

# LAVERSTOCK AND FORD COMMUNITIES DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA)

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken to inform a Regulation 16 consultation response from Wiltshire Council to the Laverstock and Ford Communities Draft Neighbourhood Plan, 2021 to 2036 (Submission Draft), hereafter referred to as 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 2019<sup>1</sup>, 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 network<sup>2</sup>) 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>3</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 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.”<sup>4</sup>*
- 1.4. Where appropriate assessment is undertaken, the competent authority may go on to authorise the plan 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/462222/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 Laverstock and Ford Communities Draft 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 (NE) 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 (WCS) HRA (October 2009, February 2012<sup>5</sup>, March 2013<sup>6</sup>, February 2014<sup>7</sup> and April 2014<sup>8</sup>) and the South Wiltshire Core Strategy (SWCS) HRA<sup>9</sup> identified general parameters to determine the likelihood of potential impacts on European sites. 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):*

---

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

<sup>6</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy – Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, March 2013

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

<sup>8</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

<sup>9</sup> South Wiltshire Proposed Submission Core Strategy HRA Report, Appendix 13. NPA for Wiltshire Council, July 2009

- Salisbury Plain SAC / SPA
- River Avon SAC
- New Forest SAC / SPA
- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC (added post adoption of WCS)
- *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 WCS)
  - Mottisfont Bats SAC (added post adoption of WCS)

### **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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 NE. This includes the potential zone of influence parameter 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, 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. An interim Zol of 8km for the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC is being used by Wiltshire Council as this is consistent with the approach being applied by Swindon Borough Council. The Zol will be refined once bespoke visitor surveys have been undertaken.
- 3.5 Impacts of development in Wiltshire on the New Forest SPA were considered in the HRA for the SWCS adopted in 2012<sup>10</sup>. 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 Core Strategy 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 zone of influence and how to fairly reflect different visit rates within it. This evidence has informed the preparation of an Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy for the New Forest Internationally Protected Sites by Wiltshire Council<sup>11</sup>.
- 3.6 The WCS adopted the 8km zone of influence, however, as discussed in the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, from 1<sup>st</sup> 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.
- 3.7 Since the Core Strategy 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

---

<sup>10</sup> South Wiltshire Proposed Submission Core Strategy HRA Report, Appendix 13. NPA for Wiltshire Council, July 2009

<sup>11</sup> The Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy has not been reviewed by Natural England at the time of writing.

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.

### **Screening of Laverstock and Ford Communities NP Area**

- 3.10 The following screening assessment of the Laverstock and Ford Communities NP area applies the most up to date criteria available from the HRA of the WHSAP and advice from NE.

#### *Recreation*

- 3.11 In terms of potential for recreational/visitor impacts upon European sites, several European sites in the area are vulnerable to such pressures.
- 3.12 The current Zone of Influence (ZoI) for the New Forest SPA/SAC comprises the 13.8km radius (further extended to 15km where HRA indicates this is necessary) around the SPA/SAC within which the majority of day visitors to the New Forest originate<sup>[1]</sup>. Dwellings falling within this zone are considered to contribute the majority of visitors to the New Forest. The majority of the NP area lies within the 13.8km ZoI. The NP does not allocate sites for development however it does support infill development within the villages and therefore the NP has been screened with respect to recreational impacts on the New Forest SPA/SAC.
- 3.13 A small section of the NP area lies within the 15km ZoI for the New Forest SPA/SAC. The development supported by the NP would be infill development that is defined in the NP as development that fills a small gap in the developed area of a village with a maximum of two dwellings. The Interim Recreation

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

Mitigation Strategy states that 1-49 units on greenfield or brownfield sites within the 15km ZOI would not have likely significant effects on the New Forest SPA/SAC. Therefore, the potential for recreational impacts as a result of new development within the 15km ZOI has been screened out.

