

CHIPPENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) relates to the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2038, Submission Version, June 2023, hereafter referred to as the NP, which was submitted to Wiltshire Council in July 2023. This HRA has been undertaken to inform a Regulation 16 consultation response from Wiltshire Council to the NP.
- 1.2. The HRA has been carried out to comply with Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019¹, hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations. Under these Regulations, a competent authority must consider whether a relevant plan is likely to have a significant effect on any European sites (formerly also referred to as Natura 2000 sites and now known as the national site network²) 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 measures³, the competent authority must undertake an appropriate assessment 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 appropriate assessment 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.”*⁴
- 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. Where an **adverse effect on the integrity (AEoI)** of any European sites cannot be ruled out, and where there are no alternative solutions, the plan can only be authorised and proceed if there are **imperative reasons of over-riding public interest (IROPI)** and if the necessary compensatory measures can be secured.

¹ On 1st January 2021 the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) were amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Most of these changes involved transferring functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales. All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant. The obligations of a competent authority in the 2017 Regulations for the protection of sites or species do not change [Changes to the Habitats Regulations 2017 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

² Due to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) being amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 on 1st January 2021.

³ Court of Justice of the European Union, Case C 323/17 “People Over Wind”/P. Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta

⁴ Commission of the European Communities v UK and NI, opinion of Advocate General KoKott, 9 June 2005, Case C-6/04

- 1.5. Wiltshire Council has conducted the following HRA as competent authority for the Chippenham NP. Where risks to European sites are identified, changes are recommended to remove or reduce the risks, and these should be incorporated into the plan 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:
- 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

- 3.1 The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA (October 2009, February 2012⁵, March 2013⁶, February 2014⁷ and April 2014⁸) identified general parameters to determine the likelihood of potential impacts on European sites (now known as the national site network⁹). The following potential impact pathways and associated parameters were identified and assessed for the European sites stipulated below.
- *Recreation – European sites within 5km of the plan area, or where the New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is within 13.8km (extended to 15km where HRA indicates this is necessary) 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):*

⁵ Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Draft – Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, February 2012

⁶ Wiltshire Core Strategy – Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, March 2013

⁷ Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)

⁸ Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

⁹ On 1st January 2021 the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) were amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

- 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 – European sites that fall wholly or partly within the Wessex Water Resource Zone may be susceptible to impact:*
 - 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
- *Air Pollution / Nitrogen Deposition – European sites within 200m of a main road*
 - Porton Down SPA
 - Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
 - 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

- 3.2 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 25th February 2020 and this was accompanied by the final WHSAP Assessment under the Habitats Regulations (Wiltshire Council, February 2020).
- 3.3 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. This includes the zone of influence (ZoI) around the Salisbury Plain SPA used

to screen for likely significant effects as a result of recreational pressure being revised from 15km to 6.4km on the basis of data obtained by means of visitor surveys.

