

TRANSPORTEAST

Jacobs

Transport East Transport Strategy

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Transport Strategy

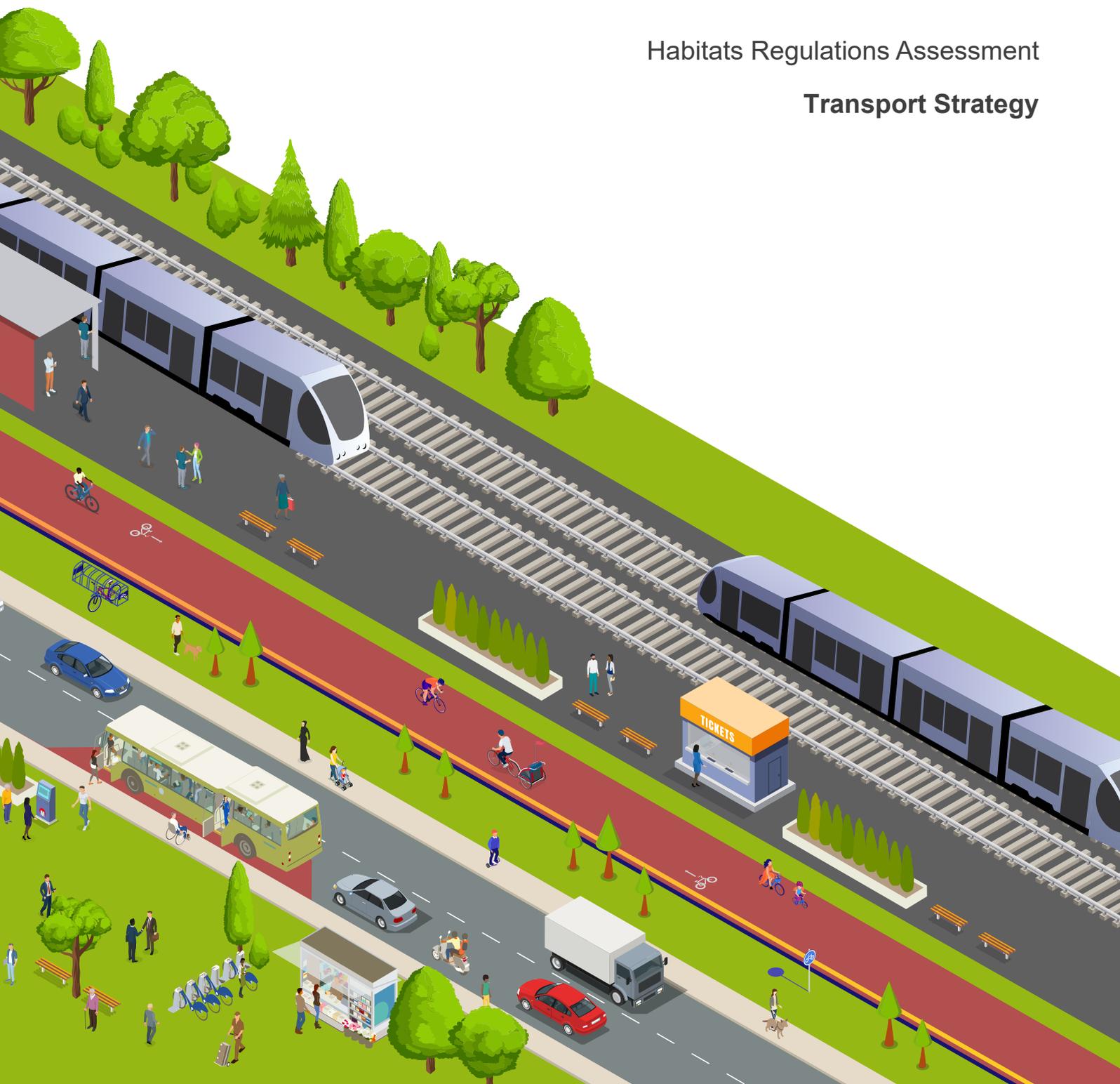


Table of Contents

<u>1</u>	<u>Introduction and Background</u>	<u>2</u>
1.1	Transport East and the Transport East Region.....	2
1.2	Transport East Strategy.....	4
1.3	Strategic Investment Programme	4
1.4	Previous Habitats Regulations Assessment	4
1.5	Purpose of the Report	5
<u>2</u>	<u>Habitats Regulations Assessment.....</u>	<u>6</u>
2.1	Legislative Context.....	6
2.2	Habitats Regulations Assessment Process	6
2.3	Habitats Regulations Assessment of Plans	7
<u>3</u>	<u>Methodology.....</u>	<u>9</u>
3.1	Determine if HRA is required for the plan	9
3.2	Identification of European sites.....	9
3.3	Conservation Objectives.....	10
3.4	Stage One: Screening for Likely Significant Effects	10
3.5	Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment.....	12
3.6	In-Combination Assessments for Screening and Appropriate Assessment.....	12
<u>4</u>	<u>Stage One – Updated Screening on Transport Strategy</u>	<u>14</u>
4.1	Determining if HRA is required	14
4.2	Identification of European sites and Conservation Objectives.....	14
4.3	Transport Strategy.....	14
4.4	In-Combination Assessment.....	14
4.5	Summary of Screening	15
<u>5</u>	<u>Conclusions</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>References.....</u>	<u>17</u>

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Four stages in the HRA process.....	7
Table 3.1: Screening Categories (adapted from Tyldesley and Chapman ¹)	11

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The Transport East Region (red outline) and nature conservation sites of European importance.....	3
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1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Transport East and the Transport East Region

Transport East is the sub-national transport body for the East of England comprising public and private sector partners to act a single voice for the future of transport in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. It is developing its first Transport Strategy which aims to identify the transport investment required to achieve the region's ambitious and inclusive economic, social and environmental goals for 2050.

The Transport East region has a diverse economic base, with key strengths in distribution, manufacturing, information and communications technology, agricultural technology, biosciences, green energy production, financial services and tourism. The region aspires for a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and will capitalise on the aforementioned strengths to deliver new jobs and bring significant benefits to the local and national economy.

The Transport East region hosts ports that are critical to the economy and trade of the United Kingdom, London Stanstead Airport and some of the largest wind farms in the UK. Outside of the urban areas, sustainable transport options are limited, presenting a key challenge for the Transport Strategy.

