

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report

26/11/2025



Revision History

Version	Date	Description	Approved
1.0	26/11/2026	First draft for consultation	NM

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) Council ('the Council') as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), must develop, maintain, apply, and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) for its area. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required for any strategy which is likely to have a significant effect upon, but is not directly connected to or necessary to the management of, any Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites include existing or proposed Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Ramsar designated sites. This document represents the Screening Report, which is the first stage of an HRA. Through undertaking a Screening Report, it is possible to determine any potential harmful effects to Natura 2000 sites that could be brought about by implementing the LFRMS and its associated Action Plan. As a result, the outcome of this Screening Report informs whether the LFRMS requires further investigation and progression of the HRA to the second stage.

There are no designated sites within LBTH. However, the assessment has been extended to include any sites that may have an ecological or hydrological link to LBTH. Two designated sites were identified to be close enough to LBTH that they have the potential to be ecologically or hydrologically linked to the Borough. These sites are Lee Valley (SPA and Ramsar) and Epping Forest (SAC).

Following the identification of these designated sites and analysis of the sites' habitats, species and threats, a screening exercise was undertaken whereby each LFRMS strategic objective was individually assessed against each designated site. The purpose of this exercise was to identify any potential harmful effects on the identified designated sites as a result of the LFRMS strategic objectives.

The screening assessment concluded that the implementation of the LFRMS will not likely cause any negative effects on either of the designated sites. Conversely, the implementation of the LFRMS may benefit the sites through providing habitat enhancements, improving air quality, and encouraging protection. As a result, it is not required to progress the LFRMS to the second stage of the HRA process.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym / Abbreviation	Definition
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FWMA	Flood and Water Management Act (2010)
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
LBTH	The London Borough of Tower Hamlets
LFRMS	Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority
RMA	Risk Management Authority
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
The Council	The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Screening

European Natura 2000 sites are a network of locations which have been designated as rare, endangered or vulnerable, and include:

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):** Areas designated under the [European Union's Habitats Directive \(1992\)](#) as providing increased protection to multiple species of animals and plants in addition to habitats as part of global efforts to conserve the world's biodiversity.
- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs):** Areas designated under the [European Wild Birds Directive \(2009\)](#) as having international importance for the conservation of rare and vulnerable bird species found within the European Union.
- **Ramsar Sites:** Wetlands of international importance designated under the [UK Ramsar Convention \(1976\)](#) Ramsar sites may also include riparian zones, such as the banks of a watercourse.

[The Conservation of Habitats and Species \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations \(2019\)](#) requires any plan, programme, or strategy which is likely to have a significant effect upon, but is not directly connected to or necessary to the management of, any Natura 2000 site to undergo a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). A HRA is split into three main stages: the Screening Assessment stage, the Appropriate Assessment stage, and the Derogation Assessment stage. This document will focus on the Screening Assessment stage in relation to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH), determining whether the adoption of the LFRMS will have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site. If the Screening Report concludes that there is likely to be an effect on such a site, then the HRA will progress to the next stages to propose alternative options to reduce the effect as best as possible.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology of an HRA is defined by [guidance](#) produced by the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Natural England, and additional Welsh governing bodies. This guidance outlines a three-stage process, which is detailed in *Table 1-1*.

Table 1-1: Summary of the HRA stages.

HRA Stages	SEA Tasks
Stage 1: Screening Assessment	To check if the plan, programme, or strategy is likely to have significant effect on the site's conservation objectives.
Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment	To assess the likely significant effects of the proposal in more detail and identify ways to avoid or minimise any effects.
Stage 3: Derogation Assessment	To consider if proposals would have an adverse effect on a Designated Site quality for exemption.

1.3 Summary of Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

1.3.1 Introduction to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

LBTH Council ('the Council') is designated as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) by the [Flood and Water Management Act \(2010\) \(FWMA\)](#). All LLFAs have a requirement under the FWMA to develop, maintain, apply, and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS).

