

## **Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening June 2016**

### **1. Screening Methodology**

Each element of the draft plan has been categorised against the screening criteria developed by Natural England. This process is necessary to help provide a clear audit trail for the assessment and, if necessary, identify the need for the wording of policies to be amended or new policies added to be certain that the neighbourhood plan will not have a significant negative effect on a European site.

The criteria used were as follows:

- 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.

The effect of each draft policy has been considered both individually, and in combination. The effects of the whole plan have also been considered in combination with the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

### **2. Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA**

Wiltshire Core strategy HRA derived a set of parameters by which to determine the likelihood of potential impact on Natura 2000 sites. Applying these parameters to the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan Area identifies the following issues to be assessed.

*Recreation – Natura 2000 sites within 5km of the plan area, or where Salisbury Plain SPA/SAC is within 15km of the plan area.*

- Salisbury Plain SPA and SAC
- Pewsey Downs SAC

*Hydrology / Hydrogeology – Sites that fall wholly or partly within the Wessex Water North WRZ*

- Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC
- Pewsey Downs SAC
- North Meadows and Clattinger Farm SAC
- River Avon SAC

*Nitrogen Deposition – Natura 2000 Sites within 200m of a main road*

- Porton Down SPA
- Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
- Southampton Water SPA
- Clattinger Farm SAC
- River Avon SAC
- Rodborough Common SAC
- Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC

*Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines*

- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC

### **3. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS**

Draft policies within the emerging Wootton Rivers neighbourhood plan have been screened against each of the above potential impacts, for each Natura 2000 site.

*Recreation.*

**Salisbury Plain SPA/SAC** - The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA assessed that the issues relating to additional recreational pressure as a result of residential development growth are dealt with sufficiently in the “Salisbury Plain SPA HRA and Mitigation Strategy” which prescribes developer contributions made under CIL, to deliver monitoring and adaptive management on the plains. Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy implements this approach.

**Pewsey Downs SAC** - Pewsey Downs SAC is part of the North Wessex Downs, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that attracts millions of visitors every year. The AONB has a Management Plan and Delivery Plan which could provide the basis for managing impacts on the SAC. The SAC is also a National Nature Reserve, managed by Natural England and this provides further safeguard for managing recreational pressure. The Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan area is only just within the 5km zone of likely impact and the small scale of development expected to result from the plan would have a *de minimus* effect on the SAC.

*Hydrology/Hydrogeology*

**Water Resource - Wessex water have confirmed that** the small amount of development proposed by the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan can be accommodated within the existing abstraction license levels. Current abstraction licences issued by the Environment Agency have undergone a Regulation 63 / 64 review in 2010 and were not found to have any likely significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site. Wessex Water’s Water Resource Management Plan (2014) has also been subject to a Regulation 61 assessment and found that it would not have any likely significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site, as agreed by Natural England. The Council is confident in the conclusions of both of these assessments and is therefore satisfied that the issue does not require further assessment at the Neighbourhood Plan level.

**Water Quality** – Issues of water quality, including surface water drainage will be dealt with through Development Management as described in Core Policy 50. The use of SUDS and suitable pollution control measures will be required for most proposals.

Sewage from Wootton Rivers is treated at Pewsey STW before discharge to the River Avon catchment. Wessex Water confirm that the increase resulting from the small amount of development proposed by the neighbourhood plan for Wootton Rivers, can be accommodated within the existing discharge licence, which has been subject to Regulation 61 assessment and shown to have no likely significant effect on the a Natural 2000 site, as agreed by Natural England.

The plan area is sufficiently far from the River Avon SAC (more than 8 km) and the amount of development described in the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan is so small that any adverse effects as a result of increased development, on the SAC, would be *de minimus*.

#### *Nitrogen Deposition*

The effect on Natura 2000 sites, as identified in the Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA as being sensitive to adverse impact, in relation to the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan has been considered and it is deemed that the small scale of development described in the Wootton Rivers NP, and the distances from the European sites make it unlikely that impact would occur as a result of implementation of the plan.

#### *Physical Damage/Interruption of Flightlines*

The Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan area is sufficiently distant from the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC that loss of habitat as a result of development within the plan area would not result in physical damage or interruption of flight lines associated with the SAC.

## **4. SCREENING OF EMERGING WOOTTON RIVERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES**

The Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan includes draft policies to address the following policy objectives:

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- Housing Development
- Non-Residential Development
- Streetscape
- Recreational Green Space
- Physical Environment and Biodiversity

All parts of the plan have been screened for potential impacts upon the Natura 2000 network, as set out in Section 5.