- 3.14 Recreational pressure on the River Avon SAC is recognised to occur predominately in circumstances where significant development lies in close proximity to the SAC. The River Avon SAC flows through the NP area, and any policies that promote major housing or tourism in the plan area could result in additional recreational pressure on the SAC and as such the NP has been screened on this basis.
- 3.15 In relation to Salisbury Plain, the SAC habitat features were screened out of appropriate assessment for the Core Strategy on the advice of NE. Recreational/visitor pressure is a known issue for the Salisbury Plain SPA; however, the NP area lies 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. Moreover, the NP does not allocate any sites for development. Therefore, appropriate assessment of the NP is screened out with respect of the Salisbury Plain SPA.
- 3.16 In respect of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, the NP area lies more than 40km from the closest component area of the SAC, and also lies well beyond any bat consultation zones around the SAC or core roosts associated with the SAC. Thus, appropriate assessment with respect of this European site can be screened out.

#### *Hydrology / Hydrogeology*

- 3.17 In terms of hydrology/hydrogeology, the entire NP area lies within the catchment of the River Avon SAC. Consequently, any proposals for development within the NP area will need to be phosphate neutral and demonstrate that it will not prevent the SAC conservation objectives from being met within timescales identified in the River Avon Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). The Council is working with the Environment Agency (EA) and NE to ensure appropriate mitigation is in place for development coming forward under the Core Strategy and Local Plan Review. The NP does not allocate any sites for development, however, any policies within the NP which support development could in effect lead to development within the catchment of the River Avon SAC thereby giving rise to a pathway for likely significant effects on the SAC. The associated implications in relation to this NP are considered further in the Stage 1 assessment in Section 4 and the appropriate assessment in Section 5.

#### *Air Pollution / Nitrogen Deposition*

- 3.18 The WCS 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 level<sup>12</sup> (WCS HRA Update February 2014). In relation to these sites the WCS HRA concluded no likely significant effect where the existing approach to mitigation in Core Policy 55 is implemented.
- 3.19 There are no housing site allocations or proposals for new roads put forward in the Laverstock and Ford Communities NP and most of the European sites listed under point 3.1 above are deemed to be beyond the distance within which there could be effects. The only exception is the River Avon SAC which runs through the NP area and this is considered further in the Stage 1 assessment in Section 4, and the appropriate assessment in Section 5.

#### *Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines / Disturbance*

- 3.20 Porton Down SPA is located approximately 2.12km northeast of the NP area its closest point. It is considered that the plan area is sufficiently distant from the SPA and known functionally linked habitat,

---

<sup>12</sup> Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)

for any development within the plan area to cause direct physical damage to, or fragmentation of, breeding and foraging habitat for the Annex I species stone-curlew. It is also considered too remote for development within the plan area to result in anthropogenic disturbance or visual stimuli that could have an adverse effect on stone-curlew breeding at Porton Down. Moreover, the NP does not allocate any sites for development and as such appropriate assessment in respect of this European site is not necessary.

- 3.21 Salisbury Plain SPA is located approximately 8.48km north of the NP area at its closest point and is therefore deemed too distant for any development within the plan area to have implications for the Annex 1 species stone-curlew and quail that breed at the SPA, or to have effects on the Annex 1 species hen harrier, that winters at the SPA. Furthermore, the NP does not allocate any sites for development. Therefore, appropriate assessment in relation to this European site is not necessary.
- 3.22 The NP area is sufficiently distant from the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, Chilmark Quarries SAC and Mottisfont Bats SAC that it is deemed the potential for likely significant effects upon these European sites and the Annex II bat species associated within them can be screened out, and further assessment will not be required.

