

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The methodology used for this HRA has drawn from draft guidance on strategic HRA commissioned by Natural England’s predecessor<sup>9</sup>, and taken account of more recent draft guidance for Natural England on HRA of LDDs<sup>10</sup>. As shown in Table 1, the HRA involves three stages. This section of the report outlines the approach used in each stage of the HRA.

**Table 1: The Habitats Regulation Assessment Process**

<b>Stage 1:</b>	
<b>Screening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Natura 2000 sites within and adjoining the Core Strategy area and acquire, examine and understand the conservation objectives for each feature of the site.</li> <li>Consider the changes that policies and proposals in the plan may cause.</li> <li>Assess whether any elements of the plan are likely to have a significant effect on any interest feature of each N2K site, either indirectly, directly, alone or in combination with other projects and plans.</li> <li>If no significant effects are likely to occur as a result of implementation, the plan (or certain policies and proposals within it) can be published with no further reference to the Habitat Regulations, i.e. ‘screened out’ from stage 2. If there are likely significant effects arising from elements of the plan on certain N2K sites, or it is uncertain whether such effects will be significant, progress to stage 2.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2:</b>	
<b>Appropriate Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an assessment of the implications of the plan (those policies and proposals within it identified in stage 1 as requiring AA) for each N2K site likely to be affected, in light of their conservation objectives.</li> <li>Consider how the plan in combination with other plans or projects will interact and affect the site when implemented.</li> <li>Consider the effect of the plan on the integrity of the site could be mitigated and consider alternatives or develop mitigation measures.</li> <li>If it can be demonstrated that the plan will not have an adverse effect on the European sites, the plan can be adopted. If the plan is still likely to have an adverse impact on the site(s) progress to stage 3.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3:</b>	
<b>Assessment where no alternatives exist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The competent authority must demonstrate that there are no alternative solutions to the plan which are less damaging.</li> <li>The competent authority must establish if there are ‘<i>imperative reasons of overriding public interest</i>’ to proceed with the plan or policy.</li> <li>Identify and agree compensation measures and how these will be monitored.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> David Tyldesley and Associates, March 2007. Draft Guidance: The Assessment of Regional Spatial Strategies and Sub-Regional Strategies under the Provisions of the Habitats Regulations. For English Nature.

<sup>10</sup> David Tyldesley and Associates, February 2009. Revised Draft Guidance: The Habitats Regulations Assessment of Local Development Documents. For Natural England.

---

## Stage I: Screening

### Site selection:

2.2 The first step in the screening process is to identify the N2K sites which need to be considered within the HRA. The Core Strategy relates to the former administrative area of Salisbury District, known as south Wiltshire (or the Salisbury Housing Market Area (HMA) as detailed within the South West draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)), excluding the southern part of the former district that falls within the New Forest National Park. All N2K sites that fall within the Core Strategy area have been included, which are:

- River Avon SAC
- Salisbury Plain SAC, SPA
- Porton Down SPA
- Prescombe Down SAC
- Chilmark Quarries SAC
- Great Yews SAC

2.3 In line with previous draft English Nature guidance<sup>6</sup> and as agreed with the Steering Group, a 10 km buffer was placed around the former district boundary in order to identify designated sites which are outside of the Core Strategy area but could potentially be affected by the Core Strategy. These are:

- Avon Valley SPA, Ramsar site
- Dorset Heaths SAC
- Dorset Heathlands SPA, Ramsar site
- Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC
- Mells Valley SAC
- Mendip Woodlands SAC
- Montisfont Bats SAC
- New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar site
- Solent Maritime SAC
- Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Ramsar site

- 
- 2.4 It should be noted that Ramsar, SAC and SPA sites are designated under different legislation for different reasons. As such, each type of site has different qualifying features but it is often the case that one site could benefit from a combination of designations. Examples of this are the New Forest which enjoys Ramsar, SPA and SAC designations, and the Porton Down SPA whose area is also included within the Salisbury Plain SAC.
- 2.5 **Figure 1** shows the location of the N2K and Ramsar sites in relation to the former district boundary, the Core Strategy area and the 10km buffer.

