

# South Brooks Solar Farm Preliminary Environmental Information

Volume 2: Environmental Summary

Chapter 18: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

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## 18 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

### 18.1 The HRA Process

18.1.1 As set out in the EIA scoping report for the Project, a HRA is required where:

- A plan or project has the potential to significantly affect a site designated for its nature conservation importance, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), as well as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (National Site Network Sites (NSNS)<sup>144</sup>).

18.1.2 Due to the proximity of the Project to European Designated Sites – Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas for Conservation (SAC) – a shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be prepared and submitted, which is a systematic process for assessing whether a plan or project will have a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on a European Designated Site. The HRA informs and allows the competent authority (in this case the Secretary of State) to consider how the Project interacts with the designated features of European Sites nearby.

18.1.3 There are three recognised stages to the HRA process, as set out in

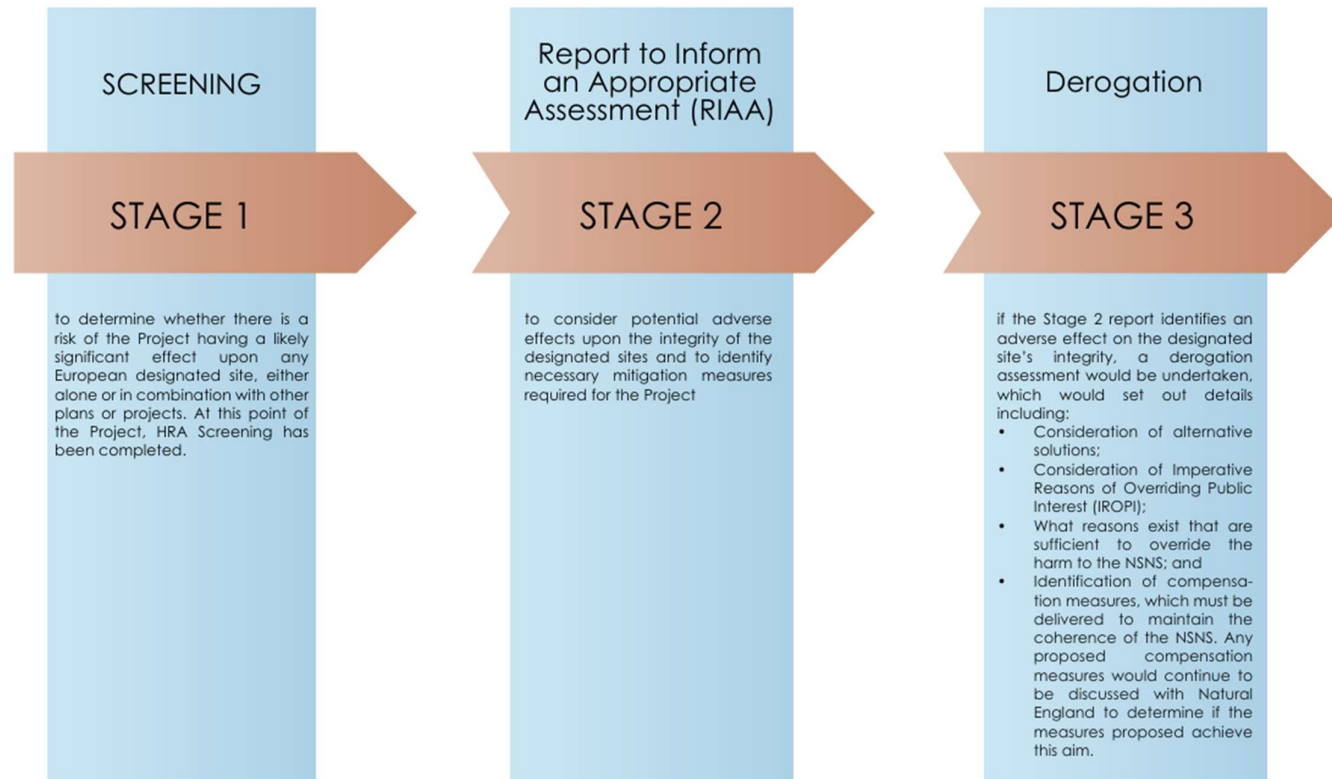
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<sup>144</sup> His Majesty's Office (HMSO) (2019) The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Available at:  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573>

18.1.4 **Figure 18-1: HRA Process** below:

Figure 18-1: HRA Process

HRA Process



## 18.2 South Brooks Solar Farm HRA Progress

18.2.1 At this stage of the Project, HRA Stage 1 Screening has been completed, with the RIAA currently being drafted as part of the Stage 2 process. Natural England, the Environment Agency and Kent Wildlife Trust have been consulted so far as part of the HRA process. Table 18-1 below summarises the consultation that has taken place to date with regard to the HRA.

**Table 18-1: Summary of HRA consultation**

Relevant Bodies Consulted	Details	Next Steps
Natural England	The HRA screening report was sent to Natural England on 19 <sup>th</sup> December 2025. Comments on the HRA screening report were subsequently received on 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2026. Comments principally focussed on ensuring all aspects were covered as part of the scope, additional commentary on permanent and temporary losses, as well as the approach to cabling during decommissioning of the Project. A meeting took place on the 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 to discuss changes to the HRA screening report. An updated final document was sent to Natural England on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026. Further discussions have taken place with Natural England	Following the finalisation of HRA Stage 1, Natural England will continue to be consulted upon with specific regard to the ongoing approach to RIAA, as part of monthly meetings.
Environment Agency	The HRA screening report was sent to the Environment Agency for comment on 19 <sup>th</sup>	Going forward, the Environment Agency will be consulted upon the next stages of the HRA,

Relevant Bodies Consulted	Details	Next Steps
	December 2025. No specific feedback has been provided to date.	and are being continually engaged with as part of the DAS process
Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)	KWT, following agreement from Natural England, have received a copy of the HRA screening report for information on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026. No specific feedback has been provided to date.	Going forward, KWT will be consulted upon the next stages of the HRA, and will continue to be engaged with as the Project develops, particularly with regard to proposed mitigation measures and ecological survey data
RSPB	The RSPB, following agreement from Natural England, have received a copy of the HRA screening report for information on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026. No specific feedback has been provided to date.	Going forward, the RSPB will be consulted upon the next stages of the HRA, and will continue to be engaged with as the Project develops, particularly with regard to proposed mitigation measures and conservation objectives at RSPB Dungeness.

18.2.2 A HRA Screening Assessment (Stage 1) has been produced following government guidance<sup>145</sup> to consider potential likely significant effects (LSE) upon European Designated Sites within the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the Project.

18.2.3 European Designated Sites identified within the Zol of the Project include:

- Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Special Protection Area (SPA);
- Dungeness Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and
- Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar.

18.2.4 The Screening Assessment was distributed to Natural England, Environment Agency, KWT and the RSPB for technical review and comment. Following

<sup>145</sup> Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (2023) Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site#screening>

comments received from Natural England, the Screening Assessment was updated with points for clarification, for which LSE will be assessed during Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2). No comments were received from the Environment Agency to date.

### **18.3 HRA Next Steps**

- 18.3.1 As set out above, the next stage of the HRA is to develop the RIAA based upon the agreed HRA Phase 1 screening. The RIAA will provide a more in-depth assessment of whether there will be any effects upon the integrity of designated sites in proximity to the Project. In coordination with the work taking place as part of the EIA, specific mitigation measures will be outlined as part of Stage 2. The completion of the RIAA and subsequent delivery to Natural England and other relevant consultees will be at a similar time to Phase Two Consultation. The outcome of this stage will be presented as part of the ES.



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