#### **4. Screening of Policies in Laverstock and Ford Communities Draft NP, 2021 - 2036**

- 4.1 The Laverstock and Ford Communities NP comprises seven planning policies.
- 4.2 Taking into consideration the location, scale and nature of proposals in the NP, there is a potential mechanism for effect upon two European sites, namely the River Avon SAC and the New Forest SPA/SAC, on account of three policies. These comprise Policies 1, 2 and 7 which have the potential to give rise to significant effects upon the European sites in combination with other plans and projects and are therefore taken forward to appropriate assessment in Section 5. All parts of the Submission 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.
- 4.3 Other policies would either not lead directly to development or would have no significant effects either alone or in combination with other plans and projects due to the scale and nature of the proposals in the plan.

**TABLE 1: Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening of the Laverstock and Ford Communities NP**

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

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
Policy 1: Protection of the distinctive settlement pattern of the parish	<p>This policy sets out specific settlement policies which are set out below:</p> <p>a. Old Sarum/Longhedge shall be retained as a discrete settlement. Development proposals must ensure that it remains separated from the urban edge of Salisbury city to the south by the existing Green Buffer 1.</p> <p>b. The village of Laverstock shall be retained as a discrete settlement. Development proposals must ensure that Laverstock remains separated from urban edge of Salisbury city to the west by the existing Green Buffer 2.</p> <p>c. The village of Ford shall be retained as a discrete settlement. Development proposals must ensure that Ford remains separated from Riverdown Park to the south by the existing Green Buffer 3 and to the north and west by the provisions of Policy 2 below, relating to Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area.</p> <p>Infill development is defined in the NP and the supporting text to Policy 1 as <i>“the filling of a small gap within the developed area of the villages with a maximum of two dwellings”</i>.</p> <p>The policy does not allocate sites for development, however, it does support development within the villages. The policy does not stipulate that development would be infill however this is indicated in the supporting text and as such this policy has been screened on this basis and using the definition of infill provided in the supporting text. Therefore, there is a mechanism for a likely significant effect upon the River Avon SAC in combination with other plans and projects as the whole</p>	D for River Avon SAC	Refer to detail in the appropriate assessment presented in Section 5.



Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<p>plan area lies within the catchment of the River Avon SAC. On this basis the policy is taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p> <p>Furthermore, any planning applications for infill development within the plan area will need to be considered at the planning application stage to ensure compliance with other Development Plan policies including Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and Core Policy 69 (Protection of the River Avon SAC) of the WCS, and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).</p> <p>The policy does not allocate sites for development, however, it does support infill development within the plan area. The whole of Laverstock and the majority of Ford are located within the 13.8km ZoI for the New Forest SPA/SAC therefore this policy is taken forward to appropriate assessment due to the potential for increased recreational pressure on the New Forest SPA/SAC.</p> <p>Any planning applications for infill development within the plan area will need to be considered under the Habitats Regulations at the planning application stage and will need to comply with the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy (or subsequent iteration), other Development Plan policies including Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the WCS, and the NPPF.</p>		
<p>Policy 2: Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area</p>	<p>This policy sets out the specific policy for the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area:</p> <p>a. An approved Management Plan for Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area (see Figure 5) should be put in place before consideration is given to any future development within the Area, which is covered currently by Core Policy 25. This Management Plan is the responsibility of Wiltshire Council.</p> <p>b. Development should only be carried out in the Conservation Area if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides a long-term proactive strategy that enhances the historic setting of the Airfield Conservation Area and does not</li> </ul>	<p>D for River Avon SAC</p>	<p>Refer to detail in the appropriate assessment presented in Section 6.</p>

