

# COLERNE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken to inform a Regulation 14 consultation response from Wiltshire Council to the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan, hereafter referred to as the NP, submitted to the council in October 2020.
- 1.2. The HRA has been carried out to comply with Regulation 105 of the Habitats Regulations 2017. Under these Regulations, a competent authority must consider whether a relevant plan is likely to have a significant effect on any European sites (Natura 2000 sites) before deciding to give any consent, permission or other authorisation. If the screening exercise demonstrates significant effects are likely, whether or not these are addressed through mitigation measures<sup>1</sup>, the competent authority must undertake an appropriate assessment (AA) to examine the effects of the plan on the conservation objectives of the European sites in question, consult the appropriate nature conservation body and have regard to its representations. Both the screening and any subsequent AA must consider the impacts of the plan alone and in combination with other plans or projects.
- 1.3. It is usually the case that a plan of this nature does not go into the detailed aspects of development proposals and therefore the full effects of potential development cannot be accurately assessed at the plan making stage. Those details will typically be identified through a planning application which would be subject to further, more detailed HRA. The principle that a HRA need only consider the effects of a proposal or policy in as much detail as is specified by the plan was explained by Advocate General Kokott in a judgement brought against the UK government in 2005:  
*“Many details are regularly not settled until the time of the final permission. It would also hardly be proper to require a greater level of detail in preceding plans or the abolition of multi-stage planning and approval procedures so that the assessment of implications can be concentrated on one point in the procedure. Rather, adverse effects on areas of conservation must be assessed at every relevant stage of the procedure to the extent possible on the basis of the precision of the plan. This assessment is to be updated with increasing specificity in subsequent stages of the procedure.”*<sup>2</sup>
- 1.4. Where appropriate assessment is undertaken, the competent authority may go on to authorise the plan or project provided that it will not adversely affect the integrity of any European sites. Otherwise the plan cannot be authorised unless it meets specific statutory tests.
- 1.5. Wiltshire Council has conducted the following HRA as competent authority for the Colerne NP. Where risks to European sites are identified, changes are recommended to remove or reduce the risks, and these should be incorporated into the NP before it is made. Likewise, if the policies or planning context change after the HRA is completed, the HRA process must be repeated before the final plan is considered by a referendum and adopted.

## 2. Screening Methodology

- 2.1. Each element of the plan has been categorised against screening criteria developed by Natural England to provide a clear audit trail for the screening assessment.
- 2.2. The screening criteria used are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Court of Justice of the European Union, Case C 323/17 “People Over Wind”/P. Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta

<sup>2</sup> Commission of the European Communities v UK and NI, opinion of Advocate General Kokott, 9 June 2005, Case C-6/04

- Category A1: The policy will not itself lead to development e.g. because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development.
  - Category A2: The policy is intended to protect the natural environment.
  - Category A3: The policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment.
  - Category A4: The policy would positively steer development away from European sites and associated sensitive areas.
  - Category A5: The policy would have no effect because no development could occur through the policy itself, the development being implemented through later policies in the same plan, which are more specific and therefore more appropriate to assess for their effects on European sites and associated sensitive areas.
  - Category B: No significant effect.
  - Category C: Likely significant effect alone; and
  - Category D: Likely significant effects in combination.
- 2.3. The effect of each policy has been considered both individually and in combination with other plans and projects (see Table 1 below). Where potential for likely significant effects have been identified, an appropriate assessment has been undertaken in subsequent sections.

### 3. Higher Level HRAs

#### Wiltshire Core Strategy

1. The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA (October 2009, February 2012<sup>3</sup>, March 2013<sup>4</sup>, February 2014<sup>5</sup> and April 2014<sup>6</sup>) identified general parameters to determine the likelihood of potential impacts on Natura 2000 (European protected) sites. The following potential impact pathways and associated parameters were identified and assessed for the European sites stipulated below.
  - *Recreation - Natura 2000 sites within 5km of the plan area, or where Salisbury Plain SPA/ SAC is within 15km of the plan area (it should be noted that the relevant parameter for the latter has since been revised on the basis of data obtained by means of visitor surveys and is now 6.4km):*
    - Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
    - River Avon SAC
    - New Forest SAC / SPA
    - Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC (added post adoption of Wiltshire Core Strategy)
  - *Hydrology / Hydrogeology - Sites that fall wholly or partly within the Wessex Water Resource Zone and the catchment of the River Test may be susceptible to impact:*

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<sup>3</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Draft - Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, February 2012

<sup>4</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy - Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, March 2013

<sup>5</sup> Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)

<sup>6</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

- Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC
- Pewsey Downs SAC
- North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC
- River Avon SAC
- River Lambourn SAC
- Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain SAC
- Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (River Test drains into Solent)
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA (River Test drains into Solent)
- Chichester and Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) (River Test drains into Solent)
- Portsmouth Harbour SPA (River Test drains into Solent)
- *Air Pollution / Nitrogen Deposition - Natura 2000 sites within 200m of a main road*
  - Porton Down SPA
  - Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
  - Solent and Southampton Water SPA
  - North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC
  - River Avon SAC
  - Rodborough Common SAC
  - Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC
- *Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines / Disturbance*
  - Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC
  - Porton Down SPA
  - Chilmark Quarries SAC (added post adoption of Wiltshire Core Strategy)
  - Mottisfont Bats SAC (added post adoption of Wiltshire Core Strategy)

### **Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan**

2. Since the Core Strategy was adopted, the Council published a pre-submission draft of the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP) together with a HRA dated 21 June 2017. A schedule of proposed changes was considered by Cabinet supported by an Addendum to the HRA dated May 2018. A schedule of changes and an Addendum to the HRA incorporating minor factual changes were published in September 2018 for public consultation. Subsequently, the WHSAP (Council Version, February 2020) was adopted by Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and this was accompanied by the final WHSAP Assessment under the Habitats Regulations (Wiltshire Council, February 2020).
3. The screening criteria for the adopted WHSAP and final HRA were modified for some European sites from those used for the Core Strategy subsequent to the acquisition of results from new surveys, and in light of advice from Natural England. The following screening applies the most up to date criteria available from the WHSAP and HRA.

4. Furthermore, since the Core Strategy was adopted, Natural England (NE) has advised Wiltshire Council of its concerns regarding the growing number of visitors to the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC in recent years which has led to an increase in trampling. NE has advised that this is particularly evident at North Meadow (which is also a National Nature Reserve (NNR)) during April and May when visitors come to see the Snake's-head fritillaries in flower. NE considers that the increase in recreational pressure upon the SAC is primarily as a result of increases in the local population, and that major new housing developments within a short travel distance of North Meadow are likely to add to the existing visitor pressure and trampling effects.

### **Screening of Colerne NP Area**

#### *Recreation*

5. In terms of potential for recreational/visitor impacts upon Natura 2000 sites, the NP area lies well beyond the 8km radius around the New Forest SPA within which the majority of day visitors to the New Forest originate<sup>7</sup>.
6. Recreational pressure on the River Avon SAC is recognised to occur predominately in circumstances where significant development lies in close proximity to the SAC, and this scenario would not arise as a result of any development put forward within the Colerne NP as the SAC is approximately 26km from the plan area at its closest point.
7. In relation to Salisbury Plain, the SAC habitat features were screened out of appropriate assessment for the Core Strategy on the advice of Natural England. Recreational/visitor pressure is a known issue for the Salisbury Plain SPA, nonetheless, the NP area lies well beyond the 6.4km zone around the SPA within which the majority (75%) of visitors to the Plain are expected to live. This parameter around the SPA has been derived from data collated by means of a visitor survey commissioned by the Council in 2015. Therefore, appropriate assessment in respect of this SPA can be screened out and appropriate assessment is not required.
8. The North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC is situated approximately 25km from the NP area at its closest point of and as such appropriate assessment with respect of this Natura 2000 site can be screened out.
9. In terms of potential for recreational pressure on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and associated core roosts, the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (discussed in more detail later on) is supported by a study investigating recreational use of publicly accessible open spaces including the woodlands south of Trowbridge used by roosting Bechstein's bats. The Colerne NP area lies some distance from the areas within which 75% of visitors to these woodlands originate, and as such the potential for new residential development within the Colerne NP area to result in additional recreational pressure upon the woodlands, is deemed to be limited. Therefore, the issue of recreational pressure is not considered further within this HRA and is not considered to trigger appropriate assessment.

