



Chippenham Site Allocations Plan

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

June 2015

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Chippenham Site Allocations Plan	1
3. Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA.....	3
4. Initial HRA Screening Assessment.....	5
5. Conclusion and Recommendations.....	7

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of land use plans is to ensure that protection of the integrity of European sites is part of the planning process at a regional and local level. Natura 2000 is the European wide network of protected areas, recognised as 'sites of Community importance' under the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). These sites are known as European sites; including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). HRA of plans and projects is required by Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EC Habitats Directive.

2. Chippenham Site Allocations Plan

- 2.1 The emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) proposes that approximately 5,090 new homes should be provided in the Chippenham Community Area. It is suggested that at least 4,510 of these should be at Chippenham town. Core Policy 10 of the WCS estimated that the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan should look to allocate strategic mixed use sites to accommodate 26.5ha of employment land and 2,625 dwellings (revised to 1,936 excluding sites that have already been built or have planning permission in April 2014).
- 2.2 The WCS identified a set of strategic areas east of the A350 as potential directions for future expansion (areas A, B, C, D and E), within which site options have been confirmed (Chippenham Site Allocations Plan Topic Paper 1: Site Selection, 2015).
- 2.3 The Chippenham Site Allocations Plan has identified the preferred areas and site options in order of priority. These are:

1. Area E, Option E2: South West Chippenham

- a. Approximately 1,000 dwellings (850 within the plan period)
- b. 18ha employment land (B1, B2, and B8 uses of the Use Classes Order)
- c. Primary school
- d. Local centre
- e. Extensive riverside country park
- f. Strategic landscaping and open space to retain and reinforce existing hedgerows and establish new areas of substantial planting
- g. Development will be subject to the following requirements:
 - i. surface water management that achieves equivalent or less than current Greenfield rates of run-off
 - ii. financial contributions toward measures in the Chippenham transport strategy
 - iii. completion of a pedestrian and cycle route across the River Avon connecting to the town centre
 - iv. a design and layout that preserves the importance and settings to designated heritage assets
 - v. measures to enhance the character of the Rowden conservation area

- h. Development will take place in accordance with a masterplan for the site approved by the Council prior to commencement.

2. Area B, a reduced Option B1: Rawlings Green

- a. Approximately 650 dwellings
- b. 5ha of land for employment (B1, B2, C2, D1 and D2 of the Use Classes Order)
- c. Primary school
- d. Distributor standard road from the B4069 to the eastern boundary of the site and to Cocklebury lane, including connection over the main railway line
- e. Strategic landscaping and open space to retain and reinforce existing hedgerows and establish new areas of substantial planting; and
- f. 10ha Country Park along the northern edge of new development linking to the existing recreation areas along the river to Monkton Park area
- g. Development will be subject to the following requirements:
 - i. surface water management that achieves equivalent or less than current Greenfield rates of run-off
 - ii. completion of all distributor roads and a road crossing of the railway before the completion of the 200th dwelling
 - iii. a design and layout that preserves the setting and importance of listed buildings on the site
- h. All other aspects of development will take place in accordance with a masterplan for the site approved by the Council prior to commencement.

3. Area C, Option C1: East Chippenham

- a. Approximately 850 dwellings
- b. 20ha of land for employment (B1 and B2 of the Use Classes Order)
- c. Primary school
- d. Distributor standard road from north-western boundary of the site to the A4, including connection over the River Avon (an Eastern Link Road)
- e. Strategic landscaping and open space to retain and reinforce existing hedgerows, establish new areas of substantial planting and landscaping and to provide a visual boundary to the town along the route of the Eastern Link Road
- f. 35ha Country Park along the western side of new development
- g. Development will be subject to the following requirements:
 - i. surface water management that achieves less than current Greenfield rates of run-off and decreases flood risks
 - ii. completion of a road crossing of the River Avon
 - iii. completion of the Eastern Link Road
 - iv. financial contributions toward measures in the Chippenham transport strategy

- v. a design and layout that preserves the setting and importance of listed buildings on the site
 - h. All other aspects of development will take place in accordance with a masterplan for the site approved by the Council prior to commencement.
- 2.4 These three allocated sites will accommodate approximately 2,500 homes of which around 2,350 may be built within the plan period up to 2026.
- 2.5 New roads are proposed in two of the allocation sites. The Eastern Link Road is required to connect Areas B (Rawlings Green) and C (East Chippenham) to the A350 north of Chippenham and the A4 to the east. Other roads that are required to facilitate development in these areas were included in the WCS or have already been committed. Area E does not require a new link road, as suitable access can be provided from the A350.

3. Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA

- 3.1 Chippenham was not identified as a principal settlement that falls within 15km of Salisbury Plan Special Protection Area (SPA) or within 8km of the New Forest SPA, or within 5km of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with regard to the potential for increased recreational pressure. It is therefore concluded that the proposed site allocations in Chippenham are unlikely to have significant effects on European sites due to increased recreation.
- 3.2 The WCS HRA (2009, 2011, 2012, and 2013) screened in hydrological/hydrogeological and nitrogen deposition potential effects of development at Chippenham upon Natura 2000 sites within 15km.

Hydrology/Hydrogeology

- 3.3 The European sites likely to be affected were identified in the WCS HRA as:
- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC
 - Salisbury Plain SPA and SAC
 - North Meadows and Clattinger Farm SAC
 - River Avon SAC
 - Pewsey Downs SAC
- 3.4 The WCS HRA confirms that Chippenham lies within the Wessex Water North Water Resource Zone. A Habitats Directive, that a Review of Abstraction Consents has identified that abstraction will be reduced and that a new 'Water Grid' is proposed to move water from areas of surplus to areas of deficit. No additional abstraction and hence no impact on Natura 2000 sites is anticipated. The 'Water Grid' was approved by OFWAT and implementation commenced in 2010 (Wessex Water Services Ltd Water Resources Management Plan, June 2010). The WCS HRA also confirmed that current licences have undergone HRA by the Environment Agency, as has Wessex

Water's Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP), therefore the Council is satisfied that the issue does not require further assessment.

- 3.5 Water quality issues, including surface water drainage, will be dealt with through Development Management, as described in Core Policy 50. The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) and suitable pollution control measures will be required for most proposals. Chippenham lies within the River Avon (Bristol) catchment and the River Avon (Hampshire) SAC is therefore unlikely to be adversely affected as there is no mechanism for ground water or surface water to directly pollute the adjacent catchment.

Nitrogen Deposition

- 3.6 The European sites likely to be affected were identified in the WCS HRA as:
- Porton Down SPA
 - Solent and Southampton SPA
 - North Meadows and Clattinger Farm SAC
 - River Avon SAC
 - Cotswold Beechwoods SAC
 - Rodborough Common SAC
- 3.7 The WCS contains policies to encourage more sustainable forms of transport, which could help reduce transport's impact on air quality and now has a specific policy to help to improve air quality. Core Policy 55 'Air Quality' sets out measures that may be required to contribute to the air quality strategy for Wiltshire. The February 2012 WCS HRA report recommended that Policy 55 identified the role of Low Emission Strategies (DEFRA 2010) as a way of tackling transport related emissions and the need to consider the potential for air quality impacts on European sites" (WCS HRA, 2013). Paragraph 6.110 of the WCS was amended to read: "*Development which could potentially impact upon Natura 2000 sites through contributions to aerial deposition e.g. industrial processes within 10km of a SAC will require an assessment of the likely impacts in accordance with published guidance. Where mitigation is required, this may be delivered through a local emissions strategy.*"
- 3.8 The WCS HRA refers to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which identified 200 metres as the distance beyond which the contribution of traffic emissions to local pollutant concentrations is considered to be negligible. It goes on to refer to Natural England's confirmation that assessments of development plans should focus on European sites within 200m of an affected road (English Nature, 16th May 2006, letter to Runnymede Borough Council, 'Conservation Regulations 1994, Runnymede Borough Council Local Development Framework').
- 3.9 The proposed new roads in the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan do not lie within 200m of a European site and therefore the Council is satisfied that the issue does not require further assessment.

4. Initial HRA Screening Assessment

a) Initial screening of individual elements of the selected sites

Site Option	Type of Allocation	Likely Significant Effects?	Comments and recommendations
Option E2: South West Chippenham	Housing	No	Limit housing density to ensure adequate buffer adjacent to hedgerows and woodlands to prevent interference with the amenity of new dwellings. Boundary features should be excluded from the curtilages of dwellings.
	Employment	No	
	School	No	
	Local centre	No	
	Country Park	No	Biodiversity gain is expected as part of the enhancements and management of new and existing habitats within the country park.
	Landscaping	No	An opportunity for native species planting to enhance biodiversity.
	Footbridge over River Avon	No	Impact on River Avon (County Wildlife Site) and bat flight lines (SAC species, the Bechstein's bat, has been recently recorded in this area and horseshoe bats are also present) would need to be fully considered as part of the Development Management process in line with the Council's Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC HRA Guidance. Add "<i>and bat flight lines</i>" at the end of para 7.17 of Topic Paper 1: Site Selection report and the associated section in the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.
Masterplan	No	Consultation on the masterplan must include the Council's Ecologist.	
Option B1: Rawlings Green	Housing	No	Limit housing density to ensure adequate buffer adjacent to hedgerows and woodlands to prevent interference with the amenity of new dwellings. Boundary features should be excluded from the curtilages of dwellings.
	Employment	No	
	School	No	
	County Park	No	Biodiversity gain is expected as part of the enhancements and appropriate management of existing and newly created habitats within the country park.
	Eastern Link Road	No	No European site within 200m of Chippenham.
Landscaping	No	An opportunity for native species	