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<p>detract from its heritage significance when viewed from Old Sarum and Figsbury Ring Scheduled Monuments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not cause the flying activity to cease and provides a legal agreement for reasonable controls over flying activity in the interests of the amenity of local residents</li> <li>• provides public access and benefits to the residents of the communities within the whole parish</li> <li>• delivers a high-quality strategic landscape improvement to mitigate the visual impact of existing intrusive buildings when viewed from within the Conservation Area, from the Scheduled Monuments at Old Sarum and Figsbury Ring, and from other key viewpoints contained in our Landscape Sensitivity Assessment</li> <li>• maintains a Green Buffer 5 (see Figure 4) to the north and west of the existing village of Ford.</li> </ul> <p>c. Any future development in the Airfield Conservation Area should be cognizant of the designation of Ford as a small village under Core Policy 2, which limits development to infill only.</p> <p>The policy does not allocate the Old Sarum Conservation Area for development, however, it does support infill development within the area and as such there is a mechanism for a likely significant effect upon the River Avon SAC in combination with other plans and projects as the whole plan area lies within the catchment of the River Avon SAC. On this basis the policy is taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p> <p>Furthermore, any planning applications for infill development within the Old Sarum Conservation Area will need to be considered at the planning application stage to ensure compliance with other Development Plan policies including Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and Core Policy 69 (Protection of the River Avon SAC) of the WCS, and the NPPF.</p>		
	<p>The policy does not allocate the Old Sarum Conservation Area for development, however, it does support infill development within the area. A small area of the Old Sarum Conservation Area is located within the 13.8km ZOI therefore this policy is taken forward to appropriate</p>	<p>D for the New Forest SPA/SAC</p>	<p>Refer to detail in the appropriate assessment presented in Section 6.</p>

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<p>assessment due to the potential for increased recreational pressure on the New Forest SPA/SAC.</p> <p>Any planning applications for infill development within the plan area will need to be considered under the Habitats Regulations at the planning application stage and will need to comply with the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy (or subsequent iteration), other Development Plan policies including Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the WCS, and the NPPF.</p>		
<p>Policy 3: Protection and enhancement of the distinctive landscape character, wildlife habitats and heritage assets</p>	<p>This policy specifies in summary:</p> <p>a. Development should, as a minimum, maintain but is expected to enhance the visual character of the landscape when viewed from both inside and outside the Parish.</p> <p>b. All development proposals, especially in High and Medium/High sensitivity landscape, should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal proportionate to the scale of the development.</p> <p>c. Development should only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposals comply with the recommendations of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment prepared for the Parish Council in June 2020 (see Appendix 9 for the Executive Summary).</p> <p>d. Any development shall provide an overall improvement to wildlife habitats. To this end, development shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be supported by an ecological assessment of the proposed development, including quantitative evidence of biodiversity net gain using NE’s Biodiversity Metric</li> <li>• avoid any encroachment into the green corridors within the Parish, particularly either side of the River Bourne, along Ford Down/Cockey Down/Laverstock Down and around Ford, including the Bat corridor along Green Lane</li> </ul>	<p>A1 / A2</p>	

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• replace any loss in hedgerows and woodland with at least the equivalent area planted with native species in an equivalent location.</li> </ul> <p>e. All development proposals should be accompanied by a Heritage Statement relating to heritage assets (including but not restricted to any sub-surface archaeological remains). This statement should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification of heritage asset(s)</li> <li>• statement of significance of the asset, including its setting</li> <li>• assessment of impact of proposed development on the asset and its setting</li> <li>• measures to mitigate any such impacts.</li> </ul> <p>This policy aims to protect and enhance the natural environment and will not give rise to likely significant effects upon any European sites.</p>		
<p>Policy 4: Designated Local Green Spaces</p>	<p>This policy identifies the six sites designated by the NP as Local Green Spaces. They are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castle Hill Country Park (1)</li> <li>• Old Sarum Community Green Spaces (three areas) (2)</li> <li>• Hampton Park Green (3)</li> <li>• Longhedge Village Community Green Space (4)</li> <li>• Ford Green on Manor Farm Road (5)</li> <li>• Whitebridge Spinney (6)</li> </ul> <p>This policy aims to protect and enhance the natural environment and will not give rise to likely significant effects upon any European sites.</p>	<p>A2</p>	
<p>Policy 5: Design of future development</p>	<p>This policy states that the design of any future development - whether in the form of a single dwelling or larger scale - must aim to improve the quality of the built environment of the Parish, maintain or enhance its semi-rural character and help to address the climate emergency.</p> <p>This policy requires that any development proposal should follow the general principles set out in the National Design Guide 2019, the requirements of the WCS/Local Plan and the further specific detail set out in the Laverstock and Ford Parish Design Guide 2020.</p>	<p>A1 / A3</p>	

