

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Initial Screening Statement

For *Landscape Character Assessment* (Supplementary
Planning Document)

October 2025

1. Introduction

This Initial Screening Statement has been prepared to help determine the need for a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the following document:

Landscape Character Assessment SPD – November 2025 Consultation Draft

Public consultation will take place on this document between **Friday 14th November and Friday 12th December 2025** (provisional dates).

It is intended that the Bradford District Landscape Character Assessment will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Its purpose will be to provide the information necessary to enable planning officers and developers to understand the different landscape character types and areas within the district, and help guide development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. It can also be used to inform appropriate design and mitigation, as well as providing baseline evidence for more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LIVA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVA). The SPD is in support of policies in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (Policy EN4) (and emerging Local Plan (Policy EN5)).

2. Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

Bradford Council (as a competent authority) is required to consider whether its planning documents would have a significant adverse effect upon the integrity of internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance including 'European Sites' (now referred to as Habitat Sites) which are designated within the District.

This consideration is undertaken through a process known as a Habitats Regulations Assessment which is a requirement of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations).

European sites (Habitat sites) provide important habitats for rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species of exceptional importance within Europe. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs, designated under the Habitats Directive) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs, designated under European Union Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive)). (These directives were translated into UK law and have been retained following the UK's exit from the European Union) (European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017).

Bradford District includes an area of the South Pennine Moors designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These are protected because they contain habitat types which are rare or threatened, and due to the importance of breeding bird populations.

3. HRA Screening of the Local Plan Core Strategy

The adopted Local Plan Core Strategy for Bradford was subject to HRA screening and assessment throughout its development. The final HRA documents for the Core Strategy are:

- HRA Screening Assessment for the Draft Core Strategy DPD (by Environ, 2012)
- Further Engagement Draft of Core Strategy: Appropriate Assessment (by UEEC, 2013)
- Publication Draft Core Strategy HRA Report (by UEEC, February 2014)
- HRA for the Bradford District Core Strategy: Appropriate Assessment Report (by UEEC, December 2014)

The Core Strategy HRA assessment identified a range of likely significant effects on the South Pennine Moors that could result from the Core Strategy for Bradford district including:

- Loss of supporting habitats (directly or indirectly);
- Increased water demand;
- Impacts on water quality;
- Increased emissions to air;
- Collision mortality risk and displacement due to wind turbine developments;
- Recreational impacts, including walkers, dogs, trampling and erosion;

- A range of urban edge effects, including fly-tipping, invasive species, wildfire and increased predation.

It concluded that taking into account the range of avoidance and mitigation measures incorporated into the plan, the Core Strategy will not result in adverse effects on the ecological integrity of the European Sites.

4. Landscape Character SPD

The Council previously prepared and adopted a Landscape Character Assessment SPD in 2008. However, there have been notable changes in the landscape since that time and changes to the development pressures within the district, as well as new guidance on how to prepare Landscape Character Assessments, therefore a new assessment has now been prepared. This new assessment will be translated into a new SPD which will replace the existing one.

The new assessment provides further details and guidance to support the implementation of Core Strategy Policy EN4: Landscape, which requires development proposals to make a positive contribution towards the conservation, management and enhancement of the diversity of landscapes within the District.

The LCA was prepared by consultants LUC, and included consultation and engagement with a number of stakeholders with an interest in the landscape. A workshop was held with:

- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Council Officers from planning, landscape, design and conservation, countryside and rights of way, biodiversity, flood risk, and development management
- West Yorkshire Ecology Service, West Yorkshire Archaeology Advice Service
- Government organisations such as Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency
- The National Trust, Farming Representatives, Yorkshire Water, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and National Farmers Union.

Separate targeted consultation with Town, Village and Parish councils was also undertaken.

The LCA identifies the different landscape character types and areas within the district and makes an assessment of the character using a set of established criteria and in line with the Natural England guidance. These are:

- Geology, Soils, Topography and Drainage
- Semi-natural Habitats and Tree Cover

- Land Use and Field Patterns
- Cultural Associations and Historic Landscape
- Settlement and Transport Pattern
- Access and Recreation
- Views and Perceptual Qualities

The LCA describes the key characteristics of each landscape character area and also sets out pressures and forces for change for each landscape character type. They are outlined under the following broad headings:

- Climate Change
- Agricultural Change
- Development
- Habitat Management and Environmental Initiatives
- Heritage at Risk
- Tourism, Recreation and Access Pressure
- Pollution, Littering and Anti-social Behaviour

The guidance includes recommendations to help counter or mitigate the identified pressures in order to maintain and/or enhance the landscape character. Overall, the SPD seeks to provide more detailed guidance in relation to how new development can be designed and managed to integrate successfully into the landscape.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the Landscape Character SPD is to support and provide guidance on policies contained within the Local Plan Core Strategy, as such it is considered that the HRA screening and assessment for the Core Strategy is relevant to the SPD.

The potential effects of the Landscape Character SPD on the integrity of the Protected Habitat Sites (formerly European Sites) are deemed to have been considered during the HRA screening and assessment of the Core Strategy. The SPD parent policy (Policy EN4: Landscape) was assessed as having no negative effect and intended to protect the environment including biodiversity.

One of the key aims of the policy is to consider the opportunity to contribute towards positive restoration of landscapes, particularly in the urban fringe, achieve greater habitat connectivity, enhancement of characteristic semi-natural vegetation and accessible natural greenspace. The SPD provides additional guidance on how this can be achieved and will support the aims of the policy as well as supporting measures to address likely significant effects on the South Pennine Moors.

Given the supporting role of the SPD, it is therefore unlikely to have any adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites (Habitat Sites) either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. As the SPD does not introduce new planning policy it is recommended that no further Habitats Regulations Assessment screening is required.

6. Consultation with Natural England

Consultation on this initial screening statement was carried out with the Statutory Body Natural England for a period of 5 weeks from Monday 1st September until Monday 6th October 2025.

The Council received the following response:

Statutory Body	Consultation Response
Natural England	In advance of seeing the Landscape Character Assessment SPD, we can agree with the conclusions of the Landscape Character Assessment HRA screening. However, if when we are consulted on the Landscape Character Assessment SPD and find it contains anything which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then we will raise that in our response and may recommend rescreening.

7. Determination

As stated above it is not considered that contents and application of the SPD will have any adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites (Habitat Sties) either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The consultation response from Natural England has been reviewed and any further comments received at the SPD public consultation stage will be taken into consideration. Therefore, at this time it is determined that HRA is not required, but this may change if the consultation process highlights any concerns.