A LFRMS is an important tool designed to provide residents, businesses, and developers with a better understanding of flood risk management within LBTH. It discusses the roles and responsibilities of different Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), outlines the different types and historical occurrences of flooding within LBTH, and provides advice for residents and developers. The LFRMS also sets out what the Council has done and intends to do to mitigate local flood risk in the form of seven objectives, each entailing a series of actions.

1.3.2 Strategy Objectives

The seven objectives of the LFRMS are:

- A.** Improve knowledge and understanding of flood risk within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- B.** Reduce the risk of flooding within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets by adequately maintaining highways drainage assets and council-owned flood assets.
- C.** Ensure new developments suitably mitigate against the risk of flooding.
- D.** Reduce the risk of flooding within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets through the delivery of targeted flood alleviation schemes and Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- E.** Respond effectively to flooding emergencies.
- F.** Improve the collaboration between Risk Management Authorities and other key stakeholders, ensuring clarity on roles and responsibilities and improving the coordination of flood risk management.
- G.** Engage with communities to increase awareness of local flood risk and develop resilience to flooding.

These objectives are assessed against the identified SEA objectives as part of the screening analysis in *Section **Error! Reference source not found.***

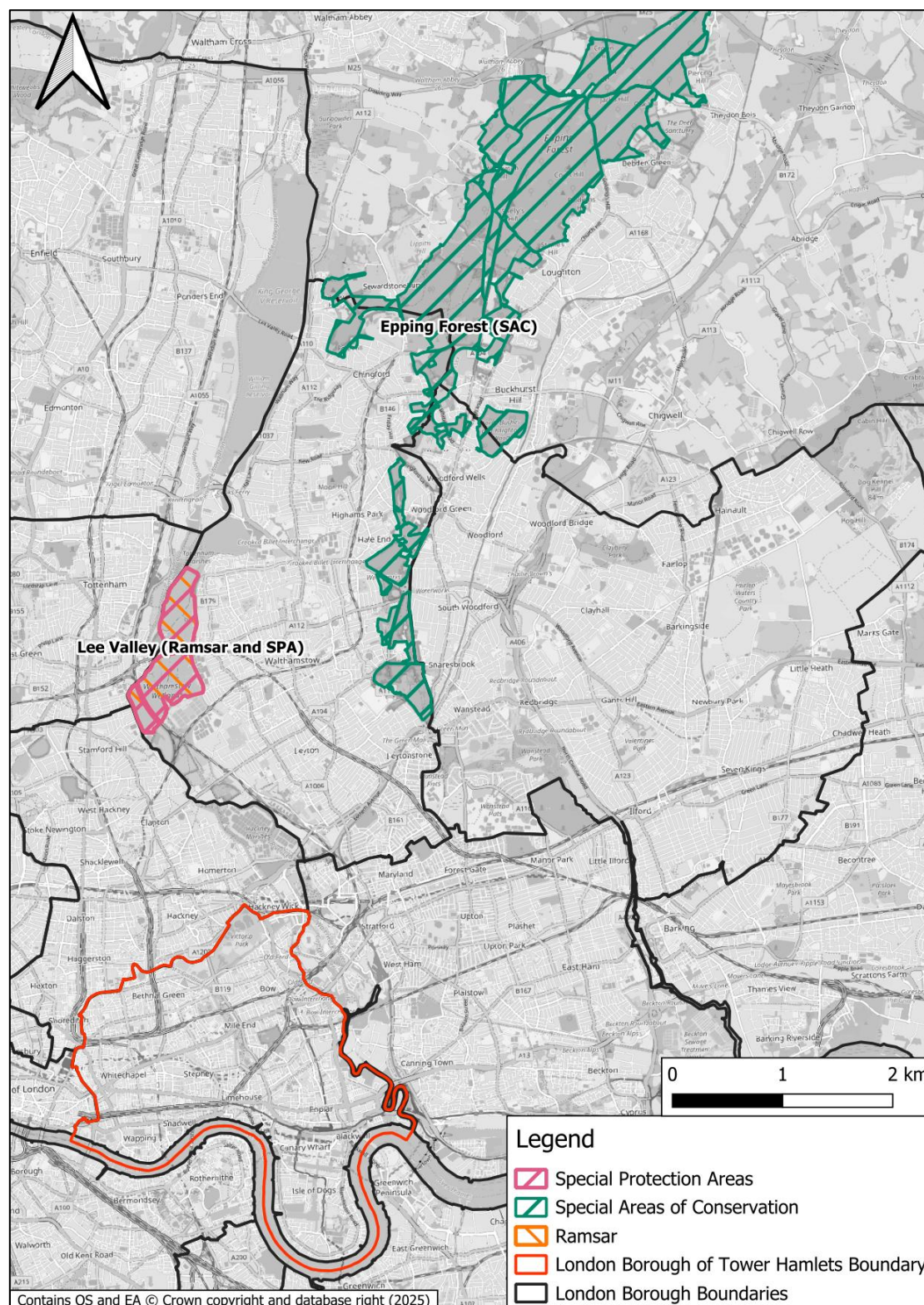
1.4 Consultation Process

This HRA screening report will undergo a consultation process with the statutory consultee, Natural England. Natural England will provide feedback on the consultation questions detailed at the end of each section in this report. The feedback from these questions was reviewed and integrated into an updated version of the report. A public consultation was also undertaken from 28 November 2025 until 23 January 2026, during which members of the public, internal stakeholders, and external stakeholders were able to provide comment on the report. Suggested amendments will then be reviewed and incorporated into a final version of the document.

2. Identification of Relevant Designated Sites

2.1 Introduction to the Designated Sites

The initial step of the HRA process is to identify the designated sites that need to be considered in this assessment. A map of the designated sites is shown in *Figure 2-1*.



Information regarding the sites has been collated from the following sources:

- [Natural England](#)
- [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#)
- [DEFRA's Magic Map database](#)

2.2 Designated Sites Within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets

There are no designated Natura 200 sites within LBTH.

2.3 Designated Sites in Proximity to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets

There are two designated sites close enough to LBTH that they have the potential to be ecologically or hydrologically linked to the Borough and therefore need to be included in this assessment.

2.3.1 Lee Valley Summary

Lee Valley is a park of approximately 450 ha located in the north-east of London, 3.6 km north of LBTH. The park is comprised of water supply reservoirs, sewage treatment lagoons, gravel pits and wetlands. It is designated as a SPA according to the Birds Directive for internationally important numbers of breeding and wintering wildfowl, and it is a Ramsar site for its wetlands. *Table 2-1* presents the key information about Lee Valley, including the qualifying species and habitats as well as the current threats and pressures facing them.

Table 2-1: Lee Valley summary.

Site Name	Lee Valley
Site Designation	Ramsar and SPA
EU Code	UK9012111
Area (ha)	451.29
Qualifying Species and/or Habitat Features	• A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) • A051 Gadwell (<i>Anas strepera</i>) • A021 Bittern (<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>)
General Site Character (% Area)	• Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens (4%) • Other land including Towns, Villages, Roads, Waste places, Mines, Industrial sites (1%) • Inland water bodies (67%) • Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland (8%) • Improved grassland (10%) • Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (10%)
Current Threats	• Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions • Pollution to groundwater (point sources and diffuse sources) • Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities • Biocenotic evolution, succession • Marine and Freshwater Aquaculture
Supplementary Evidence	Lee Valley Standard Data Form Lee Valley Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands Lee Valley Site Improvement Plan

2.3.2 Epping Forest Summary

Epping Forest is an ancient forest 4.1 km north of LBTH which is designated as a SAC, as well as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under the [Wildlife and Countryside Act \(1981\)](#). It covers an area of approximately 1,630 ha and it extends for 19 km north to south and 4 km east to west between Greater London and Essex. *Table 2-2* presents the key information about Epping Forest, including the qualifying species and habitats as well as the current threats and pressures facing them.