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<p>It goes on to specify that for any substantive housing development proposal, consultation should take place with the community prior to submission for planning approval, with the Parish Council as a primary point of contact.</p> <p>The policy stipulates that any proposal for significant housing or commercial development should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a specific assessment of its impact on air quality, including the effect of local traffic generated by the development</li> <li>• proposed measures to facilitate household use of “clean” energy</li> <li>• a layout and infrastructure which would give residents easy, safe access to local pedestrian/cycle networks and to public transport, in order to help reduce vehicle usage.</li> </ul> <p>The supporting text goes on to state that the design of new housing development has the potential to deliver significant long term improvements to residents’ health and wellbeing in a variety of ways and highlights the opportunity to move towards the use of “clean” energy.</p> <p>This policy itself will not lead directly to development and instead sets out criteria to improve the quality of the built environment. As such, the policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites.</p>		
<p>Policy 6: Development of a comprehensive, attractive network of footpaths and cycleways within the Parish</p>	<p>This policy states that the Parish Council will use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds generated by any future development, along with other sources of funding, to improve the network of footpaths and cycleways within the parish.</p> <p>The policy stipulates that priority should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving access from Old Sarum and Longhedge villages and Bishopdown Farm/Hampton Park /Riverdown Park to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the city centre</li> <li>○ the green spaces of the parish</li> <li>○ Laverstock schools site</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>B</p>	

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving access between Old Sarum Country Park and Longhedge Community Open Space, and to give safe pedestrian and cycle access to Monarch’s Way</li> <li>• improving the cycle lanes on Church Road to overcome the problem of parked cars, preferably by the provision of an off road route</li> <li>• identifying and implementing a safe route for that part of the proposed Salisbury to Stonehenge cycle route which lies within the parish.</li> <li>• improving safe connectivity to local employment centres, including those in Salisbury, Old Sarum and Porton</li> <li>• improving the safety of the Golden Way route especially on Milford Mill Road.</li> </ul> <p>The policy goes on to specify that the Parish Council will support initiatives to establish and extend public access to (and along) the local Green Blue Infrastructure Network and will work with Wiltshire Council, landowners and other agencies to this end. In making decisions on routes, high priority should be given, wherever practicable, to minimising proximity to roads where air quality is poor. Complementary to schemes undertaken by the Parish and Wiltshire Council, the granting of planning permission for any site in excess of 50 dwellings should be contingent on implementing agreed schemes to improve access to green spaces.</p> <p>The supporting text lists the positive outcomes of further development of this network.</p> <p>The policy will not result in a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Details of any development that comes forward within the plan area will need to 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), 52 (Green Infrastructure) and 69 (Protection of the River Avon SAC) of the WCS and the NPPF.</p>		

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
<p>Policy 7: Improvements to infrastructure and amenities appropriate to the scale of specific future housing development</p>	<p>This policy specifies that any new development should be required to provide the appropriate supporting infrastructure and amenities prior to, or in phases during, the new development, and not following completion. It states that any proposed development adjacent to or dependent on the following roads should be contingent on providing agreed improvements to the local highways network aimed at increasing pedestrian and cyclist safety and reducing traffic speed, noise and pollution, with particular focus on the following roads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Portway, Old Sarum</li> <li>• Ford Road/Roman Road, Ford</li> <li>• Church Road, Laverstock</li> <li>• Milford Mill Road, Milford.</li> </ul> <p>The Parish Council will direct any CIL Funds to whatever local infrastructure is appropriate at the time.</p> <p>The supporting text goes on to state that the Parish Council will work with Wiltshire Council and other agencies to secure improvements to local infrastructure, facilities and amenities for the benefit of Parish residents and businesses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local road system improvement</li> <li>• full fibre broadband connectivity</li> <li>• improvements to bus services (e.g. additional/extended routes, increased frequency of services).</li> </ul> <p>The HRA of the WCS identified that increased traffic could lead to potential effects through an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition upon the River Avon SAC where it lies within 200m of a main road.</p> <p>This policy requires that any new development provides supporting infrastructure and goes on to specify that new development adjacent to the roads listed in the policy will require agreed road improvements. This includes Church Road in Laverstock and Milford Mill Road in Milford, both of which lie in close proximity to the River Avon SAC which flows through the NP area.</p>	<p>D for River Avon SAC</p>	<p>Refer to detail in the appropriate assessment presented in Section 5.</p>