- 3.4 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. The North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023 – 2028 (May 2023) sets out the mitigation strategy for the North Meadow element of the SAC with regards to new residential and tourism accommodation developments within the identified Zol. The Clattinger Farm element of the SAC is not subject to the strategy. The strategy sets out 2 Zol, an Inner Zone of 0km - 4.2km and an Outer Zone of 4.2km – 9.4km. The Inner Zone represents the area within which 75% of local year round users (e.g. dog walkers) originate. The Outer Zone represents the area within which 75% of those people who visit to view the Snake's-head fritillaries during the main flowering season originate¹⁰. Mitigation will be achieved through financial contributions to Strategic Access Management Monitoring (SAMM), Infrastructure Mitigation Projects (IMP) and/or Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs). Developments of over 50 units within the Inner Zone will be expected to provide their own SANG unless a financial contribution to the IMP/SANG project system can be robustly justified. The strategy is an interim approach and will be reviewed within 5 years following further monitoring and surveys.
- 3.5 Impacts of development in Wiltshire on the New Forest SPA were considered in the HRA for the South Wiltshire Core Strategy (SWCS) adopted in 2012¹¹. The assessment used data from the Tourism South East PROGRESS survey for 2004/05 and census data from 2001 for the former Salisbury District to examine patterns of visitors to the New Forest from across south Wiltshire. That HRA concluded that the development in south Wiltshire would increase visitor pressure by less than 1% and 89% of this would be through additional local day visits from within 8 km of the National Park. The WCS addressed the New Forest's mitigation requirements through Core Policy 50, identifying that a New Forest Mitigation Strategy would be prepared to address recreational impacts. Since the WCS was adopted, the council has joined a partnership of local authorities seeking to develop a strategic approach to address the impacts of recreational pressure on the New Forest SPA. A Government grant through the Planning Delivery Fund enabled visitor surveys to be conducted across the New Forest in 2018/19. This work was recently published, and the Council is now part of a steering group working to agree a common approach to mitigation including the extent of the Zol and how to fairly reflect different visit rates within it. This evidence has informed the preparation of an Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy by Wiltshire Council¹².
- 3.6 The WCS adopted the 8km zone of influence, however, as discussed in the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, from 1st September 2021 this has been revised to 13.8 km. Before this date, the mitigation scheme only applied to permitted dwellings lying within 8km of the New Forest designated sites whereas thereafter the scheme has been extended to apply to new residential and tourism development within 13.8 km of any of the New Forest designated sites and may be extended to include applications within 15km, where demonstrated to be necessary through a bespoke appropriate assessment.

¹⁰ North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023 – 2028. Cotswold District Council, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council in partnership with Natural England. May 2023

¹¹ South Wiltshire Proposed Submission Core Strategy HRA Report, Appendix 13. NPA for Wiltshire Council, July 2009

¹² The Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy has not been reviewed by Natural England at the time of writing.

- 3.7 Since the WCS was adopted and on the advice of NE, any plan or project that will lead to development within the catchment of the River Avon SAC must be phosphorous neutral and be subject to appropriate assessment which concludes no adverse effect on the SAC alone or in-combination with other plans or projects in order to be authorised.

Emerging Evidence and Advice from Natural England Subsequent to Adoption of WHSAP

- 3.8 Similarly, it came to light in spring 2020 that any plan or project that will lead to development within the catchment of the River Test must be nitrogen neutral as the Test drains into the Solent and this region is protected by a number of European and international designations including the Solent Maritime SAC, Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA, Portsmouth Harbour SPA and Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site. In 2018 and 2019 NE undertook a number of condition assessments of the features of these designated sites around the Solent. These assessments identified that high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus are entering this water environment and that there is sound evidence that nitrogen in particular is causing eutrophication at the aforementioned designated sites and that the resulting excessive growth of green algae and plants, which reduces oxygen and light levels, is leading to negative effects on the special features for which the European sites are designated. These nutrient inputs currently mostly come either from agricultural sources or from wastewater from existing housing and other development. These findings were published by NE in June 2020 in *Advice on Achieving Nutrient Neutrality for New Development in the Solent Region*. This advice also stipulates that:

“There is uncertainty as to whether new growth will further deteriorate designated sites. This issue has been subject to detailed work commissioned by local planning authorities (LPAs) in association with Natural England, Environment Agency and water companies. This strategic work, which updates early studies, is on-going. Until this work is complete, the uncertainty remains and the potential for future housing developments across the Solent region to exacerbate these impacts creates a risk to their potential future conservation status.

One way to address this uncertainty is for new development to achieve nutrient neutrality. Nutrient neutrality is a means of ensuring that development does not add to existing nutrient burdens and this provides certainty that the whole of the scheme is deliverable in line with the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This report sets out a practical methodology to calculating how nutrient neutrality can be achieved. This methodology is based on best available scientific knowledge, and will be subject to revision as further evidence is obtained. It is our advice to local planning authorities to take a precautionary approach in line with existing legislation and case-law when addressing uncertainty and calculating nutrient budgets.”