Site Option	Type of Allocation	Likely Significant Effects?	Comments and recommendations
			planting to enhance biodiversity.
	Railway road bridge	No	Bridge design and construction must consider impact on linear wildlife corridor and bat flight lines.
	Masterplan	No	Consultation on the masterplan must include the Council's Ecologist.
Option C1: East Chippenham	Housing	No	Limit housing density to ensure adequate buffer adjacent to hedgerows and woodlands to prevent interference with the amenity of new dwellings. Boundary features should be excluded from the curtilages of dwellings.
	Employment	No	
	School	No	
	Country Park	No	Biodiversity gain is expected as part of the enhancements and appropriate management of existing and newly created habitats within the country park.
	Eastern Link Road	No	No European site within 200m of Chippenham. Impact on River Avon (County Wildlife Site) and bat flight lines (SAC species, the Bechstein's bat, has been recently recorded in this area and horseshoe bats are also present) would need to be fully considered as part of the Development Management process in line with the Council's Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC HRA Guidance. Bat flight lines should be recognised as ecological constraints to development. Bat activity surveys to inform site layout and landscaping would be required to inform Development Management.
	Landscaping	No	An opportunity for native species planting to enhance biodiversity.
	Masterplan	No	Consultation on the masterplan must include the Council's Ecologist.

b) Assessment of all elements of the plan in-combination

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- 4.1 The WCS has been subject to HRA, including appropriate assessment, in accordance with the Habitats Regulations to the satisfaction of the Inspector and the statutory consultees. Upon review of the April 2014 HRA (December 2014), the Council is

confident that the conclusions of that assessment remain valid. The HRA process has therefore objectively concluded that the WCS would not have an adverse effect upon Natura 2000 /European sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

- 4.2 The Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is being prepared as a result of the requirements of Core Policy 10 of the WCS. Most of the aspects of the site allocations were already included in the WCS and therefore, there is unlikely to be any in-combination significant effects due to the site allocations in Chippenham.

Neighbouring development plans

- 4.3 An addendum to the WCS HRA in December 2014, states “*These have progressed relatively little since April 2014, and none of the updated plans have changed so significantly as to alter the conclusions of the April 2014 HRA (Section 5 / Appendix 2)*”.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 5.1 The Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the integrity of European sites within 15km. The majority of land uses have already been assessed in the WCS HRA documents (2009 – 2014) and the findings of this HRA process are largely still applicable to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.
- 5.2 The comments and recommendations provided in the table in section 4a above should be considered and implemented, including the addition of the wording “and bat flight lines” to paragraph 7.17 of Topic Paper 1: Site Selection and the associated section in the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, so that it reads: “*A footbridge should be located as sensitively as possible to avoid impact on riparian habitats and provide improved pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre avoiding busy roads and **bat flight lines.***”
- 5.3 Mitigation for likely significant effects has already been included within the WCS, including specific policies dealing with air quality, and HRA Guidance produced by the Council, including for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC. No additional mitigation is recommended at this time in relation to the proposals in the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan and potential impacts on European sites.
- 5.4 The Plan is therefore screened out of requiring any further assessment under HRA

23rd June 2015

Tim McCombe
Senior Planning Officer
Economy and Regeneration
Economic Development and Planning
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Landscape and Design Team
Economic Development and Planning
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Dear Tim,

Re: – Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Update of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan

With reference to your email dated 9th June 2015, thank you for consulting the Landscape and Design Team on the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan Proposed Modifications to Pre-Submission Draft Plan. I confirm that the proposed modifications will not affect the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan and the Plan would not have any significant effects on European sites (Natura 2000).

The proposed modifications to the Plan relate to the re-wording of policies, explanatory text and points of clarification in response to comments received as part of the consultation process. The proposals for development remain the same; therefore, the HRA does not need to be revised.

Yours sincerely,

MJ Dodd

Melanie Dodd
Ecologist

Direct line: 18281
Email: melanie.dodd@wiltshire.gov.uk

This document was published by the Spatial Planning team, Economic Development and Planning, Wiltshire Council.

For further information please visit the following website:

[www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/
chippenhamsiteallocationsplan.htm](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/chippenhamsiteallocationsplan.htm)