Policy	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Screening Category	Comments and Recommendations
	<p>Whilst the policy does not allocate sites for development, it does require new development to provide supporting infrastructure. It also requires that any new development adjacent to the roads listed in the policy are improved and as aforementioned, this includes roads in close proximity to the River Avon SAC. New development that necessitates the provision of new infrastructure within 200m of the River Avon SAC and/or new development adjacent to main roads within 200m of the River Avon SAC could result in additional traffic using roads within the aforementioned distance of the SAC, which in turn could give rise to a likely significant effect on the SAC in-combination with other plans and projects through an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition.</p> <p>The WCS HRA concluded no likely significant effect on the River Avon SAC as a result of an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition providing the existing approach to mitigation detailed in Core Policy 55 of the WCS is implemented. Nonetheless, mitigation cannot be considered at the screening stage of HRA, plus any forthcoming development not allocated in the WCS or WHSAP would be above and beyond that assessed in the associated HRAs; and as such this policy must be taken forward to appropriate assessment.</p>		



## 5. Appropriate Assessment – River Avon SAC

### Background to the River Avon SAC

- 5.1 The qualifying features of the River Avon SAC are the river habitat, categorised as a water course of plain to montane levels containing *Ranunculus* vegetation; Desmoulin's whorl snail which occurs on emergent vegetation in the floodplain, and; four species of fish, Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, brook lamprey and bullhead. The conservation objectives are available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6048472272732160>, the current version (V3) is dated 27 November 2018.
- 5.2 In brief these require that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features. Supplementary Advice on conserving and restoring site features was published by NE on 11 March 2019<sup>13</sup> (available through the weblink above). This discusses the need to restore the natural nutrient regime, by limiting anthropogenic enrichment to levels at which adverse effects on characteristic biodiversity are unlikely. In relation to planning, the main concern is the contribution that development makes to river phosphorus levels through inputs from sewage treatment works and package treatment plants. To this effect, specific targets have been identified for phosphorus for the individual waterbodies which make up the SAC.
- 5.3 Development may also affect the river directly, if works are undertaken on the banks or within the river channel and indirectly through non sewage related pollution, such as runoff during construction operations. These matters are generally site specific and for applications of the scale being considered by this plan are best considered during the planning application process.

### Plans and projects to be considered in combination

- 5.4 The HRA for the WCS considered the in-combination effect of all development proposed in the River Avon catchment, relying on the River Avon Nutrient Management Plan (NMP)<sup>14</sup> to demonstrate there would be no adverse effect on the SAC.
- 5.5 The principle behind the NMP was that planned increases in development related sewage would be more than offset by the reductions in agricultural phosphate being secured by catchment sensitive farming. For the Core Strategy 2015-2026 this enabled the Council to conclude that, provided development was within the headroom of individual sewage treatment works, there would be no likely significant effects of housing allocations proposed within the River Avon catchment.
- 5.6 In March 2018, the EA and NE advised the Council that catchment sensitive farming targets were not being achieved and therefore the NMP could not be relied on for appropriate assessments, even for development within headroom. From that time onwards, all new development in the catchment would need to be "phosphate neutral" if it was to comply with the Habitats Regulations.
- 5.7 Subsequently Wiltshire Council and other Local Authorities in the Avon catchment have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NE, Wessex Water and the EA<sup>15</sup> agreeing to deploy a range of measures to ensure that development between March 2018 and March 2025 will be phosphate