The region encompasses over 5,000 square miles including several urban areas (e.g., Norwich, Ipswich, Chelmsford), numerous smaller villages and sparsely populated coastal areas. Outside of the urban areas, the region supports habitats including ancient woodland, lowland grasslands, lowland heathland and fens. Numerous major rivers flow through the region including the River Thames at its southern border, the River Crouch, River Blackwater, River Store, River Great Ouse and River Wensum. The region also hosts numerous sites of local, UK and European importance (the latter

displayed in Figure 1).

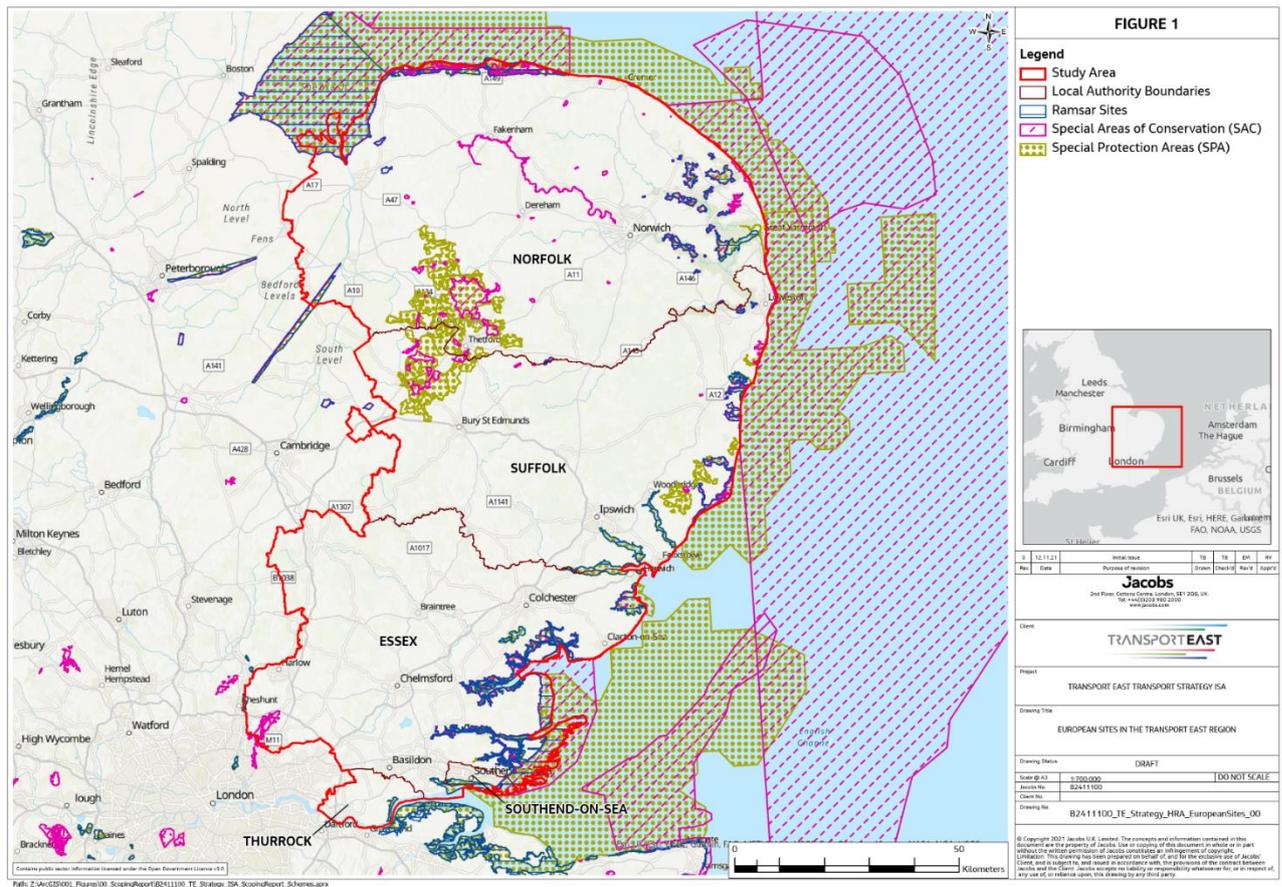


Figure 1.1: The Transport East Region (red outline) and nature conservation sites of European importance

1.2 Transport East Strategy

The Transport East region is anticipated to experience significant growth over the next 15 years and is in need of improved regional transport to support this growth and enhance social and economic opportunities in the region. To accomplish this aim, Transport East has developed a Transport Strategy for the region. The Transport Strategy sets out measures to deliver a high-quality, sustainable transport network for the Transport East region that is resilient to the demands for future growth in the region.

Transport East has identified the following overall vision for its Transport Strategy:

A thriving economy for the East, with fast, safe, reliable, and resilient transport infrastructure driving forward a future of inclusive and sustainable growth for decades to come.

To deliver this vision, Transport East has identified four strategic priorities for transport:

- **Decarbonisation to net-zero** – working to achieve net-zero carbon emissions from transport by 2040, building on our status as the UK’s premier renewable energy region;
- **Connecting growing towns and cities** – enhanced links between our fastest growing places and business clusters. Improving access for people to jobs, supplies, services, and learning; enabling the area to function as a coherent economy and improving productivity;
- **Energising coastal and rural communities** – a reinvented sustainable coast for the 21st century which powers the UK through energy generation. Supporting our productive rural communities and attracting visitors all year round; and
- **Unlocking international gateways** – better connected ports and airports to help UK businesses thrive, boosting the nation’s economy and helping to level up communities through better access to international markets and facilitating foreign direct investment.

The Transport Strategy was published in draft form in November 2021 and public consultation on the draft strategy concluded on 30 January 2022. The Transport Strategy has now been finalised, and it will be monitored regularly and updated as appropriate.

1.3 Strategic Investment Programme

Accompanying the draft Transport Strategy is a Strategic Investment Programme (SIP). The SIP sets out the schemes and mechanisms that will be put in place to ensure that Transport East delivers the strategic priorities set out in the Transport Strategy. The SIP focuses on the Transport Strategy’s four strategic priorities and identifies schemes that will address the regional issues identified in the Transport Strategy, concentrating on the strategy’s six priority corridors.

The main text of the SIP presents the approach to delivering the aims and objectives of the Transport Strategy.

Transport East is undertaking an ISA to inform the development of the Transport Strategy and SIP. The main text of the SIP outlines the key stages in the ISA process and SIP Appendix E presents the objectives and targets associated with a typical ISA monitoring plan.

The schemes identified in the SIP are at varying stages of development, and assigned a broad timescale for delivery. The SIP also identifies schemes to be delivered by neighbouring authorities.

These are schemes that are located outside of the Transport East region and will not be delivered by Transport East but will deliver transport benefits to the region.

