

HRA: Proposed approach to cumulative assessment of impact from traffic flows associated with 2040/2042 Local Plan growth in Oxfordshire on the Oxford Meadows SAC

1. Background

The assessment of Local Plan impacts on European sites is set out in national guidance: [Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site](#). Natural England has also published [NEA001: Advising CAs on Road Traffic and HRA June 2018](#) on its approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations.

Guidance acknowledges that the proposals within an authority's Local Plan may not, on their own, have an effect on a European site that is significant. However, an authority must consider whether this effect could be significant when combined with any other Local Plan that affects the same site. If, in combination, a Local Plan proposal could have a significant effect on the European site, an appropriate assessment must be undertaken.

2. Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC): Zone of Influence

For screening the air pollution effects of a Local Plan, likely significant effects are only considered likely within 10km (see [JNCC report](#), para 5.5). A 10km buffer applied to the [Oxford Meadows SAC](#) is shown in Figure 1 and shows that the five Oxfordshire districts are all within 10km of the site, with the A34 and A40 adjacent to the SAC.

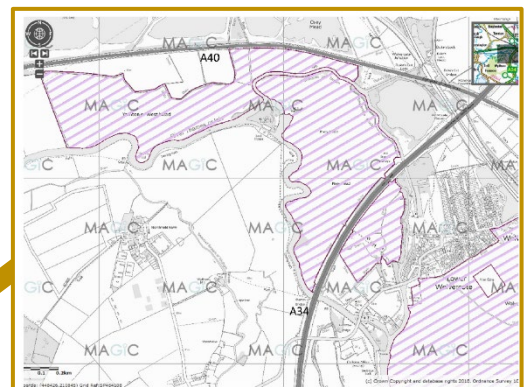
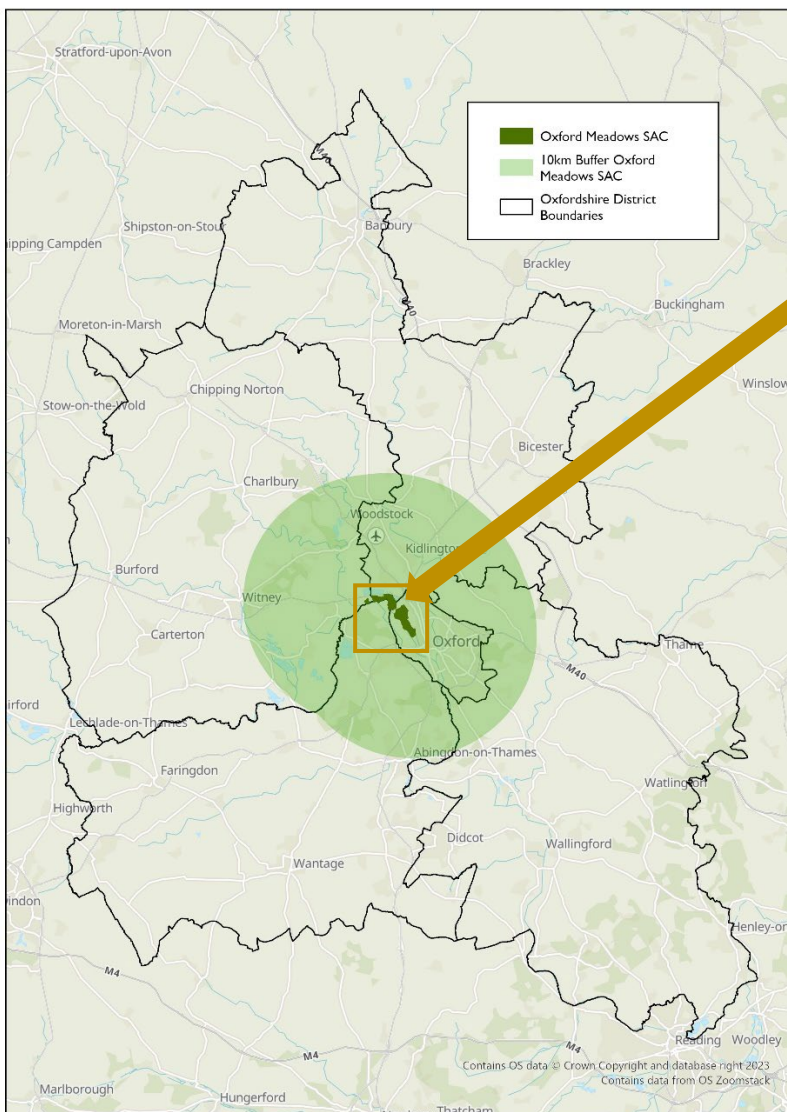


Figure 1: 10km buffer around Oxford meadows SAC

3. Emerging Local Plans in Oxfordshire

Within Oxfordshire, Local Plans are emerging for all five districts although West Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan has not yet been through Regulation 18 consultation. The other Local Plans are further progressed and the cumulative impacts on European sites will therefore be considered for:

- Oxford City Local Plan
- South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan
- Cherwell Local Plan

4. Modelling approach to assessing Local Plan transport impacts

[DMRB guidance LA105](#) sets out the traffic scoping criteria that should be used to determine whether the air quality impacts of a project can be scoped out, or whether they require an assessment based on the changes between the 'do something' traffic (with the project) compared to the 'do minimum' traffic (without the project) in the opening year. The thresholds for requiring an assessment are where:

- Daily traffic flows will change by 1,000 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) or more; or
- Heavy duty vehicle (HDV) flows will change by 200 AADT or more.

[NEA001](#) also presents the same assessment criteria as screening thresholds which if exceeded, will require further, more detailed work to be undertaken to ensure that there are no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

This means that if the 'with' and 'without' Local Plan scenarios have a cumulative impact of less than 1,000 AADT for cars/Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs), and 200 for HDVs, no further assessment is required.

5. Scale of impacts

The change in traffic flow on the A40 and the A34 in the vicinity of the Oxford Meadows SAC is shown in Table 1 (Cars/ LGVs) and Table 2 (HDVs). Further detail regarding the derivation of traffic flow figures can be found in the forecasting reports for the individual Local Plans.

Table 1: Change in AADT flows 'with' and 'without' emerging Local Plans (Cars/LGVs)

Local Plan	A40 Two way change in AADT (from 'without' to 'with' Local Plan)	A34 Two way change in AADT (from 'without' to 'with' Local Plan)
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse (S&V)	-22	-73
Oxford City	+15	+274
Cherwell	-448	-330
TOTAL (cumulative impact)	-455	-129

Table 2: Change in AADT flows 'with' and 'without' emerging Local Plans (HDVs)

Local Plan	A40 Two way change in AADT (from 'without' to 'with' Local Plan)	A34 Two way change in AADT (from 'without' to 'with' Local Plan)
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse (S&V)	-8	-22
Oxford City	-13	-49
Cherwell	+26	-164
TOTAL (cumulative impact)	+5	-235

Therefore, in accordance with the DMRB LA105 Guidance and NE001 Advising CAS on Road Traffic and HRA June 2018, the assessment of air quality impacts from the three emerging plans (Oxford City, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse and Cherwell) on the Oxford Meadows SAC can be screened out from further HRA assessment.