#### *Hydrology / Hydrogeology*

10. In terms of hydrology/hydrogeology, Colerne drains into the Bristol Avon, rather than the Hampshire Avon, and as such there is no pathway for a likely significant effect on the River Avon SAC as a result of policies within the NP.
11. No water resource issues have been identified for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC which is the only SAC to lie fully within the Bristol Avon catchment. The Bristol Avon is also not identified as a cause of water resource issues for the Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA.

#### *Air Pollution / Nitrogen Deposition*

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<sup>7</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

12. The Wiltshire Core Strategy identified that increased traffic would lead to potential effects through an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition upon a range of Natura 2000 sites within 200m of a main road. Such effects were considered to be very small and difficult to predict at the strategic level<sup>8</sup> (WCS HRA Update February 2014). The housing site allocations in the Colerne NP allow for about a further ten dwellings which is considered to be a very small number in relation to the total for the county. All of the European sites listed above, except the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, are a considerable distance from the NP area and effects are likely to be negligible. In relation to these sites the Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA concluded no likely significant effect where the existing approach to mitigation in Core Policy 55 is implemented. It is concluded that the proposals for housing in this NP would not have an adverse effect on Natura 2000 sites through nitrogen deposition.

*Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines / Disturbance*

13. In terms of the potential to cause physical damage to features which provide habitat for bats, such as breeding, roosting and foraging habitat, and the potential to interrupt or fragment bat flight lines, or to cause disturbance to such features, it is deemed that the NP area is too remote to have implications for bats at the Chilmark Quarries SAC or indeed the Mottisfont Bats SAC. However, most of the NP area, apart from an area in the north, does lie within the 4km greater horseshoe bat consultation zone/core area around either a component site of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC or a greater horseshoe bat core roost with an established or likely demographic connection to the SAC population. In addition, the southeast extent of the NP area lies within the 2km lesser horseshoe bat consultation zone/core area and the 1.5km Bechstein's bat consultation zone/core area around a component site of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. The southwest section of the NP area lies within the 2km lesser horseshoe bat consultation zone/core area and the 1.5km Bechstein's bat consultation zone/core area around core roosts with an established or likely demographic connection to the SAC population. The northeast section of the NP area falls within the 2km lesser horseshoe bat consultation zone/core area around two core lesser horseshoe bat roosts that have an established or likely demographic connection to the SAC population.
14. The current draft of the Colerne NP puts forward site allocations for development within the aforementioned SAC and core roost consultation zones/core areas, and also supports a range of development within the plan area. Development within the plan area has the potential to lead to physical damage/interruption of flight lines/disturbance in areas outside of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, but which are functionally linked to it. Furthermore, the current wording of the policies within the NP that allocate development sites or support development, currently trigger the requirement for appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations; this is presented in Section 5.
15. The NP area is beyond the potential zone of influence with respect of stone curlews breeding at Porton Down SPA and Salisbury Plain SPA and will not result in physical damage to the habitats within the Natura 2000 sites, nor will it result in the interruption of flight lines or disturbance to breeding stone curlew, such as by means of the introduction of visual stimuli or noise.

#### **4. Screening of Policies in Colerne NP Regulation 14 Consultation Draft**

1. The Colerne NP comprises twenty-eight planning policies. Taking into consideration the location, scale and nature of proposals in the NP, there is a potential mechanism for significant effect on one European site, namely the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. All parts of the Regulation 14 consultation draft of the NP have been screened for potential impacts which may arise from the plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects. It has been identified through the screening stage (Stage 1) of this HRA that ten policies have the potential to give rise to significant effects and are therefore taken forward to appropriate assessment (Stage 2) in Section 5.

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<sup>8</sup> Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)

2. The other eighteen policies within the NP would either not lead directly to development or have no potential to lead to significant effects upon the SAC either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

**TABLE 1: Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening of the Colerne NP**

A / B (Green) - Screened out

C / D (Red) - Screened in

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy BEP1: Character and design	A1	<p>This policy supports development proposals providing designs comply with the relevant guidance in the Design Statement, and it requires applicants to demonstrate compliance by submitting a Design Compliance Statement with any planning application.</p> <p>The policy itself will not lead to development, and instead sets out requirements for any forthcoming development proposals. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure it aligns with this policy and that there will be acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019.</p>	
Policy BEP2: Heritage	A1	<p>This policy sets out requirements for planning applications that would involve demolition or development of, or alterations to the buildings and/or structures listed in the Historic Environment Record. This includes the provision of Heritage Impact Assessments alongside applications, where appropriate.</p> <p>The policy itself will not lead to development, and instead sets out requirements for any forthcoming development proposals. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure it aligns with this policy and that there will be acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy BEP3: Housing policy	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy stipulates criteria that any forthcoming application for residential development must fulfil including that: <i>‘Development must demonstrate how it meets residents’ revealed preferences for small scale developments capable of offering a mix of different dwelling type.’</i> It also specifies: <i>‘In line with the NPPF, where there is developable brownfield land, or a reasonable prospect thereof in the Plan timeframe, brownfield development will be supportable and greenfield development opposed.’</i></p> <p>The policy will not directly lead to development and does not allocate specific sites, instead it sets out criteria with regards to the type of housing that would be supported, and also opposes development of greenfield land. However, the policy does not specify that compliance with the Bat Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) would be required for any new development coming forward within the NP area and that there must be no mechanism for significant adverse effects upon the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of development proposals. This is important because almost the whole NP area, with the exception of a small area in the north, lies within core areas/bat consultation zones around the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and/or within core areas/bat consultation zones around core roosts of Annex II bat species that are functionally linked to the SAC. Therefore, housing development within the NP area, even if not on greenfield sites, could result in the loss and/or degradation of habitat of importance for bats associated with the SAC and as such could give rise to likely significant effects on the SAC.</p> <p>In not referring to the need to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, the policy currently does not wholly align with Policy NEP1, and the potential for likely significant effects on the SAC cannot be screened out and as such the policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>	B

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy BEP4: Housing allocations	C for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy allocates two sites for development. The first is at Thickwood Field, at which the development of approximately five houses is proposed. The policy sets out criteria that must be met for any development at this site, and this includes the need for <i>‘An assessment of potential impacts on bats, following the latest best practice guidelines, must be submitted with any application in line with the recommendations of the Habitats Regulations Assessment associated with this Plan (see NEP1).’</i></p> <p>The site at Thickwood Field comprises a greenfield site with a line of trees along the western extent of the site; these trees are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (N/TPO9) and it is possible that these trees have potential roost features (PRFs) for bat. The site may have foraging/commuting habitat potential for bats associated with the SAC and comprise functionally linked habitat. The site lies approximately 3.5km from the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC at its closest point and as such is located within the 4km core area/consultation zone for Greater horseshoe bats affiliated with the SAC.</p> <p>The second site allocation put forward within the policy is for the development of approximately five affordable houses/apartments at the Constitutional Club. The policy requires that any forthcoming application for development at this site is accompanied by <i>‘An assessment of potential impacts on bats, following the latest best practice guidelines, must be submitted with any application in line with the recommendations of the Habitats Regulations Assessment associated with this Plan (see NEP1).’</i></p> <p>The stipulation within the policy that any forthcoming application for development at either of the two allocated sites must be accompanied by an assessment in respect of bats, is welcomed. Nonetheless, allocation of the Thickwood Field site in particular, within the policy does give rise to potential for a likely significant effect on the aforementioned SAC and as such the policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>	B

