

**SUBJECT**  
Ribble Valley Borough Council Local Plan - Habitats  
Regulations Assessment Screening Report Summary

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**DEPARTMENT**  
Environmental Planning

**TO**  
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**OUR REF**

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## Introduction

This technical note provides a summary of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening of Ribble Valley Borough Council's (RVBC) emerging Housing and Economic Development (HED) Development Plan Document (DPD). The HED DPD forms part of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) 2008-2028 which sets out site based policies, including specific site allocations for housing and employment.

Screening is the first stage in the HRA process. The Screening exercise identifies whether or not the Ribble Valley HED DPD is likely to result in likely significant effects upon one or more European/Ramsar sites (either in isolation and/or in combination with other plans or projects), and consequently whether or not an Appropriate Assessment (AA) will be required.

## Screening

There are two European sites within the boundary of the borough (Bowland Fells SPA and North Pennine Dales and Meadows SAC), and a further 12 European/Ramsar sites within 20km of the borough boundary.

A high-level initial screening exercise of the Ribble Valley HED DPD identified that a number of European/Ramsar sites could be screened out completely from further assessment. This was on the basis of no identifiable impact pathway linking the allocation sites with the European/Ramsar sites. The European/Ramsar sites taken through to the detailed screening process comprised: Bowland Fells SPA, North Pennine Dales and Meadows SAC, Morecombe Bay SPA/Ramsar site and the Ribble and Alt Estuary SPA/Ramsar site.

The potential impact types identified for consideration in the detailed screening included the following:

1. Direct habitat loss within European/Ramsar site.
2. Direct loss of habitat within Ribble Valley that is functionally linked to a European/Ramsar site.
3. Disturbance/displacement of species as a result of construction activities/ operational stage.
4. Disturbance of species and habitats through increased recreational pressure as a result of population growth within Ribble Valley.
5. Habitat degradation as a result of increased air pollution.
6. Changes in water quality where sites are hydrologically linked to European/Ramsar sites.

The Ribble Valley HED DPD comprises 14 committed employment sites, 44 committed housing sites, and five additional preferred options sites. The five preferred options sites comprised two housing sites (WILPSHIRE3 and MELLOR1), and three employment sites (EMPLOYMENT SITE 1 (Land at Sykes Holt), EMPLOYMENT SITE 4 (TIME technology park), and EMPLOYMENT SITE 10 (Land at Higher College Farm)).

All 58 committed housing and employment allocation sites, as well as the five preferred options sites, were screened in detail to determine the need for further Appropriate Assessment (AA).

Following a review of the potential impacts against each of the allocation and the preferred options sites, it is concluded that none of the allocation, or the preferred options sites would give rise to likely significant effects on the European/Ramsar sites considered within the assessment alone.

The detailed screening exercise also considered potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects within the local area. To be relevant to the in-combination assessment, the residual effects of other plans or projects will need to either make the unlikely effects of the Ribble Valley HED DPD likely, or insignificant effects of the plan significant, or both. The screening exercise has identified that there are no potential likely significant effects on European/Ramsar sites, which could be made 'likely' when considering other plans and project within the wider area.

### **Conclusion**

The HRA Screening of the Ribble Valley HED DPD concludes that implementation of the Ribble Valley HED DPD would not give rise to likely significant effects on the European/Ramsar sites considered within the screening assessment, alone or in combination with other plans and projects. Therefore, no further Appropriate Assessment of the Ribble Valley HED DPD will be required.

Natural England will be consulted on the final version of the HRA Screening Report to confirm if they are in agreement, or otherwise, with this conclusion.