The SIP has now been finalised but is designed to be a live document that will be regularly reviewed and updated.

1.4 Previous Habitats Regulations Assessment

A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Stage One: Screening was undertaken on the draft Transport Strategy, and this report was published alongside the strategy¹. The objective of Screening is to determine whether any plans or projects will have a likely significant effect (LSE) on the qualifying features of any European sites (further details on HRA process in Section 2). As the

Transport Strategy was in draft form, the Screening identified elements of those reports that could result in potential effects on European sites, as opposed to likely significant effects.

1.5 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of a HRA undertaken on the Transport Strategy. A separate report presents the results of the HRA undertaken on the SIP².

This report covers Stage One: Screening. Although the Transport Strategy was previously screened¹, the entire document is re-screened here to reflect any changes that have occurred after public consultation.

2 Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.1 Legislative Context

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended by the EU Exit Regulations 2019) (hereafter referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations') is the primary piece of UK legislation that provides protection for threatened habitats and species. The legislation transposes the land and marine aspects of EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (hereafter referred to as the 'Habitats Directive') into UK law, as well as certain elements of Council Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (hereafter referred to as the 'Wild Birds Directive').

Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations sets out the requirement that a competent authority must undertake appropriate assessment of any plan or project which

“(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (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.”

The appropriate assessment must assess the implications of the plan or project in light of the site's conservation objectives. The assessment process is referred to as Habitats Regulations Assessment and is a sequential process which begins by identifying European sites potentially affected by the plan or project (referred to as 'screening', see Section 2.2).

Habitats Regulations Assessment only considers the implications of a plan or project on sites of European importance. Prior to the UK's departure from the European Union (EU), sites of European importance were identified within the EU's Natura 2000 network³. The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment)(EU Exit) Regulations 2019 introduced the term 'National Site Network' which is composed of sites within the UK which were a part of the EU's Natura 2000 network prior to EU Exit Day, as well as any new sites designated after EU Exit Day that would have otherwise been included within the Natura 2000 network. Based on current legislation and policy, the sites to be assessed in an HRA under the Habitats Regulations include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs): these areas were selected as they make a significant contribution to conserving species and habitats of UK and European importance;
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs): these areas were selected as they support important populations of birds of UK and European importance;
- proposed SACs (pSACs): sites proposed to be SACs but are not yet confirmed;
- potential SPAs (pSPAs): sites that may potentially become SPAs but are not yet confirmed;
- areas secured as sites compensating for damage to a European site; and
- Ramsar sites: wetlands of international importance designated under criteria set out in the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands⁴.

For the purposes of this HRA, the above sites will collectively be referred to as European sites, as they are all sites of European importance.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

The HRA process has up to four stages, each of which assesses whether there will be impacts on a European site^{3,5} (Table 2.1). If at any stage in the process it can be determined that there will be no negative impacts on a site, then the process is effectively completed and there is no need to progress to the next stage.

This report covers Stage One: Screening. The schemes identified in the Transport Strategy are all in early stages of development, and the design process is either ongoing or has not yet begun. Therefore, it is expected that avoiding impacts on European sites will be considered during the design process, and therefore any effects identified in this plan-level HRA may no longer exist at the project-level.

Table 2.1: Four stages in the HRA process

Stage	Description
Stage One: Screening	<p>This stage determines whether the plan or project is likely to have significant effect(s) on any European site either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.</p> <p>During the screening exercise, the precautionary principle must be applied, which requires that in the event of uncertainty, the conservation objectives of the site(s) must prevail.</p>
Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment (AA)	<p>If LSEs are identified during Stage One: Screening, then AA is undertaken in which the competent authority determines the impact of the effects on the integrity of the site(s). AA considers the structure and function of the site(s) and the conservation objectives of the qualifying feature(s) both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects.</p> <p>The precautionary principle applies at this stage.</p> <p>Where adverse effects on site integrity (AESI) are identified, mitigation measures to avoid negative effects may be proposed.</p>
Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions	<p>If AESI or uncertainties remain following AA and after applying mitigation measures, then an Assessment of Alternative Solutions is required. This process involves identifying alternative ways to achieve the objectives of the plan or project that would avoid affecting the integrity of the site(s).</p>
Stage Four: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and compensatory measures	<p>If no alternative solutions can be identified during Stage Three, but AESI still remain, then a further assessment must be undertaken to determine if there are IROPI for consenting the plan, with the assumption (or expectation) that compensatory measures are available.</p> <p>If the site hosts priority species or habitats (as identified in Annex I and II of the Habitats Directive), then only human health or safety considerations may be considered when determining IROPI. If the affected species or habitats are not identified as priority, then the assessment may also consider economic and social reasons, in addition to the above considerations.</p> <p>If it is agreed that a plan or project must proceed due to IROPI, then compensatory measures must be added to the plan or project to ensure the overall coherence of the National Site Network.</p>

Consultation

Section 63 in the Habitats Regulations states that consultation with the appropriate nature conservation body must be undertaken during HRA and that the competent authority ‘*must have regard to any representations made by that body within such reasonable time as the authority specifies*’. Joint UK government guidance on undertaking HRA states that consultation with the relevant statutory nature conservation body must be undertaken at the appropriate assessment stage of the HRA process^{3,6}.

2.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment of Plans

The Habitats Regulations require HRA to be undertaken for both projects and plans. In this context, a plan is considered to be a document which is not aspiration but rather sets out an intended future course of action, or is a detailed proposal for doing, planning, regulating or achieving something³. In

contrast, a project is considered more specific than a plan and tends to result in physical modification to an area of land, for example the construction of a new road.

For plans, the competent authority may be both responsible for both producing the plan and conducting the HRA³. In addition, the competent authority is also responsible for identifying all necessary mitigation measures and building them into the plan and developing the plan's strategy for avoiding adverse effects on European sites.

Plans must undergo the HRA process as described in Table 2.1. Due to the general nature of many plans, it is recognised that the assessment of a plan may be less precise than that of a project. Therefore, when assessing the impacts of a plan the precautionary principle must be applied in a way that recognises the lack of specificity within some plans, or parts of plans. Where uncertainties or conflicts exist between the policies or proposals within a plan and the conservation objectives of a European site, measures should be built into the plan to mitigate, or preferably avoid, negative impacts to the site³. Such measures may include explicit site-specific or proposal-specific conditions designed to protect the site, or assurances that a more detailed plan assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the site is protected from adverse effects.

3 Methodology

This report covers all stages of the HRA process, as required. As with the overall HRA process, Stage One: Screening is a sequential process which determines whether HRA is required, identifies European sites potentially affected, and considers whether the plan or project will result in LSEs on European sites. Each stage in this process is described in more detail below.

