

The Sheffield Plan: Our City, Our Future

Habitats Regulations Assessment of Citywide Options for Growth to 2034

November 2015

Introduction and Methodology

- 1.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is the assessment of the potential impacts of implementing a plan or policy on a European Site. HRA is required under the European Directive 92/43/EEC on the 'conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora' for plans that may have an impact on European Sites.
- 1.2 European Sites are those of exceptional importance for rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. They include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). SPAs are designated under the European Council Directive 79/409/EEC 'on the conservation of wild birds', for the protection of wild birds and their habitats. SACs are designated under the Habitats Directive and cover particular habitats and/or species identified as being of European importance. Although not European sites in legislation, Ramsar sites should also be considered as part of the HRA process.
- 1.3 The purpose of HRA is to consider the impacts of a plan or policy against the conservation objectives of the site and to ascertain whether the proposal, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would adversely affect the integrity of the site. Where significant negative effects are identified, alternative options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of Competent Authorities to undertake HRA. Sheffield City Council is a Competent Authority, and has carried out this HRA alongside the production of the Sheffield Plan [Citywide Options for Growth to 2034](#) document. This is the first document to be consulted on as part of Sheffield's new Plan. It sets out the challenges that we need to plan for, such as accommodating housing and employment growth, and options for how to address these. The HRA must assess the potential impact of all the options presented in the document.
- 1.5 There are four stages involved in an HRA:

Stage 1: Screening

The first stage of the HRA is the Screening process, and this involves screening the Plan for likely significant effect. The following key steps are required:

- Identify international sites in and around the Plan area in search area/ buffer zone agreed with the Statutory Body – Natural England
- Examine conservation objectives of the interest feature(s) (where available)
- Review proposed Local Plan policies and site allocations, and consider potential effects on European sites (magnitude, duration, location, extent)
- Examine other plans and programmes that could contribute to 'in combination' effects
- Produce Screening Assessment
- *If no effects likely – report no significant effect*
- *If effects are judged likely or uncertainty exists – the precautionary principle applies **proceed to Stage 2***



Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

If the Plan, either alone or in conjunction with other policies or projects, is likely to have an impact on European sites, an Appropriate Assessment is required. This involves the following key steps:

- Complete additional scoping work including the collation of further information on sites as necessary to evaluate impact in light of conservation objectives
- Agree scope and method of AA with Natural England
- Consider how plan 'in combination' with other plans and programmes will interact when implemented (the Appropriate Assessment)
- Consider how effect on integrity of site could be avoided by changes to plan and the consideration of alternatives
- Develop mitigation measures (including timescale and mechanisms)
- Report outcomes of AA including mitigation measures, consult with Natural England and wider [public] stakeholders as necessary
- If plan will not significantly affect European site proceed without further reference to Habitats Regulations
- *If effects or uncertainty remain following the consideration of alternatives and development of mitigations proceed to **Stage 3***



Stage 3: Assessment of Alternatives

If a policy or site allocation would affect a European site, or if the impact is unclear, then an Assessment of Alternatives is required. This involves:

- Consider alternative solutions / conditions / restrictions that would ensure the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of the site
- *If none of the above are possible, proceed to **Stage 4***



Stage 4: Assessment of 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest' (IROPI)

Stage 4 involves considering whether there are overriding reasons to allow a proposal to go ahead where it might impact upon a European site, and involves the following:

- Identify 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest' (IROPI)
 - economic, social, environmental, human health, public safety
- Develop and secure compensatory measures

