour) Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Common Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i> to favourable condition. Maintain (and if feasible enhance) population numbers and distribution of Common Seal. Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, physical features used by Common Seals within the site.	Unfavourable	None, see comments under Location to the left.

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
Aughnadarragh Lough SAC	12.5km to Council area therefore need to consider aerial emissions, no hydrological connection	Marsh fritillary butterfly	To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly population to favourable condition. Maintain (and if feasible enhance) population numbers and distribution. Maintain (and if feasible enhance) the extent and quality of suitable Marsh Fritillary breeding habitat, particularly suitable rosettes of the larval food plant <i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Favourable	The sensitivity of Devil's Bit Scabious to aerial deposition is uncertain therefore cumulative impacts from development within and beyond the plan area need to be considered further.
Eastern Mourne SAC	A source for water supply therefore infrastructural connection.	European dry heaths; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> ; Active blanket bogs; Alpine and boreal heaths; Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands; Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels.	To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the site selection features to favourable condition.	Unfavourable	The only conceivable impact would be if development growth in the plan area is to such an extent that abstraction for water supply needs to be significantly increased resulting in habitat damage in the course of constructing new infrastructure.
Antrim Hills SPA	Just over 15km away from Council area. A source for water supply therefore infrastructural connection. While the site selection features may range well beyond the site boundary the Belfast Urban area would not make up a significant part of their range.	Merlin and Hen Harrier	Same as for Belfast Lough SPA.	Favourable	The only conceivable impact would be if development growth in the plan area is to such an extent that abstraction for water supply needs to be significantly increased resulting in habitat damage in the course of constructing new infrastructure.

Site name	Location relative to Belfast City Council Area	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	2014 Site Condition	Potential Impacts from Development in Belfast City Council Area
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC	On shore of Lough Neagh which is a water source for the plan area.	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion alvae)	To maintain (or restore where appropriate) the Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion alvae) to favourable condition. Maintain and expand the extent of existing swamp woodland. (There is an area of wetland and damp grassland which have the potential to develop into carr woodland); Maintain and enhance swamp woodland species diversity and structural diversity; Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the swamp woodland, e.g. fen, swamp, especially where these exhibit natural transition to swamp woodland; Seek nature conservation management over adjacent forested areas outside the ASSI where there may be potential for woodland rehabilitation; Seek nature conservation management over suitable areas immediately outside the ASSI where there may be potential for woodland expansion.	Unfavourable	Just over 15km away. This is too far away for there to be aerial impacts. While there is a hydrological connection via the Six Mile Water and Lough Neagh this could not result in a significant effect on the alluvial forest site selection feature of this SAC.

Table A7.3: Potential development impacts in relation to designated sites

Potential Impacts	Activities arising from the implementation of plan or project	Relevance to Masterplan
Loss, fragmentation, damage of habitats and / or species:	<p>Construction activities associated with plan or project could lead to the loss, fragmentation (or obstruction of movement) or damage of habitats and / or species through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct land take and / or land clearance and the use of machinery/materials. • Direct and indirect impacts resulting from the construction and operation of built development and required infrastructure. • Impacts caused during repair and maintenance activities for built development and required infrastructure. • Direct impacts associated with mineral development in the plan area. • Removal, fragmentation or physical changes to important connectivity features could create barrier effects to species, alter habitat availability or ecological functioning or result in changes in breeding, roosting, commuting and foraging behaviour. 	<p>Not applicable as not in/adjacent to designated areas</p> <p>Not applicable</p> <p>De minimis effect</p> <p>Not applicable</p> <p>There will be no physical effects that could result in these changes.</p>
Disturbance: physical, noise, lighting	Noise or activity during construction and operational activities could have adverse impacts on sensitive species (marine mammals and birds in particular).	There will be developments in the INW that will require piling during construction. The distance to bird features is over 2.6km therefore they will not be affected. The distance to the River Lagan is 1.2km therefore marine mammals will not be affected.
	Increased lighting from construction or additional built development could: create barrier effects to species; result in changes in species breeding, roosting, commuting and foraging behaviour; or increase predation.	The distance to bird features is over 2.6km therefore they will not be affected. The distance to the River Lagan is 1.2km therefore marine mammals will not be affected.
Biological Disturbance: invasive species, human disturbance	Sensitive habitats and species may experience adverse impacts from the introduction of invasive species, non-native, competitive or predatory species through construction activities and associated machinery, movement of soils and waste or from garden escapes.	Standard good practice in cleaning machinery can be applied to avoid transfer of species to or from the Masterplan area.