Table 2-2: Epping Forest summary.

Site Name	Epping Forest
Site Designation	SAC and SSSI
EU Code	UK0012720
Area (ha)	1630.74
Qualifying Species and/or Habitat Features	• 1083 Stag Beetle (<i>Lucanus cervus</i>) • 1166 Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>) • H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> • H4030 European dry heaths • H9120 Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with <i>Ilex</i> and sometimes also <i>Taxus</i> in the shrub layer
General Site Character (% Area)	• Inland water bodies (6%) • Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens (0.2%) • Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana (3.8%) • Dry grassland, Steppes (20%) • Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (70%)
Current Threats	• Other ecosystem modifications • Grazing • Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities • Air pollution, air-borne pollutants • Changes in biotic conditions
Supplementary Evidence	Epping Forest Standard Data Form Epping Forest Site Improvement Plan

2.4 Identified Relevant Designated Sites Consultation Questions

1. Do you feel we have included all of the most relevant designated sites which may be significantly affected by the implementation of the LFRMS? If not, please state any additional sites which you believe should be included.
2. Do you feel we have included all the relevant information for each of these sites?

3. Screening Analysis

3.1 Screening Analysis Summary

Within the first stage of the HRA (Screening Assessment), the second task is to assess each of the proposed LFRMS strategic objectives against each of the identified designated sites. The purpose of this is to ascertain whether there will be any harmful effects on the designated sites by implementing the LFRMS strategic objectives and associated actions. harmful effect could be a disruption to the natural processes within the site, a reduction in the quality or area of designated habitats and/or species, or a limitation on future restoration of the site. Should any harmful effects be identified, this HRA Screening Report will progress to the second stage and a full HRA will be required.

3.2 Screening Analysis

Table 3-1 summarises the outcomes of the screening analysis. The scoring criteria for this qualitative assessment is listed in *Table 3-2* and *Section 3.3* outlines the justification for these decisions.

Table 3-1: Scoring matrix of LFRMS strategic objectives against the HRA sites.

		HRA Site	
		Lee Valley	Epping Forest
LFRMS Strategic Objectives	A	+	+
	B	+	+
	C	+	+
	D	+	+
	E	0	0
	F	+	+
	G	+	+

Table 3-2: Scoring criteria for Table 3-1.

++	The strategic objective could have a potential significant positive effect on a designated site.
+	The strategic objective could have a potential positive effect on a designated site.
0	The strategic objective will have no effect on a designated site.
-	The strategic objective could have a potential harmful effect on a designated site.
--	The strategic objective could have a potential significant harmful effect on a designated site.
?	Uncertain.

3.3 Screening Analysis Outcomes

3.3.1 LFRMS Strategic Objective A: Improve Knowledge and Understanding of Flood Risk Within the Borough

Strategic Objective A is unlikely to have any negative impact on the identified designated sites as it does not involve the physical implementation of anything that would harm the sites. Instead, improved understanding of flood risk may encourage environmental stewardship within the Borough, aiding in the protection of the sites. Therefore, Strategic Objective A can be screened out at this stage.

3.3.2 LFRMS Strategic Objective B: Reduce the Risk of Flooding Within the Borough by Adequately Maintaining Highways Drainage Assets and Council-Owned Flood Assets

Epping Forest does not share any watercourses with LBTH. The River Lee runs through the Lee Valley southwards and flows along the eastern border of LBTH into the River Thames. The section of the River Lee flowing through the Lee Valley is upstream of LBTH and the River Lee is only tidal up to Lea Bridge Road, downstream of the Lee Valley. Therefore, both sites can be considered hydraulically unconnected to LBTH, so any physical works carried out to the drainage and flood assets within the Borough are unlikely to have any harmful effects to the sites. In addition, opportunities to reduce emissions during routine maintenance of highways drainage assets and council-owned assets will be identified as part of Strategic Objective B, potentially benefitting the designated sites. Therefore, Strategic Objective B can be screened out at this stage.