Stage 1: Screening

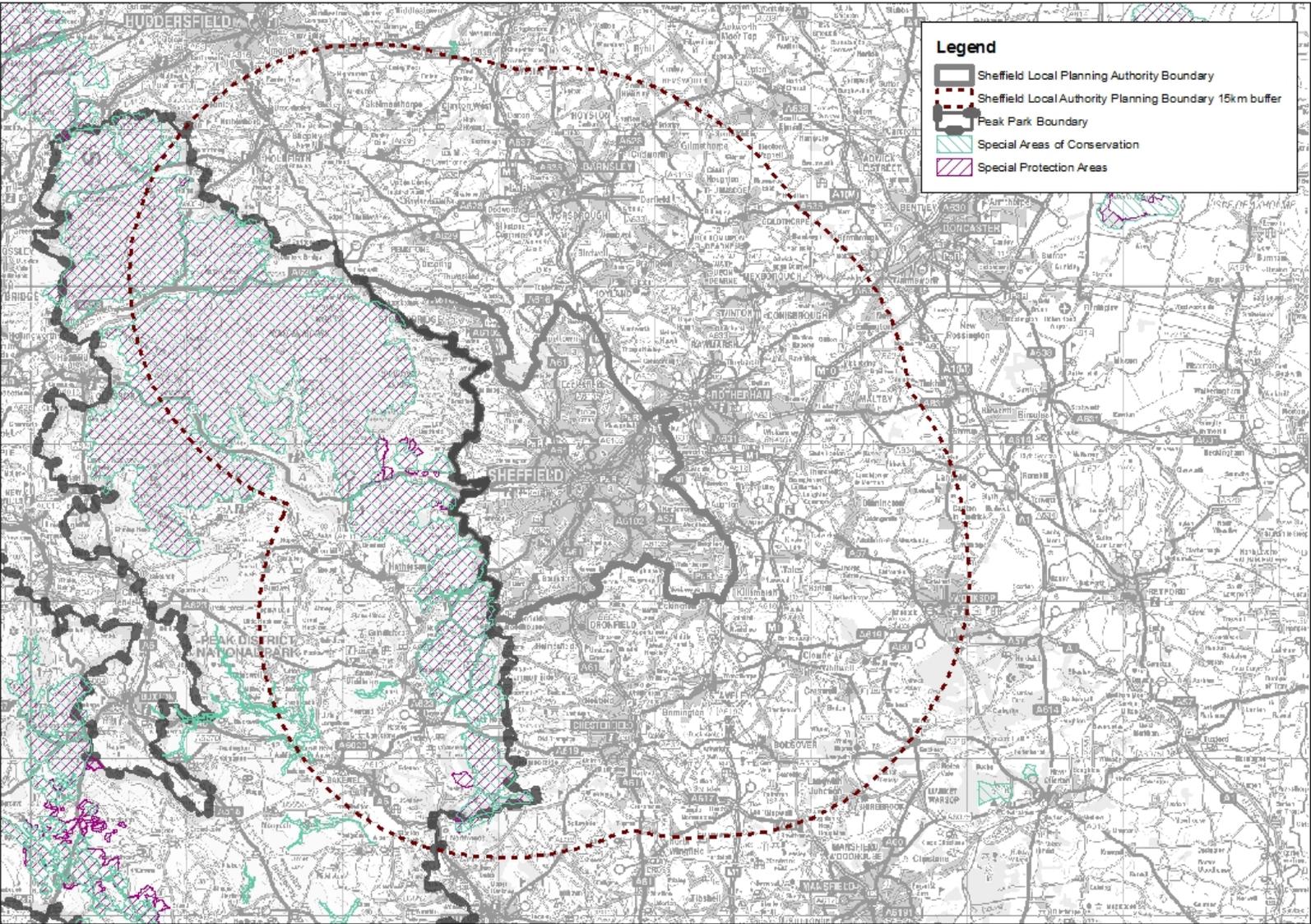
Task 1: Identification and Characterisation of European Sites

The first task in the Screening stage was to identify the European sites within and around the Plan area in a search area agreed with Natural England. For the purposes of the Local Plan HRA Screening, the Local Planning Authority boundary plus a buffer zone of 15km was agreed as the search area with Natural England.

Information about the natural environment from various Government sources is available on the ['Magic' website](#), which is administered by Natural England. The website comprises an interactive mapping tool which can display a range of data about the natural environment, including the locations and extents of European sites. This was used to identify any European sites within the search area.

Map 1 shows the locations of the SAC and SPA parcels within the search area.

Map 1: Locations of the SAC and SPA parcels within 15km of Sheffield's LPA boundary



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There are no European sites within Sheffield's Local Planning Authority boundary, although there are two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and one Special Protection Area (SPA) to the west of the city within the buffer zone. There are no Ramsar sites within the search area. Table 1 identifies the sites within the search area.