- 3.9 In accordance with NE’s advice, any plan or project which will lead to development within the catchment of the River Test cannot be approved unless nitrogen neutrality has been demonstrated via quantitative means, and an appropriate assessment conducted by the competent authority has concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of any of the Solent region European sites.
- 3.10 In 2022 the River Lambourn SAC and the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site were identified by NE as being in unfavourable condition due to excessive phosphorus inputs. A very small area of both of these sites are located within Wiltshire. Any overnight accommodation development within the catchment of the SAC or Ramsar site are now required to demonstrate phosphorous neutrality and be subject to an appropriate assessment which concludes no adverse effect on the SAC or Ramsar site alone or in-combination with other plans or projects in order to be authorised.

Screening of Chippenham NP Area

Recreation

- 3.11 In terms of the potential for recreational/visitor impacts upon European sites, the NP area lies well beyond the 13.8km radius around the New Forest SPA/SAC within which the majority of day visitors to the New Forest originate¹³, therefore appropriate assessment with respect of the New Forest SPA/SAC can be screened out.
- 3.12 Recreational pressure on the River Avon SAC is recognised to occur predominately in circumstances where significant development lies immediately adjacent to or in close proximity to the river, and this scenario would not arise as a result of this NP as the closest component of the River Avon SAC lies approximately 24.6km from the plan area at its closest point.
- 3.13 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. The Salisbury Plain SPA can also be screened out of appropriate assessment in respect of this NP as the plan area is beyond the 6.4km zone around the SPA within which the majority (75%) of visitors to the Plain are expected to live. This is based on the data collated by means of a visitor survey commissioned by the Council in 2015.
- 3.14 The closest component of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC is situated approximately 19.7km from the NP area at its closest point, and therefore beyond the interim 9.4km recreational ZOI around the North Meadow element of the SAC. As such appropriate assessment will not be required in respect of this European site.

Hydrology / Hydrogeology

- 3.15 In terms of hydrology/hydrogeology, Chippenham is located within the catchment of 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 the NP.
- 3.16 There have been no water resource issues identified for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC which is the only SAC from the above list to lie fully within the Bristol Avon catchment. Furthermore, the Bristol Avon has not identified as a cause of water resource issues for the Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA.

Air Pollution / Nitrogen Deposition

- 3.17 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 European sites within 200m of a main road. Such effects were considered to be very small and difficult to predict at the strategic level¹⁴ (WCS HRA Update February 2014). The Chippenham NP does not allocate any sites for development and all of the European sites listed above are a considerable distance from the NP; as such it is concluded that the NP will not result in significant effects on European sites as a result of nitrogen or particulate matter deposition.

Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines / Disturbance

- 3.18 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 Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, Chilmark Quarries SAC or the Mottisfont Bats SAC.

¹³ Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

¹⁴ Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)

3.19 The NP area is well beyond the potential zone of influence with respect of stone curlews breeding at Porton Down SPA and Salisbury Plain SPA, and the NP will not give rise to significant effects on these European sites.

4. Screening of Policies in the Chippenham NP 2023-2038, Submission Version, June 2023

4.1 The Chippenham NP comprises twenty-four policies; these are detailed and assessed in Table 1 below.

4.2 All parts of the NP have been screened for potential impacts which may arise from the plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects. None of the policies within the NP allocate sites for development or would lead directly to development, nor would any of the policies result in a likely significant effect on any European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. This is due to the nature, scope and scale of the proposals set out in the NP, and on account of the distance of the NP area from any European sites and the absence of a potential pathway for effect.