3.3.3 LFRMS Strategic Objective C: Ensure New Developments Mitigate Against the Risk of Flooding

Strategic Objective C is unlikely to have any negative impact on the identified designated sites as it encourages sustainable development which meets policy requirements on biodiversity and habitat protection. Instead, the identified designated sites may benefit from the more sustainable engineering approaches used, through reduced emissions and enhanced urban habitats and biodiversity. Therefore, Strategic Objective C can be screened out at this stage.

3.3.4 LFRMS Strategic Objective D: Reduce the Risk of Flooding Within the Borough Through the Delivery of Targeted Flood Alleviation Schemes and Sustainable Drainage Systems

Epping Forest does not share any watercourses with LBTH. The River Lee runs through the Lee Valley southwards and flows along the eastern border of LBTH into the River Thames. The section of the River Lee flowing through the Lee Valley is upstream of LBTH and the River Lee is only tidal up to Lea Bridge Road, downstream of the Lee Valley. Therefore, both sites can be considered hydraulically unconnected to LBTH, so any physical drainage works implemented within the Borough are unlikely to have any harmful effects to the sites. Instead, flood alleviation schemes and sustainable drainage systems provide opportunities to enhance the urban habitat and improve air quality, which may benefit the designated sites. Therefore, Strategic Objective D can be screened out at this stage.

3.3.5 LFRMS Strategic Objective E: Respond Effectively to Flooding Emergencies

Strategic Objective E is unlikely to have any negative impact on the identified designated sites as it does not involve the physical implementation of anything that would harm the sites. Therefore, Strategic Objective E can be screened out at this stage.

3.3.6 LFRMS Strategic Objective F: Improve the Collaboration Between Risk Management Authorities and Other Key Partners, Ensuring Clarity on Roles and Responsibilities and Improving the Coordination of Flood Risk Management

Strategic Objective F is unlikely to have any negative impact on any of the identified designated sites as it does not involve the physical implementation of anything that would harm the sites. Instead, partnership working among NE, the Council, and other RMAs can offer collaborative opportunities to actively protect the designated sites. Therefore, Strategic Objective F can be screened out at this stage.

3.3.7 LFRMS Strategic Objective G: Engage with Communities to Increase Awareness of Local Flood Risk and Develop Resilience to Flooding

Strategic Objective G is unlikely to have any negative impact on the identified designated sites as it does not involve the physical implementation of anything that would harm the sites. Instead, improved community awareness of the importance of green spaces for reducing surface water runoff while enhancing biodiversity may benefit conservation efforts within the designated sites. Therefore, Strategic Objective G can be screened out at this stage.

3.4 Screening Analysis Consultation Questions

3. Do you have any comments on the method for the assessment of the HRA sites against the LFRMS strategic objectives?
4. Do you agree with the screening analysis for each of the objectives? If not, please give reasons as to why you would screen a certain objective differently.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

This HRA Screening Report indicates that the proposed LFRMS strategic objectives are not likely to cause any harmful effects on identified designated sites. Instead, several of the strategic objectives are likely to provide benefits to these sites, through providing habitat enhancements, improving air quality, and encouraging protection. Therefore, it can be concluded that the LFRMS does not need to progress into any further HRA stages, and a full HRA is not required.

When the LFRMS is reviewed, which is proposed to be on an annual basis internally and every six years publicly, a further HRA review will be undertaken. If there are any potential harmful impacts to the designated sites that could be caused through the updated LFRMS, then a future HRA will introduce alternative actions which would aim to mitigate any such issues from occurring.

5.2 Final Consultation Questions

5. Do you have any comments on the conclusions that we have made in this HRA Screening Report of the LFRMS?
6. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for this HRA Screening Report?