3.1 Determine if HRA is required for the plan

There are numerous reasons why an HRA may not be required for a plan. For a plan to be exempt from HRA, it must be directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site potentially affected.

If a plan is not exempt from HRA, it should then be determined whether all or a part of the plan can be excluded from HRA. According to Tyldesley and Chapman³ a plan is a new, modified, altered or repealed document which is a formal statement that:

- sets out a framework for future developments or projects;
- goes beyond aspiration and set out an intention for future development or action;
- is a detailed proposal for doing, planning, regulating or achieving something; or
- sets out an intention or decision about something that is going to be done or should be done.

While the above is not an exhaustive list, it provides a means for determining whether a document constitutes a plan and requires HRA. However, all assessments should be completed on a case-by-case basis and serious consideration should be made into whether all or a part of a document could impact a European site.

If it has been decided that the plan should not be exempt or excluded from HRA, it should then be determined whether it can be eliminated from further assessment on the grounds that it cannot have any conceivable effect on a European site. The European Commission has advised that plans (or subsets of plans) which are by their nature policy statements or those that merely show political will or intention, will by this nature be unlikely to have a significant effect on a European site, and can be eliminated from further assessment early in the Screening process³.

3.2 Identification of European sites

European sites are designated for a range of features including, but not limited to, terrestrial and aquatic habitats, groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs), highly mobile species, species with limited mobility or species with strict habitat requirements. Different features have different impact pathways and therefore identifying European sites through a single linear buffer is not appropriate. For this HRA, criteria were used that were designed to account for different impact pathways for different receptors.

European sites were considered for potential effects if the boundary of the Transport East region met any of the following criteria, as adapted from guidance from the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges^{7,8}.

- is ≤ 2 km from any European site;
- is ≤ 30 km from any European site where bat species are qualifying features;
- is located ≤ 20 km from any European site where internationally important assemblages of wintering wildfowl are qualifying features, to incorporate any functionally linked land utilised by qualifying birds of such sites;
- is located ≤ 30 km from any European site where gulls or seabirds are qualifying features due to the extended foraging range of these species;
- is located ≤ 5 km upstream of any European site and has a hydrological link to that site;

- is ≤200m from any European site with habitats or species sensitive to nitrogen (N) deposition¹, including non-designated supporting habitat for qualifying species; or
- one or more of the designated features of the European site is a mobile species that may be affected by a scheme proposed by the SIP, as determined by professional judgement.

To initially identify European sites to be considered in the assessment, all European sites that fell wholly or partially within a 30km buffer of the Transport East region were identified using Magic Map (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>). A 30km buffer was used at this stage as this was the largest buffer from the above criteria, so would encompass all sites potentially affected.

3.3 Conservation Objectives

The overall objective of undertaking an HRA is to determine whether a plan or project will undermine the conservation objectives for any of the qualifying features of the site, and therefore assessments of impacts should be made explicitly against the conservation objectives for each qualifying feature.

Conservation objectives are set by Natural England with the aim to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of the qualifying features of the sites. The following standard conservation objectives have been set by Natural England⁹, which will apply to all sites unless amended on an individual basis.

Conservation Objectives:

With regard to the site and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

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;

[For Qualifying Habitats]

- *The extent and distribution of qualifying habitats;*
- *The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying habitats; and*
- *The supporting processes on which the qualifying habitats rely.*

[For Qualifying Species]

- *The extent and distribution of habitats of qualifying species;*
- *The structure and function of habitats of qualifying species;*
- *The supporting processes on which habitats of qualifying species rely;*
- *The populations of qualifying species; and*
- *The distribution of qualifying species within the site.*

3.4 Stage One: Screening for Likely Significant Effects

Stage One: Screening determines whether the project or plan is likely to have a significant effect(s) on any European site(s), either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. At this stage, the test is of the likelihood of adverse effects, not the certainty. In the context of HRA, and as a result of the Waddenzee Judgement (European Court of Justice C-127/02), a likely effect is one that cannot be ruled out on the basis of objective information. Significant effects are defined as those that would undermine the conservation objectives for a European site.

During the screening exercise, the full range of criteria from Section 3.2 was initially applied to the Transport Strategy to identify European sites and qualifying interests potentially affected. Likely

¹ sensitivity to N deposition was determined for all qualifying features of the site using the Air Pollution Information System (APIS) (apis.ac.uk). Ramsar sites are not assessed by APIS, so sensitivity from a corresponding SPA, SAC or Area/Site of Special Scientific Interest was used, where available.

significant effects were then identified for the qualifying interests of those European site(s) using an understanding of the ecology of the qualifying species and habitats and professional judgement.

At this stage in the HRA process, mitigation measures cannot be considered as a means to conclude that the plan will not result in LSEs on European sites.

The text of the Transport Strategy was screened in full to determine if either plan, in part or whole, would result in LSEs on European sites. Within a typical transport strategy, much of the text often introduces the region, provides background on current conditions and challenges and presents next steps for implementing the plan. This type of text can often be screened out as it cannot conceivably have an impact on European sites. The remaining sections of a plan often contain the vision, aims and objectives, and these have the potential to impact European sites.

The text of the Transport Strategy was read in full and assessed against screening categories (Table 2) to determine if any aspect could affect a European site. Although the Transport Strategy and SIP are being assessed separately, projects referenced within the Transport Strategy that could conceivably result in impacts on European sites are also included within the SIP (e.g., examples of roads requiring upgrades identified in the Transport Strategy but included as Priority Projects in Appendix C of the SIP). To avoid duplication of effort, such projects were only assessed once, in the SIP HRA. Wherever this situation arises, it will be fully explained in the text to explain where the aspect is being assessed.