TABLE 1: Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening of the Chippenham NP

| |
|------------------------------|
| A / B (Green) – Screened out |
| C / D (Red) – Screened in |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|---|--------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Policy SCC1 – Net Zero Carbon Development | A1 | <p>This policy specifies that proposals for all new buildings should aim to demonstrate that an annual operational net zero carbon emissions balance will achieve net zero carbon and that fabric energy efficiency should be prioritised as far as possible, in accordance with the Energy Hierarchy.</p> <p>Where net zero carbon emissions cannot be achieved through reduced demand, the remainder of the energy should be supplied from either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable and/or low carbon heat supply, • On-site renewable electricity generation, or • Off-site renewable energy sources. <p>The policy goes on to state that where a proposal cannot meet the requirements in full the development must be future proofed to enable future occupiers to easily retrofit or upgrade the building to achieve net zero carbon.</p> <p>The policy states that new developments should not be connected to the gas grid.</p> <p>The policy will not result in development itself but instead aims to steer and positively influence development to use low/zero carbon design, construction and management techniques. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy SCC2 - Sustainable Design and Construction | A1 | <p>This policy requires all new buildings in major development schemes to demonstrate that they are sustainable in terms of their design, construction materials and methods of construction through the submission of a Sustainability Statement. The statement should demonstrate how the design has been optimised and emissions and other environmental impacts avoided or minimised. A recognised standard for the assessment of environmental performance of buildings, such as EN 15978:2011, should be used where possible.</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|--|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | | <p>The policy goes on to state that all major non-residential developments will additionally be required to meet BREEAM ‘Excellent’ standards.</p> <p>The policy will not result in development itself but instead aims to steer and positively influence development to ensure that new buildings will be sustainable. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy SCC3 - Standalone Renewable Energy | A1 | <p>This policy lends support to proposals for renewable energy developments, including renewable energy storage, where it can be demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The wider benefits of providing energy from renewable sources, including contributions to national carbon reduction objectives and targets, outweigh any adverse impacts on the local environment or amenity, including any cumulative adverse impacts from existing or planned renewable energy developments; b) additional social, economic or environmental benefits which benefit the local community over the lifetime of the project are provided; and c) particularly adverse/harmful landscape and/or visual effects are capable of being successfully mitigated through sensitive site selection, inherent/sensitive design measures and/or appropriate mitigating and enhancing landscaping proposals. <p>The policy goes on to state that proposals for ground mounted solar photovoltaic development will be expected to demonstrate that agricultural use will continue, and/or achieve a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) on site.</p> <p>The policy will not directly result in development but instead supports the delivery of renewable energy developments. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy GI1 - Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity | A1/A2 | <p>This policy stipulates that development proposals must demonstrate that the following on-site features, for the creation, protection or enhancement of wildlife habitat and biodiversity, have either been retained or incorporated into the design of the development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient trees and hedgerows and/or trees and hedgerows of arboricultural value; • Blue infrastructure. Where sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are being created these should be multi-functional; | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native plants and wildflower areas in landscaping proposals; • Green/brown roofs (where appropriate); • Building integrated bird and bat boxes; • Swift bricks and bee bricks in new buildings; • 13cm x 13cm holes in fencing for hedgehogs and other small mammals to pass through. <p>The policy requires major developments to provide 10% BNG that is secured in perpetuity and supports developments which deliver in excess of 10%. The latest DEFRA metric or equivalent should be used.</p> <p>Developments located adjacent to existing green spaces and or open countryside will be required to demonstrate that they can provide an appropriate and sensitive interface to existing adjoining habitats.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and green spaces and infrastructure and as such does not have potential to result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy GI2 – Local Green Spaces | A2/A3 | <p>This policy designates a number of sites, which are listed in the policy and shown on Figure 6.2, as Local Green Spaces. It also stipulates that proposals for built development on these Local Green Spaces must be consistent with policy for Green Belt and will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is required to enhance the role and function of that Local Green Space.