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- 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

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development near Porton Down SPA; and potential urban runoff, physical damage and disturbance effects on River Avon SAC.

- **Core Policy 2: Strategic Allocations:**

*(This policy includes elements of previous v3 policies 20: Housing Distribution, 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 urban runoff, physical damage and disturbance effects on River Avon SAC from residential and employment developments.

- **Core Policy 7: Maltings / Central Car Park:**

*(Previously v3 policy 37):*

Potential effects from urban runoff, physical damage and disturbance on adjacent River Avon SAC.

- **Core Policy 12: Porton Down:**

*(Previously v3 policy 51):*

Potential disturbance and physical damage effects on Porton Down SPA from adjacent development (in combination with *previous v3 policy 24, now part of Core Policy 1*).

3.3 As a result of the revisions to the previous draft Core Strategy assessed through HRA, one draft policy that was previously 'screened in' to Appropriate Assessment has been removed from the Core Strategy, namely *previous v3 draft policy 14: Strategic Highway Projects*.

3.4 The following draft policies have also been reviewed in detail for their likely effectiveness as avoidance and mitigation measures:

- 19: Water Efficiency and the River Avon SAC (*previous v3 policy 15*);
- 20: Managing Phosphate Levels in Watercourses (*previous v3 policy 16*);
- 21: Flood Risks (*previous v3 policy 41*);
- 23: Green Infrastructure and Habitat Networks (*previous v3 policy 18*);
- 25: Air Quality (*previously part of v3 policy 43: Environmental Pollution*).

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- 3.5 The above current policies 21, 23 and 25 were previously deleted during revisions to the draft Core Strategy, but were then reinstated in response to the recommendations of the June 2009 draft HRA report and informal comments from the HRA Steering Group (Environment Agency and Natural England). As a result of revisions to the draft Core Strategy, a number of other draft policies that were previously reviewed for their role in providing avoidance and mitigation measures were subsequently removed from the Core Strategy: previous draft policies on Recreational Open Space Requirements (v3 policy 11), and Biodiversity (v3 policy 40). Recommendations were subsequently made in previous draft HRA reports which have resulted in revisions to other policies and the stated Objectives of the Core Strategy.
- 3.6 Other draft Core Policies screened out from any appropriate assessment are those which are likely to have no negative or significant effect, or a positive effect, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects (see **Appendix 7**).
- 3.7 The N2K sites screened in for appropriate assessment include the following, due to identified effects highlighted above:
- River Avon SAC
  - Salisbury Plain SAC, SPA
  - Porton Down SPA
  - New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar
- 3.8 The following Sites are screened out from appropriate assessment as no significant effects are considered likely to arise from the Core Strategy alone or in combination with other plans and projects, including due to the distances from existing settlements and other proposed development areas within south Wiltshire, and additional reasons below:
- **Avon Valley SPA, Ramsar:**  
Considered sufficiently downstream to avoid significant effects. Water-related effects on River Avon SAC are assessed, and avoidance and mitigation measures for water quality are included in Core Policy 20.
  - **Chilmark Quarries SAC:**

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Considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy. Site is considered to be well protected from development and disturbance, with long-term safeguards including preventing the collapse of the underground voids and restricting unauthorised access. The potential for any increase in recreational disturbance to designated site as a result of the Core Strategy is considered unlikely and not significant. No other potential effects are identified.

- **Great Yews SAC:**

Considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy. No effects are identified.

- **Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Ramsar site:**

Potential recreational effects of development are being adequately mitigated through developer contributions to greenspace provision and access management projects from developments within 5km of the N2K sites, under the Dorset Heathlands Interim Planning Framework (IPF) 2006-09 adopted by local authorities. These sites are more than 5km from the Core Strategy boundary and would not require mitigation by the IPF. The IPF will be replaced by a joint DPD, and replacement policies will be reviewed when relevant.

- **Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC:**

Considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy. No effects are identified. This site is closest to Shaftesbury, where the effects of future development were not considered significant in North Dorset LDF's HRA Screening report.

- **Mells Valley SAC:**

Considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy, and closest to Frome in Mendip district. No effects are identified.

- **Mendip Woodlands SAC:**

Considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy, and closest to Frome in Mendip district. No effects are identified.

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- **Montisfont Bats SAC:**

The Test Valley Pre-Submission Core Strategy HRA (October 2008) identified that habitats within 7.5km of this N2K site is the key area for foraging (at water, deciduous woodland and grassland habitats) used by the Barbastelle bats distance from development areas promoted in Core Strategy. The 7.5km zone covers parts of the Core Strategy area, including Whiteparish and The Common (in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area). As with the Test Valley HRA, it is concluded that any development affecting the above habitats within the 7.5km zone has the potential to affect the bats, but that as the Core Strategy does not promote specific developments in this area, significant effects on this site are considered unlikely to arise from the Core Strategy. Also, the application of HRA at project level should secure protection of this SAC should any effects arise from other developments. This issue should be revisited in the HRA of the Site Specific Allocations DPD for any developments promoted within the 7.5km zone in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area.

- **Prescombe Down SAC:**

Considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy. No effects are identified.

- **Solent Maritime SAC, Solent & Southampton Water SPA:**

Potential increases in visitor pressure and recreational use as a result of residential developments within reach of the Solent sites are considered a concern, and have been subject to ongoing research. The report of Phase I of the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project (February 2009)<sup>11</sup> examined human population and activities, bird population and distribution data, South East RSS policies, stakeholder views, and identified potential mitigation measures. Later phases of research will be undertaken in 2009-10 into the potential effects of development and mitigation measures, and the first year of bird monitoring is due to be reported in August 2009. These sites are however considered sufficiently distant from developments promoted in the Core Strategy for significant effects to arise; the focus of research is considered to be the potential disturbance effects arising from housing developments around the shoreline, including in Portsmouth, Southampton and Fareham. It is considered that the mitigation measures

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<sup>11</sup> Stillman, R. A., Cox, J., Liley, D., Ravenscroft, N., Sharp, J. & Wells, M. (2009) Solent disturbance and mitigation project: Phase I report. Report to the Solent Forum. Available at <http://www.solentforum.org/current/>

included in the Core Strategy in relation to Green Infrastructure, particularly in relation to the New Forest N2K sites through the appropriate assessment, would be likely to secure protection for these N2K sites also from any residential development in south Wiltshire, so as to avoid any significant effects. Natural England have specifically confirmed their agreement to the above approach in informal comments during July 2009.