Table 3.1: Screening Categories (adapted from Tyldesley and Chapman¹)

Category	Description	Screening Outcome
Administrative Text	Introductory or general text about the region, current conditions, challenges and general aspirations for the strategy. This text sets the stage for the remainder of the plan and cannot conceivably have an impact on European sites. Objectives or outcomes may be presented in general in these sections, but if they are presented in greater detail in other sections of the plan, then they can be excluded from assessment in these sections.	Out
A	General statement of policy or general aspirations: Policies which are no more than general statements or aspirations may be screened out because they cannot have a significant effect on a site. This would include strategies, or parts of strategies, that may promote physical change but where effects on any European site cannot be identified because the strategy is too general. For example, if a physical change is intended but it is not known where, or when or how the change will be implemented, it can be screened out under this category.	Out
B	Policies listing general criteria for testing the acceptability or sustainability of proposals: Policies that present criteria that will be used to assess other aspects of the proposals within the plan.	Out
C	Proposal referred to, but not included in the plan: References to other plans, strategies or projects that are not explicitly a part of the plan being assessed. A useful test for whether the proposal should be screened out in this step is to ask the question <i>“Is the project proposed as a part of another plan or programme and would it be likely to proceed under that other plan or programme irrespective of whether this plan is adopted with or without reference to it?”</i> If the answer is yes, it will likely be appropriate to screen it out at this step. These external plans will typically be included in an in-combination assessment.	Out
D	General plan-wide environmental protection, site safeguarding or threshold policies: Plan-wide policies that have the obvious intention of protecting or enhancing the environment, including biodiversity.	Out
E	Policies or proposals that steer change to protect European sites from adverse effects: Policies or proposals that have the indirect or unintentional effect of directing change away from European sites whose qualifying features may be affected.	Out
F	Policies or proposals that cannot lead to development or change: Policies that cannot lead to development or change for example because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development.	Out

Category	Description	Screening Outcome
G	Policies or proposals that could not have any conceivable adverse effect on a site: Policies that will result in change but have no causal link between them and the qualifying features of a site or would have a positive effect on sites.	Out
H	Policies or proposals the (theoretical or actual) effects of which cannot undermine the conservation objectives: Policies or proposal which direct a change, but the change can have no significant effect on a site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.	Out
I	Policies or proposals with a likely significant effect on a site alone: Many of these will relate to proposals with specific locations, but some more generic sources of possible effects include proposals that steer change towards a site or impacts routes to a site (e.g., changes in hydrology or air quality).	In
J	Policies or proposals not likely to have a significant effect alone: Aspects of the plan that may have some effect alone, but the effect is unlikely to be significant. An in-combination assessment should be conducted, and these policies or proposals should be re-categorised as either K or L.	Check for in-combination, re-categorise as K or L
K	Policies or proposals not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in-combination. Following an in-combination assessment, LSEs were not identified.	Screen out after in-combination
L	Policies or proposals likely to have a significant effect either alone or in-combination. Following an in-combination assessment, LSEs were identified.	Screen in after in-combination
M	Bespoke area, site or case-specific policies intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on a European site: More specific than general policies for protecting the environment (Category D), these aspects of the plan are obviously in place to avoid or reduce actual harm to a site.	In

3.5 Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

For all European sites where LSEs were identified during Stage One: Screening, an appropriate assessment was undertaken to assess the implications of the plan on the qualifying features of the European site. It is recognised that at the plan level, the AA is unlikely to be as detailed as an AA at the project level.

The objective of the AA is to determine whether the implications of the plan, both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects, will result in adverse effects on the integrity of the European site, with respect to the site's structure and function, in light of the conservation objectives for the site's qualifying feature(s). The integrity of a site is defined as 'the coherence of its ecological structure and function across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which the site is (or will be) designated³.

One function of the AA is to identify mitigation or other measures that, where possible, could reduce, or avoid or eliminate the significant effects on the European site(s). At the plan-level, the identification of specific mitigation measures is often not possible, as plans frequently lack the detailed information necessary to develop such mitigation.

3.6 In-Combination Assessments for Screening and Appropriate Assessment

A key component of the HRA process is an assessment of the plan both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects. Such in-combination assessments are undertaken at both Stage One: Screening and Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment. These assessments require identification of other plans or projects that have been proposed, approved but not completed, or are already completed that may also have an impact on European sites.

As many of the schemes in the Transport Strategy do not have defined timescales or locations, it is difficult to identify every potential in-combination effect. In addition, given that many of the schemes in the Transport Strategy are located relatively close to each other, it is conceivable that in-combination

effects on European sites may occur between multiple schemes identified within these two documents.

Given the lack of specific details about the schemes, including timescales, the in-combination assessments in this HRA are expected to be incomplete. Should any of the schemes identified in the Transport Strategy be developed further, a full in-combination assessment will be undertaken, should an HRA be required at the plan- or project-level.

4 Stage One – Updated Screening on Transport Strategy

4.1 Determining if HRA is required

This section presents the outcome of the updated screening process for the Transport Strategy and SIP. A screening¹ was completed on the draft Transport Strategy in November 2021. Following public consultation, the Transport Strategy was finalised and the Transport Strategy is re-screened in this HRA.

The Transport Strategy is not exempt or excluded from HRA, as no aspect of the Strategy is directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European sites, and sets out an intention for future development or action.

4.2 Identification of European sites and Conservation Objectives

One hundred and three sites were identified as falling whole or partially within a 30km buffer of the Transport East region scheme boundary (Appendix A). This list included 39 SACs, 32 SPAs and 32 Ramsar sites. Many of these sites overlapped in area either partially or wholly with each other.

The conservation objectives for individual sites were obtained from Natural England's website⁹.

4.3 Transport Strategy

Aspects of the Transport Strategy where no LSEs were identified

No LSEs were identified for any aspects of the Transport Strategy (Appendix B). Appendix B provides further detail on the Strategy assessment methodology, categorisation and scoping in relation to specific components of the Strategy. The overall vision, strategic priorities and associated goals were screened out of further assessment, due to the text of the Transport Strategy presented only general aspirations or aims. Several sections did identify specific routes requiring improvement, but these schemes were included in the SIP HRA, and were assessed there as opposed to within the Transport Strategy.

One of the primary aims of the Transport Strategy is to promote active and sustainable transport, and to pursue decarbonisation of transport to net-zero by 2040. Several aspects of the Transport Strategy that were intended to achieve these goals were screened out of further assessment as they will have a positive impact on European sites (Category D). It is possible that some physical works will be required to achieve these goals (e.g., installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, construction of cycle paths), but specific details were not provided in the Transport Strategy. Any schemes that arise to achieve these aims will undergo HRA at the plan- or project-level, so any impacts in European sites will be fully assessed.

Aspects of the Transport Strategy where it could not be concluded that there would be no LSEs

There were no aspects of the Transport Strategy where LSEs were identified on any European site(s) (Appendix B).

4.4 In-Combination Assessment

Other plans or projects must be considered when undertaking screening of any plan or project. The purpose of the in-combination assessment is to consider the potential for cumulative effects on a site, as repeated impacts, even those that were individually assessed as not significant, from multiple projects can result in a LSE when considered in-combination.