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect local green spaces and will not in itself lead to development. Moreover, the policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy GI3 - Green Corridors | A1/A2/A3 | <p>This policy specifies that all development located within, or adjacent to, the following Strategic Green Corridors must be designed to ensure that these Corridors remain intact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. River Avon Corridor b. Hardenhuish Brook Corridor c. Railway Line Corridor d. Wilts & Berks Canal Corridor e. Chippenham-Calne Corridor | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|---|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | | <p>The policy states that development which takes the opportunity to link identified Neighbourhood Green Corridors to the surrounding countryside at the Countryside Connection Points identified in the NP, or to Strategic Green Corridors, will be supported. The policy also lends support to development that will realise or improve the missing links or connections for wildlife within Green Corridors, identified in the NP.</p> <p>The policy goes on to specify that all development located within, or adjacent to, the Green Corridors must be designed to protect and enhance these Corridors by meeting the four criteria detailed in the policy.</p> <p>The policy states that green and blue infrastructure will be strategically located along contours and the edges of greenfield development sites to reduce harmful urbanising effects from new developments. Lastly, the policy states that new or improved sustainable transport routes shall be designed to include wildlife corridors along their length in a manner that balances safe use by humans and allows free movement for wildlife.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect and enhance green corridors and to positively steer new development will not lead to development. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy GI4 - Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows | A1/A2/A3 | <p>This policy requires proposals to seek to protect existing trees, woodland and hedgerows and avoid removal wherever possible. It states that in particular, ancient, veteran and mature trees or trees and hedgerows of ecological, arboricultural or amenity value should be retained and protection should be in accordance with British Standard BS5837.</p> <p>The policy requires that a minimum buffer of 20m should be provided between the edge of a woodland or tree belt and development (including gardens), unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposal would have no adverse impact on trees, ecology, people or property.</p> <p>The policy supports development that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Incorporate gateway or landmark trees for place making purposes b) Deliver new street trees. | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | | <p>The policy specifies that where there is an unavoidable loss of trees on site, the number of replacement trees shall have regard to the advice in the Tree Planting Guide with a preference for native, large-canopied and orchard species.</p> <p>The policy goes on to stipulate that proposals are required to demonstrate a minimum future tree canopy cover of 20% of the site area on sites outside of the town centre and greater than 0.5 ha in size.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect and enhance trees, woodlands and hedgerows and to positively influence new development. The policy itself will not lead to development and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy GI5 - Green Buffers | A1 | <p>This policy states that no new buildings, unless ancillary to the use and function of open space, shall be located in the Green Buffer identified in the NP in order to prevent the coalescence of Chippenham with the settlements of Langley Burrell, Tytherton Lucas and Peckingell.</p> <p>This policy seeks to prevent to coalescence of Chippenham with other settlements by preventing developments within the Green Buffer identified in the NP. The policy will not itself give rise to development and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy H1 - Housing Mix and Types | A1 | <p>This policy details requirements in respect of the types and sizes of housing to be delivered for developments of more than 10 dwellings. It states that proposals for specialist housing for the elderly will be supported where a need can be demonstrated. Major development schemes will be expected to demonstrate that consideration has been given to self-build and custom plots as part of the housing mix.</p> <p>This policy will not lead to development itself but sets criteria that new development must meet. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|--|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Policy H2 – Housing Design | A1 | <p>This policy stipulates that all residential development in Chippenham will be sustainably designed in accordance with the Chippenham Design Guide and other policies in the Development Plan.</p> <p>The policy goes on to state that Major residential development schemes shall demonstrate that they achieve at least nine out of twelve green lights and no red lights, under the Building of a Healthy Life design tool.</p> <p>This policy relates to housing design and will not lead to development or result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy TC1 - Bath Road Car Park/Bridge Centre Site | A1 | <p>This policy specifies that development proposals on the Bath Road Car Park/Bridge Centre Site will be supported where they are accompanied by an up to date masterplan and/or development brief which has been prepared in accordance with the General Design Principles for the Site and the various parameters detailed in the policy.</p> <p>This policy does not allocate development but details various criteria that new development on the Bath Road Car Park/Bridge Centre Site must meet. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy TC2 – River-Green Corridor Masterplan | A1 | <p>This policy states that proposals will be supported where they contribute towards enhancing the River Avon as a defining and connecting feature in the revitalisation of Chippenham Town Centre, whilst also protecting and enhancing the function of the River Avon Strategic Green Corridor. It goes on to specify that development in the River-Green Corridor area will be supported where it accords with the Masterplan in the NP and where it meets the eight objectives detailed in the policy.</p> <p>The policy then details seven design principles with which all development on the River Avon frontage, or public/semi-public spaces with a functional connection to the River Avon, within the Masterplan area, will be required to demonstrate conformity.</p> <p>This policy itself will not lead to development but details various objectives and design principles that new development within the corridor of the River Avon must meet. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|--|--------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Policy TC3 - Public Realm Improvements to Upper Market Place | A1 | <p>The policy supports public realm improvements within the Upper Market Place where it would be accord with the parameters plan and the parameters set out in the policy.</p> <p>This policy will not in itself result in development but seeks to positively influence improvements in the Upper Market Place. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy TC4 - Development within Chippenham Conservation Area | A1/A3 | <p>This policy requires that consideration of proposals for development within the Chippenham Conservation Area, or those that affect its setting, shall take full regard of the relevant character area analysis set out in the updated Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal. It also requires that development proposals maintain or enhance positive views, and/or where possible eliminate or reduce the effect of negative views, identified in the updated Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal.</p> <p>The policy then specifies six criteria that new development within the Chippenham Conservation Area, or which would affect its setting, would have to meet in order to be permitted.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect the Chippenham Conservation Area and will not result in development or in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy TC5 - Buildings of Local Merit | A3 | <p>This policy identifies and lists 11 buildings that are considered to be important non-designated heritage assets. It states that the effect of a proposal on the significance of a Building of Local Merit will be taken into account to avoid or minimise harm.</p> <p>This policy seeks to positively steer development in order to reduce potential effects on the built/historic environment. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy TC6 – Design of Shopfronts and Advertisements | A1 | <p>This policy stipulates that within Chippenham Town Centre, new or altered shopfronts and their associated advertisements must have full regard to the Shopfront Design Guide set out in Annexe 3 of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|---|--------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | | <p>This policy relates to design criteria and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| <p>Policy T1 – Provision and Enhancement of Cycle Paths</p> | <p>A1</p> | <p>This policy requires that cycling schemes are prepared for all large scale major developments, and the majority of major developments, to encourage a shift from the private car to cycling. The policy specifies that cycle paths on new major developments, particularly for strategic housing sites, should link to the existing town cycle network. It also states that major development that will generate an increased use of the existing cycle network to access the site will require on-site or off-site financial contributions towards the relevant high priority improvements to the cycle network.</p> <p>This policy seeks to incorporate the provision of new and enhanced cycle paths within all new major development and will not itself directly lead to development. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| <p>Policy T2 - Access to the Bus Network</p> | <p>A1</p> | <p>This policy supports proposals that seek to retain and improve existing bus infrastructure, particularly at important town centre locations. It states that proposals that seek to reduce bus infrastructure will be resisted unless a suitable alternative facility can be provided. Major development that will add to demands on public transport should prioritise the inclusion of new on-site bus network infrastructure. Financial contributions will be sought towards the cost of new or improved bus services and can also be used to reduce carbon emissions, improve the passenger experience, reduce air pollution, increase biodiversity and encourage greater bus use in the town centre.</p> <p>It also states that all buildings within major development proposals should be located within a maximum of 400m walking distance from an existing bus stop, or new bus stop (where this is to be provided as part of the development proposal).</p> <p>This policy seeks to retain and improve the existing bus service and will not lead to development or result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|--|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Policy T3 - Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure | A1 | <p>This policy requires that all new residential buildings with associated off-street car parking spaces will provide at least one electric vehicle charge point and that all residential buildings undergoing major renovation with more than 10 car parking spaces must have at least one electric charge point per dwelling. The policy also states that a minimum of one electric vehicle charge point and cable route must be provided for one in five car parking spaces for all non-residential developments.