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
<p>Policy BEP5: Meeting longer-term housing demand</p>	<p>C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC</p>	<p>This policy deals with longer-term housing need and an expectation that approximately 70 dwellings can be delivered by the <i>'release of MoD brownfield sites'</i>. The policy states that <i>'full delivery of the Longer-Term Housing Need should be met in due course by the announced intention to release for development MoD sites from the former Colerne Airfield/Barracks.'</i> The policy specifies that there would be strong <i>'community support for re-development of the 'Drill Ground' (also locally known as the 'Parade Ground').'</i></p> <p>The policy itself does not actually allocate sites, but it does cite a supported site (non-allocated), namely the Drill Ground site ("the Parade Ground"), and references Section 6 i. of the NP which shows the location of the site and sets out details of supported development. This supported site lies within the greater horseshoe bat 4km core areas/consultation zones around the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and around a core roost that has a likely demographic connection with the SAC. Section 6 i. of the NP specifies that the site comprises a brownfield site, which it is in large part, however, it also appears to comprise relatively large tracts of amenity/improved grassland with a few scattered trees and residential properties on the boundaries of the site. The suitability of the site for bats is likely to be limited, nonetheless, it does lie within the aforementioned zones associated with the SAC and the surrounding landscape has suitability for Annex II bats that are qualifying species of the SAC, with woodland in relatively close proximity to the site. Therefore, an application for development at the site would require compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) as well as Policy NEP1 of the NP. The policy does not, however, stipulate the need to comply with the aforementioned guidance and does not set out a requirement in respect of bats as has been done for some other policies within the NP. As such, the policy does not currently accord with or suitably cross-reference to Policy NEP1 of the NP.</p> <p>The omission from the policy of the need to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, and therefore in turn Policy NEP1, is especially pertinent given that Section 6 ii of the NP puts forward Slaughterford Mill as the second supported site (non-allocated). Whilst it is noted that presumably as a result of the recommendations set out in the HRA commissioned by the NP Steering Group, reference to development at Slaughterford Mill has been removed from the wording of Policy BEP5, the site is still</p>	<p>B</p>

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy BEP6: Sustainable design and construction	A1	<p>This policy specifies:</p> <p><i>‘a. Colerne Parish will support development and infrastructure proposals that contribute to the Wiltshire-wide target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and strongly encourages developers to positively address issues relating to climate change.</i></p> <p><i>b. Any new development in the Parish should aim to meet a high level of sustainability in both design and construction, and be optimised for energy efficiency.</i></p> <p><i>c. Encouragement will be given to applications which include sustainable design and construction approaches in advance of national standards in force at that time.’</i></p> <p>The policy itself will not lead directly to development as it sets out criteria that any new development should meet. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure it aligns with this policy and that there will be acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy BEP7: Infill and backland development	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy states that infill and backland development will be supported for small-scale developments, or schemes such as studios or workshops, subject to criteria set out in the policy.</p> <p>Whilst this policy will not itself lead to development as it doesn’t allocate sites, it does lend support to infill development providing specified criteria are met. Almost the whole of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Nonetheless, the criteria set out within the policy which any proposals for infill and small-scale development must fulfil does not include the requirement for compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance despite stipulating other criteria that must be met, the policy currently does not align with Policy NEP1 of the NP, and the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC cannot be screened out and the policy must be subject to appropriate assessment.</p>	B

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy BEP8: Custom and self-build	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy states that self-build and custom-build housing development proposals will be supported subject to criteria set out in the policy.</p> <p>Whilst this policy will not itself lead to development as it doesn't allocate sites, it does lend support to self-build and custom-build housing development providing specified criteria are met. Almost the whole of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Nevertheless, the criteria detailed in the policy does not include the requirement for compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance despite specifying other criteria that must be met, the policy currently does not align with Policy NEP1 of the NP and the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of Policy BEP8 cannot be screened out at the screening stage of the HRA. As such the policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>	B
Policy BEP9: Permeable surfacing	A1	<p>This policy requires all development proposals to incorporate permeable surfaces for driveways and hard standing areas in excess of 5m<sup>2</sup>, and to mitigate roof water run-off by the provision of on-site storage.</p> <p>The policy itself will not lead to development and instead sets out requirements for any forthcoming development proposals. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure it aligns with this policy and that there will be acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy BEP10: Design for home working	B	<p>This policy states: <i>‘Developments and designs that provide space and telecommunications infrastructure to facilitate home working will be encouraged if in line with all other Plan policies.’</i></p> <p>The policy will not itself lead to development and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any Natura 2000 sites. However, the policy does lend support to the provision of new telecommunications infrastructure providing that it meets all other Plan policies. This caveat is critical given that most of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and any new development could impact habitat functionally linked to the SAC. As such it will be important that any proposals for new infrastructure comply with Policy NEP1 of the NP, as well as Core Policy 50 (CP50) (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) and the NPPF; this would be considered at the planning application stage.</p>	
Policy BEP11: Sustainable land-preparation and contamination control	A1	<p>This policy details contamination control requirements that any proposals for demolition, alteration, extension or refurbishment of existing buildings on ex-MOD sites or new developments on such sites must fulfil.</p> <p>The policy itself will not lead to development and instead sets out requirements that any proposals for development on ex-MOD sites will need to meet. Thus, the policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure it aligns with this policy and that there will be acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy NEP1: Landscape and natural environment	A1 / A2	<p>This policy states:</p> <p><i>‘1. Future development must maintain adequate open landscape space, rural and agricultural in character, between Colerne and other settlements in the Parish so that the landscape continues to provide the overall character and context of the parish.</i></p> <p><i>2. Development will only be supported where it can demonstrate compliance with the Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (2015) or any subsequent update, and where it will not adversely affect any European site or Core Roosts and sensitive features within the Core Areas which are regarded as functionally linked to European sites. All development brought forward within Core Areas shall produce a project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment of the development’s impact on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bat SAC.’</i></p> <p>The second point in the policy has been added as per the recommendation put forward in the HRA (AECOM, September 2020) commissioned by the NP Steering Group and submitted to Wiltshire Council alongside the current draft of the NP. The policy intends to protect the natural environment and sets out criteria for development. The policy itself will not lead to development and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure it aligns with this policy and that there will be acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies, notably CP50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, and the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015), as well as CP51 (Landscape) and CP52 (Green Infrastructure) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the NPPF 2019.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy NEP2: Green infrastructure and biodiversity	A1 / A2	<p>This policy specifies that: <i>‘Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate the provision of a net gain in biodiversity through enhancement and creation of ecological networks within and, where possible, beyond the site.’</i></p> <p>The policy goes on to list a range of factors that proposals for development should give consideration to, including: <i>‘Maintaining and improving the quality of existing green infrastructure, including local networks and corridors, specifically to increase value as a recreation asset and as a habitat for biodiversity;...’</i></p> <p>The policy also requires that any proposals for development shall demonstrate adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. Lastly, it states: <i>‘Development will only be supported where it can demonstrate compliance with the Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (2015) or any subsequent update, and where it will not adversely affect any European site or Core Roosts and sensitive features within the Core Areas which are regarded as functionally linked to European sites. All development brought forward within Core Areas shall produce a project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment of the development’s impact on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bat SAC.’</i></p> <p>The policy will not result in development itself but instead sets out criteria that development must meet with the objective of maintaining and enhancing ecological networks, providing net gains in biodiversity, and protecting and enhancing the GI network within the NP area. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites and details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies including CP 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), CP51 (Landscape) and CP52 (Green Infrastructure) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) and the NPPF 2019.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy NEP3: Local green spaces	A3	<p>This policy specifies that the green spaces shown on the maps included in the NP and listed in the <i>Local Green Spaces Report</i> be designated as Local Green Spaces in accordance with the provision of paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Nine local green spaces are shown on the maps and include a recreation ground, two playgrounds and a football, play and open area.</p> <p>The policy itself will not lead to development as the objective of the policy is to designate and protect local green spaces. As such, the policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European 2000 sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies including Core Policies 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), 51 (Landscape) and 52 (Green Infrastructure) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy NEP4: Key Views	A1 / A3	<p>This policy states:</p> <p><i>‘a. The seven key views identified in the Key Views report must be maintained and protected and any development must avoid any significant adverse impact.</i></p> <p><i>b. Planning applications proposing development which is of a scale that could impact on any Key Views must demonstrate how the proposal enhances and protects the character of the parish given its setting within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.’</i></p> <p>The policy itself will not lead to development but aims to protect key views and positively steer any new development coming forward given that the NP area lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European 2000 sites and details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies including Core Policies 51 (Landscape), 52 (Green Infrastructure) and 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the NPPF 2019.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy EBP1: Sustaining existing employment	B	<p>This policy stipulates that the loss of land and buildings used for employment purposes will not be permitted unless there is evidence to demonstrate that redevelopment for alternative employment use is not possible and the land and/or the buildings have been marketed to local markets for employment use for at least 6 months and have remained unsold/unlet and no reasonable offer has been refused.</p> <p>The policy goes on to state that where a proposal meets the above criteria, the development of land and buildings already used for employment purposes will be supported, providing the proposal meets the four subsequent criteria set out in the policy.</p> <p>The policy relates to the reuse and development of land and/or buildings already used for employment and the policy itself does not promote and will not lead directly to development. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European 2000 sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy EBP2: Encouraging new employment	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy stipulates that the establishment of small-scale employment enterprises on existing sites or on new sites will be supported if five criteria detailed in the policy are met.</p> <p>Whilst this policy will not itself lead to development as it doesn't allocate sites, it does lend support to the development of small-scale employment enterprises on existing sites or on new sites providing specified criteria are met. Almost the whole of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. However, the criteria detailed in the policy does not include the requirement for compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance, despite detailing other criteria that must be met, the policy currently does not accord with Policy NEP1 of the NP and the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of Policy EBP2 cannot be screened out and the policy must be subject to appropriate assessment.</p>	B