In the absence of LSE there can be no in-combination effect from any aspect of the Transport Strategy. As described previously, schemes included within the SIP may give rise to LSE and In-Combination Assessment has been considered in the HRA for that document. It should be noted that given the volume of schemes proposed within the SIP for the Transport East region, it is conceivable that in-combination effects could occur between schemes identified

Although it is difficult to complete an in-combination assessment with other projects, there are numerous other plans that cover the Transport East region (or are in close proximity to it) which have the potential to result in in-combination effects on European sites. As with the Transport East Transport Strategy, such plans outline the strategic goals for the region that they cover, and therefore many of the projects that arise from the policies and objectives outlined in the strategic plans could result in in-combination effects.

4.5 Summary of Screening

No Likely Significant Effects were identified from any aspect of the Transport East Transport Strategy. As such there is no requirement to undertake a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.

5 Conclusions

The Transport East region is expected to experience significant growth over the next 15 years and is in need of improved regional transport to support this growth and enhance social and economic opportunities in the region. To accomplish this aim, Transport East has developed a Transport Strategy for the region. The Transport Strategy sets out measures to deliver a high-quality, sustainable transport network for the Transport East region that is resilient to the demands for future growth in the region.

The text of the Transport Strategy was screened in full to determine if either plan, in part or whole, would result in LSEs on European sites. A total of 103 protected sites were identified across the Transport Strategy region. Any potential proposed projects referenced within the Transport Strategy that could conceivably result in impacts on any of these sites are included within the Investment and Delivery Programme (SIP). To avoid double counting of effect, where projects are identified in both Strategy and SIP they were only assessed once, in the SIP HRA².

The Transport Strategy was predominantly categorised as administrative text, statements of policy or general aspiration, plan wide environmental protection policies or policies and proposals that do not lead to development or change. As such no LSE are assessed as to arise from the Transport Strategy on European sites.

As no LSE have been identified arising from the Transport Strategy there is no requirement to take the Strategy to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.

6 References

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9. Natural England (2019). Natural England Standard Conservation Objectives for European Sites in England. Version 1.3 [online]. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6734992977690624> (accessed April 2022).

Appendix A. European sites considered at Screening

Category	Site Code
Special Areas of Conservation	
Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries	UK0030076
Benacre to Easton Bavents Lagoons	UK0013104
Blean Complex	UK0013697
Breckland	UK0019865
Devil's Dyke	UK0030037
Dew's Ponds	UK0030133
Epping Forest	UK0012720
Essex Estuaries	UK0013690
Eversden and Wimpole Woods	UK0030331
Fenland	UK0014782
Hamford Water	UK0030377
Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths and Marshes	UK0012809
Nene Washes	UK0030222
Norfolk Valley Fens	UK0012892
North Downs Woodlands	UK0030225
North Norfolk Coast	UK0019838
Orfordness - Shingle Street	UK0014780
Ouse Washes	UK0013011
Overstrand Cliffs	UK0030232
Paston Great Barn	UK0030235
Peter's Pit	UK0030237
Portholme	UK0030054
Queendown Warren	UK0012833
Rex Graham Reserve	UK0019866
Richmond Park	UK0030246
River Wensum	UK0012647
Roydon Common and Dersingham Bog	UK0012801
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point	UK0030270
Southern North Sea	UK0030395
Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden	UK0012741
Stodmarsh	UK0030283
Tankerton Slopes and Swalecliffe	UK0030378
Thanet Coast	UK0013107
The Broads	UK0013577
The Wash and North Norfolk Coast	UK0017075
Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens	UK0012882
Wimbledon Common	UK0030301
Winterton - Horsey Dunes	UK0013043
Wormley Hoddesdonpark Woods	UK0013696
Special Protection Areas	

Category	Site Code
Abberton Reservoir	UK9009141
Alde-Ore Estuary	UK9009112
Benacre to Easton Bavents	UK9009291
Benfleet and Southend Marshes	UK9009171
Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4)	UK9009245
Breckland	UK9009201
Breydon Water	UK9009181
Broadland	UK9009253
Colne Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 2)	UK9009243
Crouch and Roach Estuaries (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 3)	UK9009244
Deben Estuary	UK9009261
Dengie (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 1)	UK9009242
Foulness (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 5)	UK9009246
Gibraltar Point	UK9008022
Great Yarmouth North Denes	UK9009271
Greater Wash	UK9020329
Hamford Water	UK9009131
Lee Valley	UK9012111
Medway Estuary and Marshes	UK9012031
Minsmere-Walberswick	UK9009101
Nene Washes	UK9008031
North Norfolk Coast	UK9009031
Ouse Washes	UK9008041
Outer Thames Estuary	UK9020309
Sandlings	UK9020286
South West London Waterbodies	UK9012171
Stodmarsh	UK9012121
Stour and Orwell Estuaries	UK9009121
Thames Estuary and Marshes	UK9012021
Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay	UK9012071
The Swale	UK9012011
The Wash	UK9008021
Ramsar Sites	
Abberton Reservoir	UK11001
Alde-Ore Estuary	UK11002
Benfleet and Southend Marshes	UK11006
Blackwater Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 4)	UK11007
Breydon Water	UK11008
Broadland	UK11010
Chippenham Fen	UK11014
Colne Estuary (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 2)	UK11015
Crouch and Roach Estuaries (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 3)	UK11058
Deben Estuary	UK11017

Category	Site Code
Dengie (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 1)	UK11018
Dersingham Bog	UK11019
Foulness (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 5)	UK11026
Gibraltar Point	UK11027
Hamford Water	UK11028
Lee Valley	UK11034
Medway Estuary and Marshes	UK11040
Minsmere-Walberswick	UK11044
Nene Washes	UK11046
North Norfolk Coast	UK11048
Ouse Washes	UK11051
Redgrave and South Lopham Fens	UK11056
Roydon Common	UK11061
South West London Waterbodies	UK11065
Stodmarsh	UK11066
Stour and Orwell Estuaries	UK11067
Thames Estuary and Marshes	UK11069
Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay	UK11070
The Swale	UK11071
The Wash	UK11072
Wicken Fen	UK11077
Woodwalton Fen	UK11078