5. Initial Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment of the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan

a. Screening assessment of individual policies

A / B (Green) – Screened out

C / D (Red) – Screened in

Policy Area	Policy	Categorisation in initial screening	Comments and recommendations
Housing Development	<p><b>WR1.1 - Location</b>            Any new development within the parish of Wootton Rivers will be limited to in-fill as defined by the Wiltshire Core Strategy (“filling a small gap in the village.....”).            The area in which development will be acceptable is defined as within the existing ribbon development i.e. either side of the road between the Little House and the railway.            Houses should be located to allow clear views between them to historic buildings and to the open countryside behind, so should not be built with one behind another in a way which blocks these views.            The cumulative scale of new development over the period of the plan must be consistent with the status of Wootton Rivers as a “small village” in the Wiltshire Core Strategy, through appropriate adaption, conversion and extension of existing dwellings is acceptable in principle.            In addition, only a small number of sites for new building will meet the criteria in WR 1.1 and developments should be low density (see WR 1.3), so only a small number of new dwellings Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Development Plan will be achievable. As a broad guideline, the average number which parishioners considered acceptable (in our September-October 2015 survey, with 57 respondents) was 6 new dwellings, between now and</p>	A1, A3	

Policy Area	Policy	Categorisation in initial screening	Comments and recommendations
	<p>2026.</p> <p>New build homes must be of mixed types to include low cost and/or medium sized (2 or 3 bedrooms) with off street parking for at least 2 vehicles each and generous outdoor/garden space..</p>		
Non-residential development	<p>Non-residential development will be encouraged and supported if it complements the appearance and rural character of the parish, adds useful facilities or suitable employment and has no detrimental impact on the local environment, e.g. through its appearance or by increasing traffic volume (see NP3 below). Existing buildings and/or brownfield sites should be used where possible</p>	A1, A3	
Streetscape	<p>The current informal, traditional and rural character of our roadsides must be sustained, with grass, flowers, hedges and gravel preferred to kerbs, pavements, solid barriers and tarmac/concrete.</p> <p>New development should not use overhead wires; satellite dishes and aerials should be discreetly positioned; and the electricity and telephone companies will be encouraged to re-route overhead lines into underground ducting.</p>	A1, A3	
Recreational Green Space	<p>The Recreation Ground at South Bank, the current allotments behind Cuckoo's Knob and the Pink Horse Chestnut tree, bench seat and grass area described above are formally designated as Green Space. No change of use will be permitted.</p>	A1, A3	
Physical Environment and Biodiversity	<p>The essentially rural nature and environment of the parish will be sustained and enhanced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving the views and accessibility of the surrounding landscape where opportunities arise e.g. through improved signage of and access to footpaths and bridleways.</li> <li>- Permitting renewable energy where this can be achieved with acceptable visual, noise and biodiversity impacts e.g. discreetly positioned solar panels.</li> <li>- Recording, protecting and, where possible, further improving the</li> </ul>	A1, A3	

Policy Area	Policy	Categorisation in initial screening	Comments and recommendations
	<p>impressive biodiversity within the parish landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining overall tree numbers across the parish, including the replacement of particular specimen trees or those with high visual impact which are removed or lost.</li> <li>- Actively planning to prevent flooding, through the maintenance of current ditches and drains and fully mitigating the drainage impact of any new development.</li> </ul>		

- b. Assessment of all elements of the plan 'in combination'
  - The draft policies would not have any in combination effects
- c. Assessment of the effects of the plan as a whole, in combination with Wiltshire Core Strategy
  - The plan would not have any in combination effects with the Wiltshire Core Strategy

6. **CONCLUSION**

No sites are allocated for development within the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan, as the intention is to maintain the population and housing numbers broadly as now and allow only infill within the linear ribbon of existing homes and the current boundary of development will be preserved. However the policies also provide qualitative criteria for development focused on protecting and enhancing the local historic and natural environment.

All Natura 2000 sites are sufficiently far from the plan area and the development described by the plan is of sufficiently small scale, such that there would be no mechanism for impact or that adverse impacts would be deemed *de minimus*.

It can therefore be concluded that the Wootton Rivers Neighbourhood Plan would have no likely significant effects upon the Natura 2000 network alone or in combination, and no appropriate assessment is considered necessary by Wiltshire Council as competent authority.

Assessment carried out by: [REDACTED] Senior Ecologist

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