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy CP1: Traffic and transport	A1	<p>This policy requires that any development proposals that will generate significant amounts of traffic will need to provide a travel plan, as per Wiltshire Core Policy 62.</p> <p>Evidently the policy itself does not promote development but instead stipulates criteria that must be met if development proposals would generate significant additional traffic. The policy does not pertain to new transport infrastructure and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European 2000 sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy CP2: Walking and cycling	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy supports developments that have a Transport strategy which advocate new and improved networks of routes for pedestrians and cyclists. The policy states: <i>'Where public footpaths or cycleways are newly routed or re-routed, their routing should be sympathetic to landscape and wildlife corridors.'</i></p> <p>Whilst the requirement set out within the policy to be sympathetic to wildlife corridors is welcomed, it does not clearly stipulate the need for any proposals to have regard to and comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) on account of most of the NP area coinciding with core areas/consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Although this policy will not itself lead to development, it does serve to support new and improved footpaths and cycleways. Given that such new routes would likely necessitate the installation of artificial lighting, this in turn has potential to lead to likely significant effects on the SAC if not suitably mitigated.</p> <p>By omitting reference to the SAC within the policy or stipulating the need to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, the policy currently does not align with Policy NEP1 of the NP. Moreover, the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of Policy EBP2 cannot be screened out and the policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>	B

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy SEP1: Renewable energy	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy states that proposals for individual and community scale energy from solar photovoltaic panels, or other forms of renewable generation, will be supported subject to five criteria set out in the policy. This includes the following criteria: <i>'ii) the proposed installation does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance;...'</i></p> <p>The policy also supports renewable generation developments that:  <i>'i) are led by, or meet the needs of the local community; and</i>  <i>ii) have regard to the wider benefits of providing energy from renewable sources, and the potential effects on the local environment.'</i></p> <p>Whilst the requirement set out within the policy that <i>proposed installations are not to 'have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance'</i> is welcomed, it does not clearly stipulate the need for any proposals to have regard to and comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) given that most of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.</p> <p>Although this policy will not directly lead to development, it does serve to support renewable energy developments within the NP area, and such developments could lead to a likely significant effect on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC if suitable mitigation is not implemented to ensure no significant impacts upon bat habitat functionally linked to the SAC. In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance, Policy SEP1 currently does not align with Policy NEP1 of the NP and the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of the policy cannot be screened out and as such must be subject to appropriate assessment.</p>	B

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy SEP2: Electrical charging points	A1	<p>This policy stipulates that all new houses where dedicated parking is provided must have an appropriately located charging point, and that where general parking areas are included in housing developments, there should be an appropriate ratio of charging points available for general use. It also encourages the provision of electric charging points in applications for non-residential development as well as at existing public buildings with vehicular access and public parking areas.</p> <p>Evidently the policy would not lead to development itself as it promotes the inclusion of electric vehicle charging points. Therefore, the policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European 2000 sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy SEP3: Dark skies and street lighting	A1	<p>This policy states that: <i>‘Development proposals must demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution have been taken, and must ensure that the measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not negatively affected.’</i> It states that proposals for artificial lighting will be supported providing that the criteria set out within the policy are met, which includes that <i>‘it can be demonstrated that additional lighting on site will have no detrimental impact on visual and residential amenity, the historic environment or local ecology;...’</i></p> <p>The policy will not itself lead to development and aims to retain and protect dark skies and as such will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. The criteria set out in point b) of the policy and the stipulation that any artificial lighting proposal must not be detrimental to ecology is critical because most of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, and therefore any new artificial lighting has potential to give rise to effects on habitat functionally linked to the SAC and therefore could lead to significant effects on the SAC. As such it will be important that any proposals for artificial lighting comply with Core Policy 50 (CP50) (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) and the NPPF; as well as Policy NEP1 of the NP. Proposals for new artificial lighting would be considered at the planning application stage (where this is applicable) and a project-level HRA may be necessary.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy CWBP1: Protection and enhancement of community facilities	B	<p>This policy aims to protect community facilities and states that proposals that would result in the loss of an existing community facility would not be supported unless one of the factors listed in the policy apply.</p> <p>Evidently the policy would not lead to development itself and it will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European 2000 sites. Details of any development that comes forward would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy CWBP2: Promoting additional community facilities	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy supports proposals for new or enhanced community facilities subject to criteria specified within the policy. The need for adherence to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) does not comprise one of the criteria listed in the policy. In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance, the policy currently does not accord with Policy NEP1 of the NP and the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of Policy CWBP2 cannot be screened out, and as such the policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>	B
Policy CWBP3: Allotments provision	B	<p>This policy requires that existing allotments are retained unless equivalent or improved provision can be delivered.</p> <p>The policy will not lead to development that would give rise to likely significant effects upon any European 2000 sites. Details of any proposals for new allotment sites would be considered at the planning application stage to ensure acceptability with respect of other Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019.</p>	
Policy CWBP4: Children's play areas	A1	<p>This policy requires that developments of 10 or more dwellings must provide children's play areas within the scheme or contribute to the existing play areas (including improvements to access).</p> <p>The provision of new play areas as part of wider development proposals would be subject to consideration at the planning application stage to ensure compliance with Development Plan policies and the NPPF 2019 as well as other policies within the NP, such as that pertaining to lighting. As such, the policy would not itself give rise to likely significant effects upon any European sites.</p>	