Appendix B. Transport Strategy Screening

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Foreword	The Foreword provides an introduction to the Transport East region including, geography and economy and presents the current state of transport and challenges for the future.	The Foreword introduces key priorities for the Transport Strategy in a general sense only, and these priorities are presented in further detail in other sections of the Transport Strategy, so are not considered in assessment of the Foreword.	Administrative Text	Out
Executive Summary	This section provides a summary of the Transport Strategy document.	Some specific priorities are discussed in this summary, however they are presented in further detail in rows below, so are not considered in assessment of the Executive Summary.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 1: Introduction	This section provides an introduction to the Transport East Region. It discusses the geography of the region, current growth, and discusses current transport and challenges for the future.	The text presents some of the objectives and wider outcomes of the strategy, but these are all presented in further detail in rows below, so are not considered in assessment of the Introduction.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 2.1: The East's unique contribution to the UK	This section provides background text which describes the Transport East region.	This section does not describe any schemes or aspirations that could result in impacts to European sites.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 2.2: The decarbonisation challenge	This section presents an argument for decarbonisation of transportation in the region.	This section does not identify any proposed schemes that could result in impacts to European sites.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 2.3:	This section describes the current growth that the region is experiencing, and identifies transport challenges associated with that	Some urban areas were identified as needing transport improvements, but specific schemes to address these challenges are not presented in this section. Schemes	Administrative Text	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Growing towns and cities	growth, particularly the preference for travel by private vehicle as opposed to sustainable means.	expected to be delivered by this Transport Strategy are assessed as a part of the SIP ² .		
Section 2.4: Challenges in our rural and coastal areas	This section presents the transport limitations and challenges in rural and coastal communities in the region.	This section does not identify any specific schemes that would address these challenges.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 2.5: Constraints at our international gateways	This section describes current challenges around the region's ports and airports.	Road and rail routes needing improvements are identified, but no specific schemes are discussed in this section. Schemes expected to be delivered by this Transport Strategy were assessed as a part of the SIP ² .	Administrative Text	Out
Section 3.1: Our vision	A thriving economy for the East, with fast, safe, reliable, and resilient transport infrastructure driving forward a future of inclusive and sustainable growth for decades to come.	This is a general aspiration that in itself will not result in any effects to a European site.	A	Out
Section 3.2: Strategic priorities	Four strategic priorities for transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decarbonisation to net-zero; • Connecting growing towns and cities; • Energising coastal and rural communities; and • Unlocking international gateways. 	This section introduces the four strategic priorities for the Transport East region, which are general aspirations for the region.	A	Out
Section 3.3: Core Corridors	This section introduces the six core corridors that will be the focus of the Transport Strategy.	No specific schemes are discussed in this section. Schemes expected to be delivered by this Transport Strategy were assessed as a part of the SIP ² .	F	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Section 3.4: Delivering the Strategy across the region	This section provides examples for how the Transport Strategy may be experienced by local communities.	Specific schemes or activities are not identified in this section, its purpose is to describe general aspirations for how the strategy will affect local communities.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 4.1: Strategic Approach Overview	This section introduces the strategic approach to delivering the Transport Strategy.	This section provides background information for delivering the Transport Strategy and does not include any general aspirations that could impact European sites.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 4.2: Decarbonisation to net-zero	Decarbonisation to net-zero – working to achieve net-zero carbon emissions from transport, building on our status as the UK’s premier renewable energy region.	The majority of the text in this section describes the aspirations of Transport East for the region to achieve net-zero carbon from transport by 2040. It introduces current carbon usage and emissions from transport in the region and discusses the benefits of reducing carbon to net-zero. No specific plans or schemes are discussed in the introductory text for this strategic priority that could have any negative impact on a European site, and furthermore, decarbonisation to net-zero is expected to have an overall positive effect on European sites.	D	Out
Section 4.2: Decarbonisation to net-zero: Goal 1	Decarbonisation to net-zero - Goal 1 Reduce demand for carbon intensive transport trips through local living by making it easier for people to access services locally or by digital means.	This goal focuses on reducing the number of journeys that individuals take or shortening the journeys that they do take. While some of the activities in this section could result in physical change, the text does not outline any specific intentions or schemes, and therefore this is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A	Out
Section 4.2: Decarbonisation to net-zero: Goal 2	Decarbonisation to net-zero - Goal 2 Shift modes by supporting people to switch from private car to active and passenger transport.	Some of these activities could result in physical change (e.g., improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure), but no specific schemes or intentions are outlined in this section and therefore it is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A, D	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
		Furthermore, shifting travel from private vehicle to active or public travel will reduce emissions, resulting in an overall environmental benefit to the region.		
Section 4.2: Decarbonisation to net-zero: Goal 3	Decarbonisation to net-zero - Goal 3 Switch fuels with all private, passenger transport, fleet and freight vehicles to Net-Zero carbon fuels at the earliest opportunity.	While some of these activities will result in physical change (e.g., installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure), no specific locations are outlined in the text and therefore it is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region. In addition, an increase in net-zero carbon fuels is expected to result in an overall environmental benefit to the region.	A, D	Out
Section 4.2: Decarbonisation to net-zero: Goal 4	Decarbonisation to net-zero - Goal 4 Zero carbon growth by supporting authorities and developers to plan, locate and design new development that reduces the need for people to make carbon-intensive transport trips in the future.	Although the goal outlined in section alludes to actions that will result in a physical change (e.g., building of new homes and associated cycle paths, footpaths and roads), it does not discuss any specific locations within the Transport East region where these developments will be. Therefore, this section is considered to be a general aspiration for the region that cannot in itself result in any impacts on any European site.	A	Out
Section 4.3: Connecting growing towns and cities	Connecting growing towns and cities – enhanced links between our fastest growing places and business clusters. Improving access for people to jobs, supplies, services, and learning; enabling the area to function as a coherent economy and improving productivity.	The introductory text in this section outlines the specific challenges in transportation between the major cities and towns in the Transport East region. It offers potential solutions but does not present any specific schemes and thus these are considered to be general aspirations for the region.	A	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Section 4.3: Connecting growing towns and cities: Goal 5	Connecting growing towns and cities - Goal 5 Improve connectivity and accessibility within our towns and cities for walking, cycling and passenger transport to support sustainable access to services, education, training, employment and leisure.	While this section does identify some activities that could result in physical change or impact on European sites (e.g., integrating cycling and walking infrastructure, increased air pollution from more frequent busses), no specific locations or schemes are outlined in this section and therefore this goal is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A	Out
Section 4.3: Connecting growing towns and cities: Goal 6	Connecting growing towns and cities - Goal 6 Deliver faster and more reliable transport connections between our growing towns, cities and economic corridors, and to the rest of the UK, to support business growth, skills development and employment.	The text identifies the delivery of the Eastern Section of the East-West Main Line, the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and Major Road Network (MRN) and South Essex Bus Metro as schemes to be delivered in conjunction with this goal. These schemes are all assessed as a part of the SIP ² , and therefore are not considered in the assessment of this goal. With the exception of the aforementioned schemes, the actions that are identified in this section that could result in physical change (e.g. improving rail infrastructure, potential new road links), however specific locations or intentions are not provided, and therefore these are considered to be general aspirations for the Transport East region.	A	Out
Section 4.3: Connecting growing towns and cities: Goal 7	Connecting growing towns and cities - Goal 7 Fully integrate transport networks, services and operations across the East of England, through a customer-focused approach, enabling seamless and safe end-to-end journeys by sustainable modes that are attractive to all people.	While this section does identify some activities that could result in physical change (e.g., improvements to stations, provision of active travel facilities and bus stops), no specific locations or schemes are outlined in this section and therefore this goal is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Section 4.4: Energising rural and coastal communities	Energising rural and coastal communities - A reinvented sustainable coast for the 21st century which powers the UK through energy generation. Supporting our productive rural communities and attracting visitors all year round.	This section outlines transport challenges in rural and coastal communities in the Transport East region and presents its intention to provide alternatives to the use of private vehicles in these areas. While this section does identify some activities that could result in physical change (e.g., improving connections between rural and coastal towns), no specific locations or schemes are outlined and therefore this is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A	Out
Section 4.4 Energising rural and coastal communities: Goal 8	Energising rural and coastal communities - Goal 8 Increase accessibility to education, training, services and employment for rural and coastal communities: 8A: Better ways of taking people to places sustainably through switching modes and utilising alternative fuels where rural trips need to be made by cars; 8B: Supporting local communities to make more trips locally by encouraging more local provision of goods and services; and 8C: Support regional partners and the digital sector to provide alternative options to travel for people through better digital communications.	While this section does identify some activities that could result in physical change and may affect European sites (e.g., construction of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, increased bus service resulting in increased air pollution, construction of footpaths and cycle lanes), no specific locations or schemes are outlined and therefore this goal is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A	Out
Section 4.4: Energising rural and coastal communities: Goal 9	Energising rural and coastal communities - Goal 9 Improve connectivity along our 500 miles of coastline and connect our coastal towns and communities to the rest of the region and UK, to support levelling-up, and boost our coastal	While this section does identify some activities that could result in physical change and may affect European sites (e.g., reintroduction of rail lines), no specific locations or schemes are outlined and therefore this is considered to be a general aspiration for the Transport East region.	A	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
	industries, including Energy, Shipping and Tourism.			
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways Pathway: Ports	Unlocking international gateways - Better connected ports and airports to help UK businesses thrive, boosting the nation's economy through better access to international markets and facilitating foreign direct investment.	This section discusses the international gateways (i.e., ports and airports) in the Transport Region and discusses some of the challenges to these gateways. It presents aims to address these challenges include improving capacity, journey times and reliability, supporting decarbonisation and encouraging a shift to sustainable modes. These are general aspirations and aims for the Transport East region. A shift to sustainable transportation modes is expected to result in an overall benefit to the region.	A, D	Out
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways Pathway: Ports Goal 10	Unlocking international gateways - Goal 10 Improve connectivity, journey time and reliability for freight and passenger surface access to ports.	Specific schemes related to improvements to junctions and pinch-points on route such as the A12, A13, A14, A47, A127 and A130 were assessed as a part of the SIP ² , so are not assessed here. With the exception of the aforementioned schemes, specific locations are not provided for activities identified in this section that could result in physical change and may affect European sites (e.g. development of freight parks), and therefore are considered general aspirations for the Transport East region.	A	Out
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways	Unlocking international gateways - Goal 11 Modal shift of freight from road to rail or short sea shipping and increase sustainable mode	This section identifies rail routes in need of improvement but does not provide any details or timescales for physical works, and therefore these are considered to be general aspirations for the area. Any priority schemes on	A	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Part A Pathway: Ports Goal 11	share of employees and passengers using port facilities.	these routes that have been identified in SIP Appendix C will be assessed there (Section 4.4, Appendix C), so are not considered here. With the exception of the rail routes identified, specific locations are not provided for the activities in this section that could result in physical change and may affect European sites, so these are considered general aspirations for the region.		
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways Pathway: Ports Goal 12	Unlocking international gateways - Goal 12 Support our ports and the freight sector to increase their use of alternative fuels through supporting infrastructure, electrified/hydrogen-powered rail routes and road vehicles and supporting innovation in new and emerging fuels.	The primary aim of this goal is to shift heavy goods vehicles from fossil fuels to zero emissions. This will result in an overall improvement to air quality in the region, which will benefit European sites. Additionally, specific activities have not been identified in this section, so this goal is considered to be a general aspiration for the region.	A, D	Out
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways Pathway: Airports Goal 13	Unlocking international gateways – Goal 13 Improved passenger and employee connectivity to airports through better connected and more sustainable surface access options.	This section presents options for improving access to airports including enhancing rail connection and improving bus and coach networks. Some schemes are identified within this section that have the potential to impact European sites (e.g., improving rail connections to Stansted and Southend airports, extending East West Rail to Norwich and Ipswich), but these are assessed as a part of the SIP ² so are not assessed here.	A	Out
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways Pathway: Airports	Unlocking international gateways – Goal 14 Support the government and aviation industry through the Jet-Zero approach and other	This section introduces the goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions for airports. This includes measures such as electrifying airport surface access through encouraging the use of electric vehicles and supporting the government's net-zero targets for aviation.	A	Out