Table 1: Sites within the search area

Sites within the LPA boundary	Sites outside the LPA boundary but within 15km
None	SAC: South Pennine Moors
	SAC: Peak District Dales
	SPA: Peak District Moors (Pennine Moors Phase 1)

Table 2 provides information about the characterisation of the three sites identified above, including general site character, qualifying interests and importance, vulnerabilities, and conservation objectives.

Table 2: Characterisation of Sites

Characterisation of Sites			
	South Pennine Moors SAC	Peak District Dales SAC	Peak District Moors (Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA
General site character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water) (1%) - Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens (42.7%) - Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana (45.5%) - Dry grassland, Steppes (4.8%) - Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland (4.8%) - Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1%) - Mixed woodland (0.1%) - Non-forest areas cultivated with woody plants (including Orchards, groves, Vineyards, Dehesas) (0.1%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water) (0.3%) - Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens (0.1%) - Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana (4%) - Dry grassland, Steppes (43.7%) - Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland (13%) - Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (37.1%) - Inland rocks, Scree, Sands, Permanent Snow and ice (1.8%) 	<p>Includes the major moorland blocks of the South Pennines from Ilkley in the north to Leek and Matlock in the south.</p> <p>Covers extensive tracts of semi-natural moorland habitats including upland heath and blanket mire.</p>
Qualifying interests and importance	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>	European dry heaths - for which the area is considered to support a	This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting

	<p>- for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>European dry heaths - for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Blanket bogs - for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Transition mires and quaking bogs - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles - for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p>	<p>significant presence.</p> <p>Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) - for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Alkaline fens - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (<i>Thlaspietea rotundifolii</i>) - which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares. - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation - which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares. - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p><i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, screes and ravines - for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p>	<p>populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <p>During the breeding season: Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>, 752 pairs representing at least 3.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at 1990)</p> <p>Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>, 77 pairs representing at least 5.9% of the breeding population in Great Britain</p> <p>Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>, 16 pairs representing at least 1.4% of the breeding population in Great Britain</p> <p>Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>, 25 pairs representing at least 2.5% of the breeding population in Great Britain</p> <p>This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <p>During the breeding season: Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>, 140 pairs representing at least 1.3% of the breeding Baltic/UK/Ireland population</p>
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		<p><i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> - for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p><i>Lampetra planeri</i> - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p><i>Cottus gobio</i> - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	
<p>Vulnerabilities (Informed by South Pennine Moors Site Improvement Plan (SIP))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public access / disturbance - Management issues: forestry and woodland; vehicles - Accidental fires / arson - Overgrazing / undergrazing - Managed rotational burning - Hydrological changes / inappropriate drainage through moor gripping - Low breeding success/poor recruitment of Merlin, Peregrine and Short-eared Owl - Air pollution - Changes in species distributions - Disease - Invasive species - Planning permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public access / disturbance - Managed rotational burning - Accidental fires / arson - Hydrological changes - Management issues: forestry and woodland; vehicles; grazing - Low breeding success/poor recruitment of Merlin, Peregrine and Short-eared Owl - Changes in species distributions - Proposed developments have the potential to interfere with drainage patterns - Impact of dust from quarrying - Existing permissions for limestone or mineral extraction threaten woodland on part of the site - Dominance of non-native woodland species in some woodland areas - Fishery management can impact on freshwater features - Shooting management can impact on woodland ecology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public access / disturbance - Accidental fires / arson - Hydrological changes - Management issues: forestry and woodland; vehicles; grazing - Low breeding success/poor recruitment of Merlin, Peregrine and Short-eared Owl - Air pollution - Changes in species distributions - Disease - Invasive species - Planning permission
<p>Conservation objectives</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The extent and distribution of the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The extent and distribution of the qualifying natural habitats - The structure and function (including typical species) of the qualifying natural habitats, and, - The supporting processes on which the qualifying natural habitats rely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species - The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats - The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species - The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely - The populations of qualifying species, and, - The distribution of qualifying species within the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> habitats of the qualifying features - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely - The population of each of the qualifying features, and, - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
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Task 2: Review and screening of Citywide Options for Growth to identify potential impacts and likely effects on European Sites

This section of the screening process reviews the proposed policies and site allocations within the Sheffield Plan Options for Growth document, and identifies any potential impacts and likely significant effects on European sites.

