

Simister Bowlee Development Framework

Initial Habitats Regulation Assessment Determination Statement

October 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bury and Rochdale Councils are jointly preparing a Simister Bowlee Development Framework (SBDF) Joint Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.2 This statement sets out the initial screening of the draft SPD in terms of the need for Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and European Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) for the Draft SBDF SPD.
- 1.3 The purpose of the HRA is to ensure that protection of the integrity of European sites is part of the planning process. European sites are Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites.
- 1.4 The purpose of the screening stage of the HRA process is to initially identify the risk or the possibility of significant adverse effects on a European site which could undermine the achievement of a site's conservation objectives, and which therefore require further detailed examination through appropriate assessment.
- 1.5 Bury and Rochdale Councils' are the "competent authority" for the purposes of this HRA screening report.

2. Draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines SPDs as documents which add further detail to the policies in the Development Plan. As SPDs do not have the same status as policies contained within the Development Plan, they are not subject to independent examination.
- 2.2 The Places for Everyone Plan (PfE) was adopted by Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan (the nine PfE authorities) and took effect on 21 March 2024. The draft SBDF SPD relates to the Simister/Bowlee (Northern Gateway) site that is allocated for residential development under Policy JPA1.2 of PfE. The draft SBDF SPD will establish the parameters against which future planning applications will be considered and identifies the necessary infrastructure required to support the development of the site.
- 2.3 The draft SBDF SPD will:

- Set out the Council’s vision and strategic objectives for the Simister Bowlee (JPA1.2) site shaped by public consultation and stakeholder collaboration;
- Facilitate a coordinated and comprehensive masterplanning approach, to be implemented consistently across multiple planning applications;
- Provide an overarching Development Framework to communicate development and design parameters, including land use, access, movement and green infrastructure;
- Establish key development requirements that all planning applications within Simister Bowlee are expected to adhere to;
- Provide design principles and guidance, to inform the more detailed design considerations and approaches needed to deliver the Simister Bowlee vision; and
- Describe the proposed approach towards phasing and the delivery of physical infrastructure.

2.4 The PfE Plan is the “parent DPD” which has already been subject to Integrated Appraisal incorporating Habitats Regulation Assessment prior to being adopted and coming into effect on 21 March 2024.

2.5 The draft SBDF SPD will supplement PfE Policy JPA1.2 Simister Bowlee and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the JPA1.2 PfE allocation when adopted.

3. Initial Screening Determination

3.1 The draft SBDF SPD is not setting new policy, it will supplement an existing policy in the plan (JPA1.2) in the PfE Plan (which came into effect on 21 March 2024). Policy JPA1.2 has already been subject to HRA, through the PfE plan making process.

3.2 The PfE Appropriate Assessment concluded that allocations within PfE including Simister/Bowlee should be subject to a mitigation measure to avoid harmful impacts arising from air pollution on the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation, specifically Holcroft Moss. The agreed mitigation measure was the preparation of a Joint SPD, the Holdcroft Moss Planning Obligations Joint SPD. This SPD was adopted by Bury and Rochdale Councils in May 2025.

3.3 Therefore, it is the opinion of Bury and Rochdale Councils’ that the draft SBDF SPD is not likely to have additional significant effect on any European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects than those already screened and mitigated for in the PfE HRA.

3.4 Accordingly, no “appropriate assessment” is required to be made under Regulations 63,64 and 65 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) before the Council seeks to undertake public consultation on the draft SPD.

3.5 The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit have confirmed that they agree with the Council's conclusion that the Appropriate Assessment stage of HRA is not required on the basis of the agreed PfE mitigation measures.