#### Understanding the sites

- 2.6 Having identified all the relevant designated sites, it is necessary to understand and catalogue each site's conservation interests. This information is shown in **Appendix 3** and **4** for sites within and outside south Wiltshire respectively, providing information on the qualifying interests (reasons why the site has been designated), factors which maintain the site integrity and information on the favourable conditions required for each of the qualifying interests of each site has (where available).

#### Review of the Core Strategy

- 2.7 Drawing on the Screening and initial Appropriate Assessment work undertaken in 2008 for the previous Core Strategy Preferred Options and its policies, the revised policies included in the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy (v3, April 2009) were reviewed for the May 2009 draft HRA Report, in order to determine whether each policy individually or in combination with other options, plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant impact on any N2K sites. Each of the policies were compared against the list of potential types of impacts shown in **Table 2** below, which were adapted from a list contained within the Draft SW RSS Appropriate Assessment Scoping Report, to identify what significant impact a particular option could have. In order to assist this, each draft policy was categorised as to its likely effects on N2K sites. Four categories of potential effects were used, with further subcategories, as provided within section 6 and tables 2-4 of the draft Natural England guidance (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2009). The four main categories are provided in **Table 3** below, and all sub-categories are provided in **Appendix 5**.

**Table 2: Types of impacts and operations which potentially affect N2K sites**

<b>BROAD CATEGORIES, AND EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON NATURA 2000 SITES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES OF OPERATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPACTS</b>
<p><b>Physical loss</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal (including offsite effects, e.g. foraging habitats)</li> <li>• Smothering</li> <li>• Habitat degradation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development (e.g. housing, employment, infrastructure, tourism,)</li> <li>• Infilling e.g. of mines, water bodies)</li> <li>• Alterations or works to disused quarries</li> <li>• Structural alterations to buildings (bat roosts)</li> <li>• Afforestation</li> <li>• Tipping</li> <li>• Cessation of or inappropriate management for nature conservation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical Damage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sedimentation / silting</li> <li>• Prevention of natural processes</li> <li>• Habitat degradation</li> <li>• Erosion</li> <li>• Trampling</li> <li>• Fragmentation</li> <li>• Severance / barrier effect</li> <li>• Edge effects</li> <li>• Fire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood defences</li> <li>• Port activity</li> <li>• Mineral extraction</li> <li>• Recreation (e.g. motor cycling, cycling, walking, horse riding, water sports, caving)</li> <li>• Development (e.g. infrastructure, tourism, adjacent housing etc)</li> <li>• Vandalism</li> <li>• Arson</li> <li>• Cessation of or inappropriate management for nature conservation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non-physical disturbance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise</li> <li>• Visual presence</li> <li>• Human presence</li> <li>• Light pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development (e.g. housing, industrial)</li> <li>• Recreation (e.g. dog walking, water sports)</li> <li>• Industrial activity</li> <li>• Mineral extraction</li> <li>• Navigation</li> <li>• Vehicular traffic</li> <li>• Artificial lighting (e.g. street lighting)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Water table / availability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drying</li> <li>• Flooding /stormwater</li> <li>• Water level stability</li> <li>• Changes in coastal water levels</li> <li>• Water flow (e.g. reduction in velocity of surface water)</li> <li>• Barrier effect (on migratory species)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water abstractions</li> <li>• Drainage interception (e.g. reservoir, dam, infrastructure and other development).</li> <li>• Increased discharge (e.g. drainage, run-off).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Toxic contamination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water pollution</li> <li>• Soil contamination</li> <li>• Air pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrochemical application and runoff</li> <li>• Navigation</li> <li>• Oil / chemical spills</li> <li>• Tipping</li> <li>• Domestic waste</li> <li>• Vehicular traffic</li> <li>• Industrial waste /emissions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non toxic contamination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrient enrichment (e.g. of soils and water)</li> <li>• Algal blooms</li> <li>• Changes in salinity</li> <li>• Changes in thermal regime</li> <li>• Changes in turbidity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural runoff</li> <li>• Sewage discharge</li> <li>• Water abstraction</li> <li>• Industrial activity</li> <li>• Flood defences</li> </ul>