Policy	Initial screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category Subsequent to Incorporation of Changes Recommended in the Appropriate Assessment
Policy CWBP5: Principals of infrastructure phasing and priorities	C and D for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	<p>This policy specifies: ‘<i>All new housing and employment proposals will be expected to contribute towards local infrastructure in proportion to their scale and in accordance with national and Wiltshire Core Strategy policies.</i>’</p> <p>It is noted that the policy does not stipulate the need for compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). Schemes to improve local infrastructure could lead to effects on habitats used by SAC bat species for foraging, commuting or roosting, particularly where such schemes are accompanied by new lighting. Therefore, the requirement for any improvements to local infrastructure to comply with the aforementioned guidance should be set out within the policy. In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance, the policy currently does not accord with Policy NEP1 of the NP and the potential for likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC as a result of Policy CWBP5 cannot be screened out. Therefore, the policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>	B
Policy PAP1: Pre-application procedures	B	<p>This policy requires applicants of development proposals to follow the <i>Colerne Pre-Application Community Involvement Protocol</i> as set out in the NP and adopted by Colerne Parish Council in February 2020.</p> <p>The policy will evidently not lead to development and will not give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites.</p>	

## 5. Appropriate Assessment - Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC

### Background to the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC

1. The following account clarifies the key geographical and ecological relationships between the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and the Colerne NP area, as far as these are currently known. Details of the conservation objectives are available online at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6279810384920576>. The current version is dated 27 November 2018 Version 3.
2. The SAC designation extends across former stone mines which are hibernation and swarming sites for the three species of bat which are primary and qualifying features of this SAC; great and lesser horseshoe and Bechstein's bats. The nearest component of the SAC is approximately 0.72km to the south/southeast of the NP area at Box Mine; others occur near Winsley and Bath. The mines are used by bats mainly during the autumn and winter.
3. Although the SAC does not lie within the Colerne NP area, the bats roost and feed across a much wider area during the spring and summer. Horseshoe bats generally breed in buildings while a significant breeding colony of Bechstein's bats occurs in woodlands to the south of Trowbridge. The Council has prepared guidance to demonstrate how development across the whole bat landscape must take account of the SAC<sup>9</sup>. It identifies a number of core roosts with core areas around them (termed "consultation zones") to show where bat activity is likely to be concentrated and where particular precautions will be required.
4. Under the above guidance, Green Lane and Biss Woods, and Picket and Clanger Woods are all core roosts for Bechstein's bats. Although the core areas around these roosts do not extend into the NP area, it is likely Bechstein's bats commute in close proximity to or possibly through part of the NP area to swarming and hibernation sites at Box and Bath. Furthermore, there is a core Bechstein's roost just outside and west of the NP area, hence the southwest section of the NP area lying within the 1.5km consultation zone around this roost, and therefore it is likely that Bechstein's bats from the core roost fly through the southern section of the NP area to the component site of the SAC at Box Mine. This species cannot readily be identified through sonograms generated by bat detectors and is therefore generally under-recorded.
5. There are a large number of records of lesser horseshoe bats across the NP area and a core roost for the species at Slaughterford Mill in the northeast extent of the NP area. The By Brook flows southwards under the mill and constitutes a well-established flyway/commuting route for Annex II bats associated with the SAC and the functionally linked core roosts. Given the landscape within the NP area and presence of network of woodland and the By Brook, it is considered that the area is likely to be important for lesser horseshoe bats for roosting, foraging and commuting.
6. In terms of greater horseshoe bats, there are limited records, however given that most of the NP area lies within the 4km consultation zone for the species around the SAC and core roosts for the species, it is highly likely that the species is under-recorded across the plan area and that it makes much greater use of the NP area for foraging and commuting in particular, than the records suggest.
7. It is likely all three Annex II species associated with the SAC fly through open countryside in the NP area to access the SAC.

### Plans and Projects to be Considered In-Combination

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<sup>9</sup> Bat Special Areas of Conservation Planning Guidance for Wiltshire. Issue 3.0, 10 September 2015

8. The screening assessment concluded that the Colerne NP could lead to significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC in combination with other plans and projects. The following assessment has been conducted taking the following plans and projects into consideration:
- Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015)
  - Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP) (Council Version, February 2020) adopted by Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020.
  - Application 15/04736/OUT Ashton Park, Trowbridge
  - Application 16/04468/OUT land South West of Ashton Road, Trowbridge
  - Application 16/00547/FUL Land SE of Southview Park, Trowbridge
  - Application 17/12509/FUL Land SE of Southview Park, Trowbridge
  - Application 18/00985/OUT The Grange, Hilperton
  - Application 16/00672/OUT Land W of Elizabeth Way, SW of Hilperton Marsh, Trowbridge
  - Application 17/09961/OUT Land West Of Biss Farm, West Ashton Road, Trowbridge
  - Permission 13/06879/OUT Land South of Devizes Road, Hilperton
  - Permission W/11/01932/REM Land North East of Green Lane Farm, Trowbridge (completed)
  - Permission W/04/02105/OUTES Land adjacent to scrapyard, Trowbridge (completed)
  - Application 18/02671/FUL Sunnyside Yarnbrook Road
  - Application 18/10035/OUT Land south of Church Lane, Upper Studley, Trowbridge

#### **HRA for the Adopted Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan and the TBMS SPD**

9. The Council published a pre-submission draft of the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP) together with a HRA dated 21 June 2017 which included an appropriate assessment of the six allocations proposed for Trowbridge. A schedule of proposed changes was considered by Cabinet supported by an Addendum to the HRA dated May 2018. The original Addendum to the HRA incorporating minor factual changes to support the consultation on the Council's Schedule of Proposed Changes was published in September 2018. An Amended Addendum comprising a minor factual update and incorporating further changes to support the Council's Further Main Modification was published in September 2019.
10. Subsequently, the adoption of the WHSAP (Council Version, February 2020) was approved by Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and this was accompanied by the final WHSAP Assessment under the Habitats Regulations (Wiltshire Council, February 2020).
11. The adoption of the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was also approved on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The overall aim of the TBMS is to provide a clear and detailed approach to considering impacts of development in the Trowbridge area on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC in order to help inform strategic planning for the area's future housing needs. The aforementioned version of the TBMS has been prepared to support the WHSAP and Core Policies 2 and 29 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The TBMS sets out the mitigation measures required by the HRA of the WHSAP and is designed to ensure no adverse impact on the important bat populations associated with the Trowbridge landscape due to the WHSAP, and therefore no adverse impact on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.
12. The final HRA (February 2020) concluded that with regard to habitat loss/deterioration, the allocations proposed in the WHSAP are likely to have significant effects on the local

Bechstein's population associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, particularly when the effects of the plan are considered as a whole, as the cluster of sites will coalesce the urban landscape south of Trowbridge, which could sever strategic flight routes between the key roosts to the east of the town and the underground sites west of the town. It specifies that the TBMS provides a scheme of mitigation which addresses impacts from each of the allocations in the plan alone and the in-combination impacts of these in combination with other development coming forward through neighbourhood plans, as rural exception sites and development within the settlement boundary. In view of the uncertainty surrounding bat use of the landscape, the TBMS takes a precautionary approach to allow appropriate assessments for individual applications to be concluded favourably without delay, provided the principles are followed.

