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appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, including any representations made by the Conservators.

Having regard to the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment, as competent authority, the Council may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the EFSAC (subject to certain exceptions which apply in the case of overriding public interest). In other words, the Council cannot adopt the EFDLP, or grant planning permission, unless it is convinced that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the EFSAC.

In accordance with recent decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union (“CJEU”), an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of a plan or project for a protected site entails, first, that, before that plan or project is approved, all aspects of that plan or project that might affect the conservation objectives of that site are identified. Second, such an assessment cannot be considered to be appropriate if it contains lacunae (i.e., omissions) and does not contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt as to the effects of the plan or project on that site. Third, all aspects of the plan or project in question which may, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, affect the conservation objectives of that site must be identified, in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field (see e.g., *Holohan v An Bord Pleanála* (Case C-461/17)).

Where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the Appropriate Assessment must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons, capable of dispelling reasonable scientific doubt concerning the absence of adverse effects to the integrity of the site concerned (see *Holohan* (above)).