---

<sup>13</sup> Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features: River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Site Code UK0013016 Published by Natural England 11 March 2019

<sup>14</sup> River Avon Special Area of Conservation Nutrient Management Plan for Phosphorus (David Tyldesley Associates, 30 April 2015)

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum of Understanding, River Avon Special Area of Conservation, Phosphate Neutral Development – Interim Mitigation, 29 May 2018

neutral. The MoU commits the parties to preparing an Interim Delivery Plan (IDP)<sup>16</sup> in order to secure a trajectory of phosphorous reductions in line with the spatial and temporal pattern of development. The IDP focusses mainly on residential development down to single dwellings, as these combine to have the greatest negative effects across the catchment. In addition to residential and non-residential growth, the IDP considers the growth of unsewered development and takes account of land use change from agriculture to urban in order to arrive at a projection for net phosphorous increases up to 2025/26.

5.8 In Wiltshire, the Cabinet resolved on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to adopt a strategic approach to secure in perpetuity measures to ensure development is phosphate neutral in the River Avon SAC catchment. It confirmed the strategic approach would include monitoring and annual reporting to ensure offsetting keeps pace with permissions granted and agreed to ring-fence an initial fund of £850,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund the necessary offsetting measures and a project officer to oversee their delivery.

5.9 The strategic approach, which has been considered through a generic appropriate assessment and agreed with NE, comprises the following:

- Offsetting is initially taking the form of Small Schemes which mainly comprise new wetlands and woodlands located in the headwaters of the River Avon sub-catchments. These are secured through contracts with landowners following an online auction.
- ‘Small Schemes’ are secured by 25 year contracts which allow for them to be extended or replaced to provide offsetting in perpetuity.
- Temporary Measures, such as cover crops or capital works, are used to bridge any gaps where there is a delay to implementing Small Schemes and may be used at other times as a contingency.
- A 20% buffer is incorporated into phosphorous projections to account for uncertainties inherent in the approach to determining whether development is phosphorous neutral.
- Large ‘Habitat Creation Schemes’ will be delivered in the headwaters of some or all of the River Avon headwaters within the next 3-10 years to provide in-perpetuity offsetting for permissions granted between March 2018 and March 2026. Contracts for Small Schemes will not be continued in any given sub-catchment where a Large Habitat Creation Scheme is in place.
- Ongoing consultation will be undertaken with partners including NE and the EA through the River Avon SAC Working Group which meets at least once a year to review contracts and delivery on the ground against the most up to date housing trajectories.

### **Analysis of policies in the NP screened into appropriate assessment**

#### **Policies 1 and 2**

5.10 The Laverstock and Ford Communities NP does not allocate any sites for development, and Policies 1 and 2 would not themselves lead to development, however, the policies support minor infill development. The entire NP area lies within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and whilst the total quantum of housing that could come forward as supported by these policies would be small and most unlikely to lead to significant effects on the River Avon SAC alone, the Habitats Regulations requires competent authorities to consider the in-combination effects of plans and projects.