13. The HRA therefore concluded that the WHSAP would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford Bats SAC alone or in combination with other plans or projects, subject to the adoption and delivery of the finalised TBMS and incorporation of the following within the policies for H2.1 - H2.6:
  - Development at the allocation site will be subject to an approved masterplan and will meet the following requirements:
    - Core bat habitat will be protected and enhanced. Design and layout will be informed by appropriate surveys, impact assessments and the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy.
    - Appropriate mitigation to protect bats, including financial contributions towards management, monitoring and offsite measures as necessary, as informed by the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy.
  
14. In terms of recreational pressure, the HRA concluded that the WHSAP could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC both alone and in-combination with other planned development through increased recreational disturbance. The TBMS is supported by Natural England who consider the strategy to be sufficient but not excessive as a means of protecting the features of the SAC. The HRA states that it has been demonstrated through consultation and the examination in public for the WHSAP, that the TBMS is achievable and deliverable within an appropriate timescale. The HRA then stipulates that on this basis, it is considered that the Council may rely on the TBMS for the purposes of the appropriate assessment, and as such it can be concluded that the WHSAP would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC alone or in-combination with other plans or projects subject to incorporation within the policy text of wording to ensure that the site allocations will be required to contribute proportionately to the TBMS.
  
15. Essentially, the HRA concluded that allocations would not lead to adverse effects alone or in-combination with other plans and projects provided that:
  - Sensitive habitat features are retained and buffered by wide, dark, continuous habitat corridors;
  - Other bat habitat e.g. grazing/arable land, is fully offset by creating new high quality bat habitat within the application boundary;
  - Developments contribute to strategic mitigation offsite, to be delivered by Wiltshire Council, to address residual in-combination habitat impacts, and;
  - Developments contribute to measures to offset in-combination increases in recreational pressure at publicly accessible woodlands used by breeding Bechstein's bats.

16. Mitigation criteria for retaining and buffering habitat within green field sites is detailed in the TBMS. Specific mitigation measures to address in-combination effects on habitats are also detailed in the TBMS and these will be secured with appropriate developer contributions and implemented through a scheme run by the Council.
17. The TBMS is supported by a study investigating recreational use of publicly accessible open spaces including the woodlands south of Trowbridge used by roosting Bechstein's bats. The Colerne NP area lies some distance from the areas within which 75% of visitors to these woodlands originate and as such the potential for new residential development within the Colerne NP area to result in additional recreational pressure upon the woodlands south of Trowbridge that support Bechstein's roosts, is deemed to be limited.
18. The TBMS is intended to address impacts arising from the quantum of development coming forward from three categories of development: (i) allocations in the WHSAP, (ii) allocations in Neighbourhood Plans and (iii) windfall development within existing settlement boundaries. It identifies zones of sensitivity for a) bat habitat and b) generation of recreational pressure at woodlands used by Bechstein's bats.
19. The whole of the Colerne NP area lies a considerable distance from any of the bat sensitivity zones set out within the TBMS and therefore, this SPD is not considered further within this HRA.

#### **Analysis of Policies in the Colerne NP Screened into Appropriate Assessment**

##### Policy BEP3: Housing policy

20. This policy stipulates criteria that any forthcoming application for residential development must fulfil. Although the policy will not directly lead to development and does not allocate specific sites, it does set out criteria with regards to the type of housing that would be supported. Whilst the stipulation in the policy that development of greenfield land would be opposed is welcomed, the policy omits any reference to the need for applications for housing development within the NP area to comply with the Bat Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). It also omits the requirement that proposals for residential development must not give rise to significant adverse effects upon the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.
21. This is important because almost the whole NP area, with the exception of a small area in the north, lies within bat consultation zones (core areas) around the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and/or around core roosts of Annex II bat species that are functionally linked to the SAC. Therefore, housing development within the NP area, even if not on greenfield sites, could result in the loss and/or degradation of habitat of importance for bats associated with the SAC and as such could give rise to likely significant effects on the SAC. Where such a mechanism for effect is possible, proposals for appropriate mitigation must be submitted alongside any planning application.
22. In not referring to the need to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, any development that comes forward that is supported by the policy could lead to adverse impacts on the SAC alone and in-combination with other developments as a result of loss and/or degradation of habitat of importance to the SAC bat species for foraging, commuting and possibly even roosting (such as at Slaughterford Mill). Furthermore, omission of reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance means that Policy BEP3 does not align with Policy NEP1 of the NP.
23. Planning applications for development within the NP area where this would coincide with bat SAC consultation zones would need to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire and the Habitats Regulations and would likely necessitate the undertaking of a project level appropriate assessment by the competent authority.

24. Given these issues, it is recommended that the wording of the policy is revised to include reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) and should be revised so that it aligns with point 2. of Policy NEP1.

#### Policy BEP4: Housing allocations

25. This policy puts forward two allocated sites for development. The first site proposed for the development of approximately five houses, is Thickwood Field. The policy sets out criteria that any proposals for development at this site must fulfil, and this includes the need for '*An assessment of potential impacts on bats, following the latest best practice guidelines, must be submitted with any application in line with the recommendations of the Habitats Regulations Assessment associated with this Plan (see NEP1).*'
26. As detailed in Table 1, Thickwood Field comprises a greenfield site with a line of trees along the western extent of the site which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (N/TPO9) and may have potential roost features (PRFs) for bat. The site may have foraging/commuting habitat potential for bats associated with the SAC and comprise functionally linked habitat given that it is located within the 4km consultation zone for greater horseshoe bats affiliated with the SAC and is approximately 3.5km from the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC at its closest point.
27. Whilst it is noted that the policy cites Policy NEP1 and specifies that any forthcoming application for development at Thickwood Field must be accompanied by an assessment in respect of bats, and this is welcomed, this does not negate the likely need for any forthcoming planning application to be subject to a project level appropriate assessment by the competent authority. It will be necessary for an appropriate level of ecological survey to be undertaken in support of any planning application for development of the site, and for suitable avoidance and mitigation measures to be proposed to ensure that there would be no mechanism for a significant effect on the SAC. Such measures would likely include retention of habitat features identified as used by bats; inclusion of buffer zones which must be maintained as 'dark corridors' alongside identified bat commuting/foraging routes; restrictions in respect of external artificial lighting on site and so forth.
28. The second site allocation put forward within the policy is for the development of approximately five affordable houses/apartments at the Constitutional Club. This site is likely to have limited potential for bats, with any potential habitat likely to be limited to roosting opportunities in the building(s) on site. Furthermore, the site is highly unlikely to afford any roosting opportunities for Annex II bats associated with the SAC and there are no records of bat species roosting at the site. As such, it is considered that development at this allocated site would not lead to a significant effect on the SAC. Furthermore, in accordance with the requirements of the policy to assess the potential for impacts on bats, any planning application for the development of the site would need to be accompanied by appropriate survey of the building(s) and site and as such suitable measures would be undertaken at the planning stage.
29. Given the potential issues associated with the allocated site at Thickwood Fields, and the potential mechanism for effect on the SAC, it is recommended that for clarity and the avoidance of doubt, the wording of Policy BEP4 is revised to include a direct reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, as this guidance is not currently cited in the policy. This will also serve more fully align with, and augment Policy NEP1. It is also recommended that the reference to adherence to the HRA produced by the

ecological consultant on behalf of the NP Steering Group is removed from the policy wording as the HRA conducted by the competent authority is the critical HRA, not the shadow-HRA. Furthermore, the HRA commissioned by the NP Steering Group contains a number of errors throughout, as well as discussion of matters that are not relevant to the Colerne NP and misinterpretation of the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire and the TBMS SPD. In several instances it also cites incorrect SAC consultation zone distances in respect of Annex II bat species associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC.