</p> <p>Where off-street parking in new developments is not possible the provision of cable routes to allow for electric vehicle charging on-street will be encouraged. Public electric vehicle charge points will be designed to be fully accessible.</p> <p>The policy goes on to stipulate that electric vehicle charge points will be provided at all new taxi ranks and electric bus charging points will be supported at Chippenham Bus Station.</p> <p>This policy seeks to positively steer development and to improve the electric vehicle charging infrastructure within the NP area. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy T4 - Access for Disabled People and those with Reduced Mobility | A1 | <p>This policy sets out a range of requirements that all new development should achieve in order to improve access for disabled people and those with reduced mobility, for example developments must make provision for the long term maintenance, upkeep and repair of unadopted footpaths and the maintenance of vegetation growing alongside such paths.</p> <p>This policy seeks to ensure new developments provide inclusive access and will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy T5 - Waymarking Signage on the Footpath and Cycle Network | A1 | <p>This policy states that major development schemes that are adjacent to or within 200m of the entrance to a public right of way or cycle path should either provide or contribute to waymarking signage where none exists already or where such signage needs to be upgraded according to the specifications that are then detailed in the policy.</p> <p>This policy seeks to improve waymarking and signage on footpaths and cycle routes and will not result in development but instead pertains to design/qualitative criteria for development. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | | considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies. | |
| Policy C11 - Community Infrastructure | A1 | <p>This policy specifies that all major residential developments should include a Community Infrastructure Statement which demonstrates how the community infrastructure needs of new residents can be met on-site without placing additional pressure on existing community infrastructure. Applicants will also be expected to demonstrate that consideration has been given to the need for new community infrastructure so that the development will provide safe, affordable and attractive venues and sites for a range of needs for all age groups. Large scale major residential developments will be required to provide on-site community infrastructure or to provide financial contributions where this cannot be achieved.</p> <p>The policy states that proposals that would result in the loss of existing community infrastructure will be resisted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the operation is no longer financially viable or needed or a change of use or a mixed use will help to retain the community benefit of a building.</p> <p>Change of use of large buildings within the town centre that could be converted to community infrastructure should not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that community use is not feasible or viable.</p> <p>This policy seeks to provide new, and retain existing, community infrastructure and will not itself lead directly to development. The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| Policy E1 – Circular Economy | A1 | <p>This policy supports development proposals that seek to create circular economy benefits for industrial or agricultural processes or for built development in Chippenham. It goes on to state that businesses that can demonstrate that they are designing-out waste and pollution and keeping products and materials in use and economic circulation will be supported, unless they create unacceptable impacts.</p> <p>The policy then sets out three measures to avoid resource use and encourages all new development in the built environment to adopt these measures.</p> | |

| Policy | Screening Category | Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations | Comments and Recommendations |
|---|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | | <p>The policy aims to positively steer development and will not itself lead directly to development or result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |
| <p>Policy E2 - Business Incubator Units</p> | <p>A1</p> | <p>This policy requires that proposals for employment uses on allocated employment land shall demonstrate that a range of unit sizes to suit the local needs and requirements of different sized businesses will be provided on the wider employment site and that provision shall be made for business incubator units of less than 5000 sq.ft. in size.</p> <p>The policy pertains to business unit size but will not itself result in development. Moreover, the policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p> | |

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The HRA screening exercise presented in this document has concluded that the Submission Version (June 2023) of the Chippenham NP will not result in a likely significant effect on any European sites or their qualifying features either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. Therefore, it has not been necessary to subject the NP to an appropriate assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
- 5.2 It should be noted that if any changes are made to the NP or the policies contained therein, it will be necessary for the amended NP to be subject to a repeat HRA screening exercise before it can be 'made'.

Prepared by [REDACTED] Ecologist, Wiltshire Council, 26 July 2023
V3.0 26/07/2023