Citywide Options for Growth to 2034

There are five Citywide Options for Growth for housing which are being consulted on. They are as follows:

Option A: Urban Capacity

This option involves continuing with the current strategy of concentrating new development on brownfield sites within the existing urban areas. Greenfield development would be limited to sites already allocated in the current Plan or proposed by the Council in 2013 in the Pre-submission Draft City Policies and Sites document.

Option B: Urban Intensification

This option involves making more intensive use of land within the existing urban areas through a combination of building at higher densities, building more housing (and taller buildings) in the City Centre and developing surplus open space. It has much in common with Option A but would also involve some changes to current policies.

Option C: Urban Remodelling

This option is similar to Options A and B but would involve major remodelling of certain parts of the existing urban area; creating new neighbourhoods.

Option D: Limited number of Larger Urban Extensions into Green Belt

This option involves a limited number of larger urban extensions into the Green Belt.

Option E: Multiple Smaller Green Belt Releases

This option involves making multiple small deletions of land from the Green Belt to accommodate new housing.

Each Option has various sub-options, as shown in Table 3. For further information about each Option and sub-option, please see the [Citywide Options for Growth to 2034](#), Chapter 5.

There are also a number of Options for accommodating employment growth, however due to the nature and locations of these, they would not impact upon the European sites.

The potential impact of the Citywide Options on European Sites can be difficult to determine. Natural England has provided the following advice in relation to assessing these options:

'You should consider whether a policy is likely to contribute to any existing threats or create new ones and therefore hinder the achievement of these objectives. This is easier for more site specific policies/allocations as there is greater detail and certainty of effects.

When looking at strategic policies (notably development targets and distribution) uncertainty can be accepted provided it is proven that the delivery of the policy (through allocations) can be achieved without likely significant effects.

Difficulties arise where the effect is indirect and it does not matter where in the settlement/area the allocations are located as they would still have an effect on a site. For example:

- where water abstraction to serve new residents in a town reduces water levels in a river
- where new residents in an area increase road traffic and increase emissions of nitrogen
- where waste water goes to the same treatment works and the increase in phosphates into a river would significantly affect it;

or

- where new residents within an area increase recreational pressure on the European site.

In these cases the effect of the strategic policy should be examined otherwise subsequent policies may not be deliverable. It is important to consider these strategic issues early before they become set in stone as the conclusions of the HRA cannot be outweighed by other plan objectives.'

Table 3: Potential impact of Citywide Options

<p>Likely to impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The option steers future development adjacent to or within 1km of a European site - The option proposes an amount or type of development that regardless of where it is located could impact a European site 	<p style="text-align: center;">South Pennine Moors SAC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Peak District Dales SAC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Peak District Moors (Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA</p>
<p>Uncertain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The option makes provision for a type or scale of development, the location of which will be determined by a detailed policy or site allocation 			
<p>Unlikely to impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The option helps steer development away from sensitive sites as it promotes development in other areas - The option only relates to small amounts of development which are unlikely to affect sensitive sites 			
<p>Option A: Urban Capacity</p>			
<p>(a) Land already identified in the</p>	<p>Sites would be within the urban area</p>	<p>Sites would be within the urban area</p>	<p>Sites would be within the urban area</p>

SHLAA (excluding City Centre, Kelham and areas undergoing urban remodelling)	and therefore sufficiently far away from the SAC	and therefore sufficiently far away from the SAC	and therefore sufficiently far away from the SPA
(b) Allowance for windfalls on small sites	Small housing developments in the urban area are unlikely to impact	Small housing developments in the urban area are unlikely to impact	Small housing developments in the urban area are unlikely to impact
(c) Allowance for windfalls on larger sites (excluding City Centre, Kelham and areas undergoing urban remodelling)	Sites would be within the urban area and therefore sufficiently far away from the SAC	Sites would be within the urban area and therefore sufficiently far away from the SAC	Sites would be within the urban area and therefore sufficiently far away from sensitive sites
Option B: Urban Intensification			
(a) Increasing density of sites already identified in the SHLAA (excluding City Centre, Kelham and areas undergoing urban remodelling)	Sites would be within the urban area and therefore sufficiently far away from the SAC	Sites would be within the urban area and therefore sufficiently far away from the SAC	Sites would be within the urban area and therefore sufficiently far away from the SPA
(b) Increase capacity of the City Centre and Kelham	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SPA
(c) Develop 1% of urban open space (in areas with surplus provision)	Development unlikely to be of a scale which would impact on the SAC	Development unlikely to be of a scale which would impact on the SAC	Development unlikely to be of a scale which would impact on the SPA
Option C: Urban Remodelling			
(a) Neepsend/Shalesmoor	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SPA
(b) Attercliffe	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SPA
Option D: Limited number of Larger Urban Extensions into Green Belt			
(a) Stocksbridge and Upper Don Valley	Depending on the location of future site allocations and scale of development, this sub-option could impact on the SAC. Any negative	Depending on the location of future site allocations and scale of development, this sub-option could impact on the SAC. Any negative	Depending on the location of future site allocations and scale of development, this sub-option could impact on the SPA. Any negative

	impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.	impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.	impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.
(b) East Sheffield (as an extension to the Waverley in Rotherham Borough)	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SPA
(c) South East Sheffield	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SPA
(d) East of Norton (Sheffield District only)	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SAC	Development would be sufficiently far away from the SPA
Option E: Multiple Smaller Green Belt Releases			
(a) Small urban extensions in to Green Belt	Depending on the location of future site allocations, this sub-option could impact on the SAC. Any negative impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.	Depending on the location of future site allocations, this sub-option could impact on the SAC. Any negative impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.	Depending on the location of future site allocations, this sub-option could impact on the SPA. Any negative impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.
(b) Redevelopment of existing previously developed sites in the Green Belt	Depending on the location of future site allocations and scale of development, this sub-option could impact on the SAC. Any negative impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.	Depending on the location of future site allocations and scale of development, this sub-option could impact on the SAC. Any negative impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.	Depending on the location of future site allocations and scale of development, this sub-option could impact on the SPA. Any negative impacts should be sufficiently mitigated by relevant policies within the Plan.

Task 3: Consideration of other plans and programmes that may act ‘in-combination’

Due to the locations of the three European sites within the search area, the plans and programmes of both the Peak District National Park and Barnsley MBC need to be considered as part of the HRA process, along with the plans of other bodies such as Yorkshire Water. At the Citywide Options for Growth stage, it is difficult to accurately assess the ‘in-combination’ impact of other plans and programmes due to the lack of locational detail with regard to potential future development. However, it is likely that any impacts would mainly relate to air quality. The ‘in-combination’ effects will be assessed as part of the next stage of the plan-making process, when the Council considers potential site allocations. The following plans and programmes have been identified as being

relevant for the future assessment of 'in-combination' impacts, although this list may not be exhaustive and will need checking and updating as necessary at the time of the assessment:

Peak District National Park:

- Core Strategy (2011)

Barnsley MBC:

- Core Strategy (2011)

Water Resources Management Plans:

- Yorkshire Water (2010- 2035)

Task 4: Screening Assessment, recording the opinion and the supporting information and analysis

Table 3 shows that the majority of housing growth sub-options are unlikely to impact upon the three European sites within the scope of this assessment. However, there are three sub-options where the potential impact is uncertain. They are:

- Option D (a) Stocksbridge and Upper Don Valley
- Option E (a) Small urban extensions into Green Belt
- Option E (b) Redevelopment of existing previously developed sites in the Green Belt

It is not possible to assess the potential impact of these sub-options at this stage, because it is dependent upon the location and scale of specific site allocations. A review of Sheffield's Green Belt is ongoing, and any sites which are proposed as a result of this will have been through a rigorous assessment procedure. Our provisional view is that the majority of Sheffield's Green Belt is too environmentally sensitive to be suitable for development. Therefore the impact on European sites from any future Green Belt development is likely to be limited.

In addition, relevant policies in the Sheffield Plan, including those covering ecology and biodiversity; air quality; and water resources, would be likely to mitigate any negative impacts arising from potential development either in the Green Belt or within the urban area which could otherwise have impacted upon the European sites.

The Council will be assessing potential site allocations prior to public consultation later in 2016, and HRA will be undertaken for potential sites in order to support the site selection process.