BROAD CATEGORIES, AND EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON NATURA 2000 SITES	EXAMPLES OF OPERATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air pollution (dust)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Biological Disturbance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct mortality</li> <li>• Out-competition by non-native species</li> <li>• Selective extraction of species</li> <li>• Introduction of disease</li> <li>• Rapid population fluctuations</li> <li>• Natural succession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development (e.g. housing areas with domestic and public gardens)</li> <li>• Predation by domestic pets</li> <li>• Introduction of non-native species (e.g. from gardens)</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Hunting</li> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Changes in management practices (e.g. grazing regimes, access controls, cutting / clearing)</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Main Screening Categories of potential effects**

<u>Screening Categories</u>	<u>Potential effects of plan policy</u>
Category A	Elements of the plan that would have <u>no negative effect</u> on a N2K site at all.
Category B	Elements of the plan that could have an effect, but the likelihood is there would be <u>no significant negative effect</u> on a N2K site either alone or in combination with other elements of the same plan, or other plans and projects.
Category C	Elements of the plan that could or would be <u>likely to have a significant effect alone</u> and will require the plan to be subject to an appropriate assessment before the plan may be adopted.
Category D	Elements of the plan that would be <u>likely to have a significant effect in combination</u> with other elements of the same plan, or other plans or projects and will require the plan to be subject to an appropriate assessment before the plan may be adopted.

Source: David Tyldesley and Associates, 2009. See also **Appendix 5** for all subcategories.

2.8 The screening of the draft Core Strategy policies was subsequently revisited, reviewed and updated to take account of policy changes, in June 2009 (based on v8 policies), and in July 2009 (based on v13, Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy) for this report (see paragraphs 1.17-1.19 above). A summary of the revisions, deletions and renumbering of draft Core Strategy policies between April 2009 (v3) and the current version assessed (v13, subject to consultation) is included as **Appendix 6**.

2.9 The screening of the current Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy policies is carried out in **Appendix 7**, and discussed in **Section 3** of this report. In light of available guidance, significant effects were considered to be those which may reasonably be predicted as a likely

---

(i.e. not merely a fanciful possibility) consequence of the Core Strategy that may undermine the conservation objectives of the features for which the site/s have been designated, excluding trivial or inconsequential effects. Where there is doubt about the significance of the effects, the 'precautionary principle' applies and further research should be undertaken at the next 'appropriate assessment' stage.

#### Review of other plans and projects

- 2.10 Consideration has been given to the potential effects of the draft Core Strategy policies in combination with other plans and projects, to inform both the Screening and Appropriate Assessment stages. This involved an initial review of the likely effects of other plans and projects on N2K sites and of the likely effects of these in combination with the draft Core Strategy policies.
- 2.11 The documents reviewed for this purpose has followed the list of items prepared by the Council in consultation with Natural England (included in **Appendix 8**). Key plans and projects reviewed include:
- South West Regional Spatial Strategy: Secretary of State's Proposed Changes, and HRA Report, July 2008; and previous Draft RSS, HRA Report (February 2007) and evidence base for Examination in Public, 2006/07;
  - South East RSS: The South East Plan and HRA (April 2009), previous HRAs for Draft RSS and Proposed Changes;
  - Salisbury District Local Plan, and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance including Porton Down Masterplan;
  - Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council, Minerals and Waste Core Strategies Submission Reports: Habitats Regulations Assessment Report, February 2008;
  - Adjacent Local Development Documents and associated HRA reports, including:
    - Test Valley Borough draft Core Strategy (2008, 2009);
    - New Forest District draft Core Strategy (2008);
    - New Forest Draft Plan (2008);
    - North Dorset LDDs and Screening for AA (2007);
    - Dorset Heathlands Interim Planning Framework 2006-09;
    - Wiltshire Local Development Scheme (April 2009) and extant development plans;