30. On the basis that the recommended revision to the policy wording is undertaken by the NP Steering Group, and that any planning application for development at the allocated sites will comply with the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire; will be accompanied by appropriate survey, assessment and mitigation proposals; and will be subject to a project-level appropriate assessment where required, it is considered that the policy would not result in a significant effect on the SAC alone.

Policy BEP5: Meeting longer-term housing demand

31. This policy pertains to longer-term housing need and an expectation, as detailed in the supporting text, that approximately 70 dwellings can be delivered by the *'release of MoD brownfield sites'*. The policy states that *'full delivery of the Longer-Term Housing Need should be met in due course by the announced intention to release for development MoD sites from the former Colerne Airfield/Barracks.'* The policy specifies that there would be strong *'community support for re-development of the 'Drill Ground' (also locally known as the 'Parade Ground').'*
32. The policy itself does not actually allocate sites, but it does cite a supported site (non-allocated), namely the Drill Ground site ("the Parade Ground"), and references Section 6 i. of the NP which shows the location of the site and sets out details of supported development. This supported site lies within the greater horseshoe bat 4km consultation zones around the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and around a core roost that has a likely demographic connection with the SAC. Section 6 i. of the NP specifies that the site comprises a brownfield site, which it is in large part, however, it also appears to comprise relatively large tracts of amenity/improved grassland with a few scattered trees and residential properties on the boundaries of the site. The suitability of the site for bats is likely to be limited, nonetheless, it does lie within the aforementioned zones associated with the SAC and the surrounding landscape has suitability for Annex II bats that are qualifying species of the SAC, with woodland in relatively close proximity to the site. Therefore, an application for development at the site would require compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015) as well as Policy NEP1 of the NP. Currently, however, the policy does not specify the need to comply with the aforementioned guidance and does not set out a requirement in respect of bats as has been done for some other policies that allocate or support development within the NP. As such, the policy does not currently accord with or suitably cross-reference to Policy NEP1 of the NP.
33. The omission from the policy of the need to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire is a particular concern given that Section 6 ii of the NP puts forward Slaughterford Mill as the second supported site (non-allocated). This site is not cited as a supported site within the wording of Policy BEP5, presumably as a result of recommendations set out in the HRA commissioned by the NP Steering Group, yet the site is still detailed in Section 6 as a supported site.
34. It is noted that Section 6 ii. does stipulate the requirement for: *'An assessment of potential impacts on bats, following the latest best practice guidelines and in line with the recommendations of the Habitat Assessment (see NEP1), would have to be submitted with any application associated with this site, and these conditions may be difficult to satisfy.'* Nonetheless, it is not evident why this site is still listed in Section 6 as a supported site given

the recommendations put forward in the HRA commissioned by the NP Steering Group to remove this supported site from the NP and given that the site is not actually cited in Policy BEP5. As such, there is a disparity between the policy and supporting text in Section 6, and as a consequence it is currently unclear whether support for development of this site is being presented within the NP or not.

35. Slaughterford Mill comprises a lesser horseshoe bat core roost associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC hence the recommendations put forward in the HRA commissioned by the NP Steering Group. Furthermore, there are other ecological sensitivities at the Slaughterford Mill Site and potentially other European Protected Species, such as otter, as well as other protected species and protected/priority habitats that could pose a constraint to development of the site. Therefore, any planning application for development of the site would need to be accompanied by appropriate survey, assessment and mitigation proposals, and would necessitate a project-level appropriate assessment by the competent authority; the outcome of which is uncertain given the core roost status.
36. In order to address the current issues arising as a result of the policy and Section 6, I would suggest that in the first instance, consideration should be given by the NP Steering Group to withdrawing support for development of Slaughterford Mill and removing reference to this as a supported site from the NP entirely.
37. It is also recommended that the actual wording of the policy is revised to make direct reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015), thereby ensuring the policy wholly aligns with Policy NEP1 of the NP.
38. On the basis that the above recommendations are implemented by the NP Steering Group, and that any planning application for development at the Drill Ground will comply with the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire; will be accompanied by appropriate survey, assessment and mitigation proposals; and will be subject to a project-level appropriate assessment where required, it is considered that the policy would not result in a significant effect on the SAC alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
39. If the decision is taken by the NP Steering Group to retain Slaughterford Mill as a supported site within the next draft of the NP, even though it is not actually cited in the policy wording thereby resulting in a lack of clarity, it may not be possible to conclude no significant effects upon the SAC at that time.
40. Policy BEP7: Infill and backland development
41. This policy states that infill and backland development will be supported for small-scale developments, or schemes such as studios or workshops, subject to criteria set out in the policy. Although this policy doesn't allocate sites and will not itself lead to development, it does state support for infill development providing specified criteria are met.
42. As already established, almost the whole of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and as such any proposals for development within these zones, especially on greenfield sites, that comes forward has the potential to lead to impacts on individual sites (therefore alone) and in-combination with other development as a result of loss and/or degradation of habitat of importance to SAC bat species for foraging, commuting and roosting. Nevertheless, the criteria set out within the policy, which any proposals for infill and small-scale development must fulfil, does not include the requirement for compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015).
43. Therefore, it is recommended that the wording of the policy is revised so that the listed criteria includes the requirement to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire

(Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). In turn, this will ensure alignment with Policy NEP1 and consistency of approach to development across the NP policies.

44. On the premise that the policy wording is revised as aforementioned, and that any planning application for development within the NP area complies with the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire; will be accompanied by appropriate survey, assessment and mitigation proposals; and will be subject to a project-level appropriate assessment where required, it is considered that the policy would not result in a significant effect on the SAC alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

#### Policy BEP8: Custom and self-build

45. Although this policy will not itself lead to development as it doesn't allocate sites, it does lend support to self-build and custom-build housing development providing specified criteria are met. Given that this policy applies to the whole NP area and that the majority of the plan area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, there is a need for any forthcoming development within these zones, especially on greenfield sites, to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). The current wording of Policy BEP8 does not specify this requirement which results in uncertainty regarding whether any planning application for the type of housing development supported by the policy would give rise to significant effects on the SAC.
46. Therefore, in order to ensure that a robust and appropriate approach to ascertaining the potential for impacts on bat habitat functionally linked to the SAC is undertaken where applicable, and for ensuring that sufficient and sound mitigation measures are proposed alongside any planning application which could otherwise result in a significant effect on the SAC, it is recommended that the policy wording is revised to include a direct reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire. This would also align Policy BEP8 with Policy NEP1 and ensure a consistent approach to development across the NP policies. It should be noted that it may be necessary for applications for housing development supported by this policy to be subject to a project-level appropriate assessment by the competent authority at the planning application stage.

#### Policy EBP2: Encouraging new employment

47. This policy will not directly lead to development as it doesn't allocate sites, however, it does lend support to the development of small-scale employment enterprises on existing sites or on new sites providing specified criteria are met. These criteria do not include the requirement for compliance with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire.
48. This policy is applicable to the whole NP area as specific sites aren't allocated by means of the policy. Given that the majority of the plan area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, any forthcoming proposals for development of employment sites within these zones, especially on greenfield sites, could give rise to impacts to bat habitat that is functionally linked to the SAC on individual sites (therefore alone) and in-combination with other development as a result of loss and/or degradation of habitat of importance to SAC bat species for foraging, commuting and possibly even roosting (such as at Slaughterford Mill where commercial units are proposed).
49. Therefore, it is recommended that the wording of the policy is revised so that the listed criteria includes the requirement to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire. This will likewise ensure Policy EBP2 accords with Policy NEP1 and ensure a consistent approach to development across the NP policies.