Table A7.3: Potential development impacts in relation to designated sites

Potential Impacts	Activities arising from the implementation of plan or project	Relevance to Masterplan
	Increased human activity (including recreation; increase in pet ownership; increased incidence in fires) close to sensitive habitats and species may cause disturbance that could impact negatively on these features and lead to displacement of sensitive species from certain locations.	The Masterplan will not increase the level of activity in locations that could affect designated site features. A greater urban population could in turn increase recreational activity e.g. on the River Lagan. Development to facilitate such activity will be assessed at the project level.
Contamination of land	Waste arising from the operation of developments associated with plan or project could cause contamination of land which could have a direct detrimental impact on sensitive habitats or species or indirect impacts if subsequent emissions to water occur.	There are strict controls on the disposal of contaminated waste therefore there is no risk of impacts on designated sites.
Emissions by air	The construction and operation of developments associated with plan or project (in particular industrial developments) have the potential to generate chemical and dust emissions and could make a contribution to acid rain or nutrient deposition resulting in significant adverse impacts to animals and sensitive habitats for example they could cause localised smothering of vegetation or potential health issues in animals e.g. birds.	Aerial pollution is discounted as the Masterplan does not promote industrial development.
	Increased traffic generation could lead to increased air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions which could have localized impacts on sensitive habitats or species.	Aerial pollution is discounted as the Masterplan in itself will not increase aerial emissions from traffic that could affect designated sites, the nearest of which is 2.6km. It is intended to create the conditions to encourage a shift from private car to public transport and active travel which may have a long term positive effect.

Table A7.3: Potential development impacts in relation to designated sites

Potential Impacts	Activities arising from the implementation of plan or project	Relevance to Masterplan
Emissions by water and changes to hydrology	There is potential for an increased transport of chemical contaminants reaching the aquatic environment during the construction and operation of development associated with the plan or project. This could range from transportation of fuels to cleaning or waste water treatment materials and associated drainage and discharges into watercourses. Changes to water quality can have harmful effects on fish, invertebrates, and vegetation, e.g. as a result of lowered oxygen levels.	The historical use of the land means that there is a risk of release of contaminants during construction which could cause pollution. Piling may be required to provide secure foundations and that, or excavation, could create pathways for contaminants to reach designated sites.
	Surface run off and sediment release from construction works and operational activities associated with plan or project can increase sediment deposition and turbidity within aquatic systems. This can adversely impact on associated wildlife by causing shading effects that can inhibit plant and algal growth and smother organisms thereby limiting productivity and survival.	There is potential for some sediment run off via underground hydrological connections.
	Water abstraction from streams or lakes required for construction and operation of developments associated with plan or project could have physical impacts on water levels, fish species at intakes, affect populations of fish or alter the configuration or availability of breeding gravels.	The Masterplan may increase the level of e.g. residential development in the INW however this will be within the planning context at the time and it is reasonable to assume that the Belfast Plan Strategy, which will be subject to HRA will be in place before any substantial development in this area takes place. Any development will be dependent on water supply not being a limiting factor.
	Construction and operation of development could alter the hydrology of sensitive habitats and species by either increasing or decreasing runoff or water percolation into aquifers.	The distance to and extent of the coastal and marine designated sites is such that any effect would be de minimis.
	Increased demands on waste water treatment works or for septic tanks could lead to increased nutrient enrichment of waterbodies which could change water quality and increase eutrophication. This in turn could have a harmful effect on the ecological functioning of these systems.	It is acknowledged that wastewater treatment capacity may be a constraint on overall development for the city. This is discussed further in Section 3 of this report.

Table A7.4: Potential Connections between Inner North West Masterplan Impacts and Designated Sites and Features

Designated Site Name	Construction: chemical impacts on water quality	Construction: Sediment release	Operation: Insufficient Wastewater treatment	Rationale	Features subject to likely significant effect
Belfast Lough SPA	•	•	•	Major pollution incident could have conceivable impact on bird habitat although this would be likely to be a short duration event rather than a persistent form of pollution. Too far away from the INW for any perceptible disturbance during construction.	Birds and supporting habitat
Belfast Lough Ramsar	•	•	•	Major pollution incident could have conceivable impact on bird habitat.	Birds and supporting habitat
Belfast Lough Open Water SPA			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate wastewater treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine pSPA			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
North Channel cSAC				The distance to the River Lagan is 1.2km therefore marine mammals will not be affected.	None
Outer Ards SPA			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
Outer Ards Ramsar			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA				No impact as any development will be dependant on water supply not being a limiting factor.	None
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar				No impact as any development will be dependant on water supply not being a limiting factor.	None

Designated Site Name	Construction: chemical impacts on water quality	Construction: Sediment release	Operation: Insufficient Wastewater treatment	Rationale	Features subject to likely significant effect
Strangford Lough SPA			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
Strangford Lough SAC				Too far away for Common Seal as feature of SAC to be impacted.	None
Strangford Lough Ramsar			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis. Too far away for Common Seal as feature of Ramsar to be impacted. Grey Seal from Strangford expected to be few if any but will be considered under The Maidens SAC.	Bird features
Larne Lough SPA			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
Copeland Islands SPA			•	Overall deterioration in water quality due to inadequate waste water treatment could impact on features. Otherwise, given the distance to and extent of open water habitat, any impact on site features or their habitats would be de minimis.	Bird features
The Maidens SAC				The distance to the River Lagan is 1.2km therefore marine mammals will not be affected.	None
Murlough SAC				Too far away for Common Seal as feature of SAC to be impacted.	None
Aughnadarragh Lough SAC				The only pathway would be aerial and industrial use is not planned.	None
Eastern Mourne SAC				No impact as any development will be dependent on water supply not being a limiting factor.	None
Antrim Hills SPA				No impact as any development will be dependent on water supply not being a limiting factor and the INW is also beyond the range of site selection features.	None
Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC				No impact as any development will be dependent on water supply not being a limiting factor and will not have such a demand as to affect water levels at this site.	None