- 
- West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD;
  - Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7-2010/11;
  - Environment Agency's Draft River Basin Management Plan, South West River Basin District (Dec 2008);
  - Wessex Water, Water Resources Management Plan (2008);
  - Defence-related projects, including the Salisbury Plain Training Area Eastern Infrastructure Project, and proposed military housing at Tidworth.
- 2.12 **Appendix 9** summarises the issues arising from the review of other plans and projects for N2K sites, and identifies potential effects that may arise in combination with the policies of the draft Core Strategy.
- 2.13 Those Core Policies identified as likely to have a significant effect on N2K sites, alone or in combination with other policies, were carried forward to the appropriate assessment stage for more detailed examination. As above, the screening of the draft Core Strategy policies was subsequently revisited, reviewed and updated to take account of policy changes, in June 2009 (based on v8 policies), and in July 2009 (based on v13, Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy) for this report. A summary of policy changes is included as **Appendix 6**.

### **Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment**

- 2.14 An appropriate assessment has been undertaken on those current Core Strategy policies considered likely to have a significant effect on the N2K sites, discussed in **Section 4** of this report. This has involved more detailed literature review, the assessment of potential impacts to an appropriate and more comprehensive level, and consultations and meetings (see **Appendix 1**) with the following:
- Environment Agency, Natural England and Government Office for the South West: water abstraction and waste water discharge in relation to the River Avon SAC: two meetings undertaken on 2 February and 26 March 2009;
  - New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA), and Natural England: recreational impacts on the New Forest SPA, SAC and Ramsar site: workshop organised by NFNPA, December 2008 with wider audience; and meeting held in April 2009 on specific issues for South Wiltshire Core Strategy;

- 
- Defence Estates: recreational impacts on Salisbury Plain SAC and SPA: meeting held May 2009.

2.15 A range of other policies included in the draft Core Strategy which aim to provide mitigation or avoidance measures for identified effects, are also reviewed as part of the appropriate assessment, and recommendations made to address relevant issues identified.

### 3.0 SCREENING

3.1 **Appendix 5** includes the categories against which draft Core Strategy policies were reviewed in order to make a judgement on whether policies should be subject to an 'appropriate assessment'. **Appendix 7** categorises the current Core Strategy policies as to their potential effects on N2K site/s, alone and in combination with other relevant plans and projects. It also includes an up-to-date commentary on the policies which were previously screened into the Appropriate Assessment stage (at v3 of the draft Core Strategy) due to their potential to have significant effects on N2K sites, and how these have been revised by the avoidance and mitigation measures introduced at the Appropriate Assessment stage. A summary of the revisions, deletions and renumbering of draft policies is also included as **Appendix 6**.

3.2 A number of Core Policies were previously assessed as having the potential to have significant effects, and were considered to require examination at the appropriate assessment stage of HRA. Seven of those policies were earlier versions of the following four current Core Strategy policies. The previous version 3 numbering is noted in *brackets* below:

- **Core Policy 1: The Settlement Strategy and Distribution of Growth in South Wiltshire:**

*(This combines elements of previous v3 policies 21: Housing Supply in Years 1 to 5 of the Core Strategy; 22: Meeting the longer term housing needs of the Area; 24: Continuation of existing employment allocations; and 25: Strategy for delivering strategic new employment opportunities):*

Potential effects from residential development, including recreational effects on New Forest sites and Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA, and effects of water demand/abstraction and wastewater discharge on River Avon SAC; potential disturbance effects of employment