Section	Summary of Text	Screening Comments	Screening Category	Screening Outcome
Goal 14	mechanisms to deliver net-zero emissions from aviation by 2050.	While encouraging the use of electric vehicles could result in physical change (e.g., through installation of charging infrastructure), no specific locations or schemes are identified and therefore this section is considered to present general aspirations for the region.		
Section 4.5: Unlocking international gateways Pathway: Airports Goal 15	Unlocking international gateways – Goal 15 Modal shift – support all passengers, employees and operations to access airports by net-zero carbon modes of travel.	This section presents options for promoting more sustainable journeys to airports. This includes supporting employees and passengers in shifting journeys to more sustainable modes and exploring ways of improving freight capacity to Stansted to reduce reliance on road transport.	A	Out
Section 5: Priority Corridors	This section provides background information on six priority corridors within the Transport East region.	Specific routes are identified as needing improvement, but no specific schemes are described that could result in impacts to European sites and thus this section presents general aspirations for the region.	F	Out
Section 6: Delivery Approach	This section describes how the Transport Strategy will be delivered.	This section does not identify any specific schemes that could result in impacts to European sites. It introduces the SIP, which lists specific schemes that Transport East will pursue. The SIP and schemes within it are assessed separately.	Administrative Text	Out
Section 7: Next Steps	This section outlines the next steps in delivering the Transport Strategy.	This section does not identify any schemes that could result in impacts to European sites.	Administrative Text	Out