50. The need for applications for employment development to be subject to a project-level appropriate assessment by the competent authority at the planning application stage where applicable, should be noted.

Policy CP2: Walking and cycling

51. This policy supports developments which will advocate and deliver new and/or improved footpaths and cycleways. Whilst the requirement set out within the policy for such proposals to be sympathetic to wildlife corridors is welcomed, it does not clearly stipulate the need for proposals to have regard to and comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire on account of most of the NP area coinciding with consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.
52. This policy will not lead directly to development, nonetheless, it supports new and improved footpaths and cycleways. Given that such new routes could lead to loss and/or degradation of, and/or disturbance to bat habitat, and would also likely necessitate the installation of artificial lighting, such schemes have potential to lead to likely significant effects on the SAC if not suitably mitigated.
53. By omitting reference to the SAC and the need to adhere to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, the policy currently leads to a lack of certainty regarding whether how such schemes would be dealt with at the planning application stage and does not suitably steer proposals for footpaths and cycleways, thereby resulting in a potential mechanism for such schemes to affect the SAC. It also means that the policy does not align with Policy NEP1 of the NP.
54. To ensure an appropriate approach to ascertaining the potential for impacts on bat habitat functionally linked to the SAC is undertaken where applicable alongside proposals for footpath and cycleway schemes, and to ensure that sufficient and sound mitigation measures are proposed alongside any planning application which could otherwise result in a significant effect on the SAC, it is recommended that the policy wording is revised to include a direct reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire. This would also align Policy CP2 with Policy NEP1 and ensure a consistent approach to development across the NP policies. It should be noted that it may be necessary for applications supported by this policy to be subject to a project-level appropriate assessment by the competent authority at the planning application stage, if applicable.

Policy SEP1: Renewable energy

55. This policy supports proposals for individual and community scale energy from solar photovoltaic panels, or other forms of renewable generation providing that such proposals meet the criteria set out in the policy. This includes the following criteria: '*ii) the proposed installation does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance;...*'
56. Whilst the criteria set out within the policy is welcomed, it does not make it clear to potential applicants that any proposals for renewable energy development must have regard to and comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire on account of most of the NP area lying within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.
57. Although Policy SEP1 will not directly lead to development, planning applications for renewable energy developments could come forward as a result of the existence of the policy in the NP, and such developments could lead to a likely significant effect on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC if bat habitat functionally linked to the SAC were to be impacted and suitable mitigation is not implemented.

58. Any proposals for development of renewable energy sites within consultation zones associated with the SAC, especially on greenfield sites, could give rise to impacts on individual sites (therefore alone) and in-combination with other development as a result of loss and/or degradation of habitat of importance to SAC bat species for foraging, commuting and roosting.
59. It is therefore recommended that the wording of Policy SEP1, specifically point ii), is amended to make direct reference to the need for development proposals to have regard to and comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire. This will also ensure alignment with Policy NEP1 and consistency throughout the NP.
60. It is also recommended that the term 'unacceptable impact' is removed from the policy and replaced, because this is not a clearly defined term being somewhat subjective and open to interpretation. Furthermore, the relevant term in respect of the Habitats Regulations is significant effect and likewise, the term of relevance in regard to environmental assessment is significant adverse effect.

Policy CWBP2: Promoting additional community facilities

61. This policy will not lead directly to development, but it does support proposals for new or enhanced community facilities providing that the subject to criteria specified within the policy. Therefore, proposals for development of new community facilities may come forward as a result of the inclusion of this policy within the NP. Therefore, the policy has been screened into appropriate assessment as the need for adherence to the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire does not comprise one of the development criteria listed in the policy.
62. In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance, development that comes forward within the NP area, as supported by Policy CWBP2, could lead to effects on bat habitat used by Annex II bats associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC for foraging, commuting and roosting. Furthermore, the policy currently does not accord with Policy NEP1 of the NP.
63. It is therefore recommended that the wording of Policy CWBP2 is revised to include a direct reference to the need to comply with the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire. This will give greater certainty for the purposes of this HRA and provide steer to applicants to ensure that any forthcoming development proposals have due regard to the aforementioned guidance, and will be informed by an appropriate level of survey and assessment in respect of bats, as well as being supported by details of appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures to ensure there is no potential for a significant effect on the SAC, where this is necessary. Amending the policy wording as detailed herein would also align Policy CWBP2 with Policy NEP1 and ensure a consistent approach to development across the NP policies.
64. A project-level appropriate assessment, to be conducted by the competent authority, may also be required at the planning application stage as revising the policy wording at this stage (i.e. the NP plan making stage) does not negate the possible need for project-specific appropriate assessment at a later stage. However, it is an appropriate means of addressing matters when undertaking high-level appropriate assessments with limited site/scheme specific information available. Where a project-level appropriate assessment is required at the planning application stage, it will be critical for the application to be supported by evidence to demonstrate adherence to the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire, and that the development would not lead to a significant effect on the SAC and the integrity of its qualifying features either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Policy CWBP5: Principles of infrastructure phasing and priorities

65. This policy requires that *proposals for development of new housing and employment site 'will contribute towards local infrastructure in proportion to their scale and in accordance with national and Wiltshire Core Strategy policies.'*
66. Although the policy requires local infrastructure proposals to accord with the policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, and therefore it follows that the policy requires accordance with CP50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and all relevant SPDs, the policy currently omits a direct stipulation to comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council and Natural England, 2015). This is pertinent as the majority of the NP area lies within consultation zones associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, and schemes to improve local infrastructure could lead to effects on habitats used by SAC bat species for foraging, commuting or roosting, particularly where such schemes are accompanied by new artificial lighting as this can form a barrier to movement of light intolerant/sensitive bats across an area.
67. In not referring to the need to adhere to the aforementioned guidance, the policy currently gives rise to uncertainty regarding whether any proposals for new local infrastructure within the NP area could lead to a likely significant effect on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.
68. In order to address the potential for effects on the SAC arising on account of Policy CWBP5, it is recommended that the policy wording is amended to stipulate that proposals for development of local infrastructure within the plan area will be required to have regard to, and fully comply with the Bat SAC Planning Guidance for Wiltshire. This will allow a greater degree of certainty for the purposes of this HRA and provide steer to applicants to ensure that any forthcoming development proposals have due regard to the aforementioned guidance, and will be informed by an appropriate level of survey and assessment in respect of bats, as well as being supported by details of appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures to ensure there is no potential for a significant effect on the SAC, where this is necessary. Amending the policy wording as detailed herein would also align Policy CWBP5 with Policy NEP1 and ensure a consistent approach to development across the NP policies.
69. A project-level appropriate assessment, to be conducted by the competent authority, may also be required at the planning application stage and the possible need for this at a later stage cannot be circumvented at this stage (i.e. the NP plan making stage) by means of revising policy wording. Where a project-level appropriate assessment is required at the planning application stage, it will be critical for the application to be supported by evidence to demonstrate adherence to the Bat SAC Guidance for Wiltshire, and that the development would not lead to a significant effect on the SAC and the integrity of its qualifying features either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

#### **Conclusion for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC**

70. On the basis that the recommendations set out above for each of the ten policies taken forward to appropriate assessment, are incorporated into the NP, it is deemed possible to conclude, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that there would be no adverse effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of the Colerne NP.

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