---

<sup>16</sup> River Avon SAC – Phosphate Neutral Development Interim Delivery Plan, Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited, January 2019

- 5.11 At the current time, the generic appropriate assessment agreed by NE, anticipates housing development coming forward in the catchment of the River Avon SAC up to March 2026 which includes permissions already granted, planned development and a proportion of windfall. This is matched by a programme for delivery of offsetting measures in the catchment which will meet the trajectory of anticipated occupations. It can be assumed therefore, that the modest number of dwellings that could come forward as supported by Policies 1 and 2 in the NP would fall within the scope of the Council's generic appropriate assessment and would be offset by the Council's strategic approach.
- 5.12 At this stage it is not known how any infill developments that could come forward as supported by Policies 1 and 2 would dispose of foul waste, most likely via mains sewer to a sewage treatment works. For information, NE previously advised it intended to issue formal guidance in autumn/winter 2021 on when non-mains development can be excluded from appropriate assessment, however this guidance is still awaited. In the meantime, Wiltshire Council has some interim guidance about small scale thresholds for non-mains system development which can be applied to planning applications so that it can be determined when discharge to non-mains systems may be considered to be *de-minimus*; i.e. lead to impacts which are so minimal that they can be excluded from appropriate assessment and not require mitigation.
- 5.13 Under the MoU, all residential development in the catchment must be built to the highest water efficiency standards provided for by the building regulations which are currently a maximum water use of 110 litres per person per day (G2 of the Building Regulations 2010). This requirement would be secured by means of a planning condition at the planning application stage, unless subsequent formal guidance from NE indicates otherwise.
- 5.14 The provision of measures to control phosphorous in urban runoff through SuDs design and on-site offsetting measures will be the responsibility of developers.

#### Policy 7

- 5.15 As discussed earlier in this HRA, the HRA of the WCS identified that increased traffic could lead to potential effects upon the River Avon SAC where it lies within 200m of a main road through an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition upon the SAC.
- 5.16 Policy 7 specifies that new development will provide supporting infrastructure and that any new development adjacent to the particular roads listed in the policy will require agreed road improvements. This includes Church Road in Laverstock and Milford Mill Road in Milford, both of which lie in close proximity/adjacent to the River Avon SAC along sections of their routes. It follows therefore, that any development adjacent to these roads, or others within 200m of the River Avon SAC, could ultimately lead to additional vehicles using these roads thereby potentially resulting in an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition upon the River Avon SAC.
- 5.17 New development that necessitates the provision of new roads within 200m of the River Avon SAC and/or new development adjacent to main roads within 200m of the River Avon SAC could result in additional traffic using those roads within the aforementioned distance of the SAC. This in turn could result in an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition upon the SAC potentially leading to an adverse effect on the SAC in-combination with other plans and projects.
- 5.18 Any forthcoming planning application for development that would result in new roads or development adjacent to roads within 200m of the River Avon SAC will need to demonstrate adherence to the Development Plan including Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), Core Policy 55 (Air Quality) and Core Policy 69 (Protection of the River Avon SAC) of the WCS and the NPPF. Moreover, HRA would be undertaken at the planning application stage where necessary, and appropriate mitigation would

have to be agreed with the Council where required in order to ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations, otherwise planning permission would be refused.

- 5.19 It is worth noting that the HRA of the WCS concluded there would be no likely significant effect on the River Avon SAC as a result of an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition, providing the existing approach to mitigation detailed in Core Policy 55 of the WCS is implemented. Whilst any forthcoming development not allocated in the WCS or WHSAP would be above and beyond that assessed in the associated HRAs, the potential for any new development within the NP area to result in additional traffic-related atmospheric pollution would be dependent upon the size of any forthcoming development.
- 5.20 In addition, the potential for effects on the River Avon SAC as a result of deposition of traffic-generated atmospheric pollution and nitrogen oxides is most likely associated with major A roads. Major A roads within the NP area that lie within 200m of the SAC comprise the A30, A338 and A345; and the A36 lies outside the plan area approximately 220m from the SAC. Any development coming forward adjacent to these A roads within the plan area must be assessed in line with the Habitats Regulations at the planning application stage.
- 5.21 In terms of the four roads listed in Policy 7, none of them comprise major A roads and only two of them lie within 200m of the River Avon SAC, namely Church Road in Laverstock and Milford Mill Road in Milford. In the event that any application for major development adjacent to these roads within the NP area were to be submitted to Wiltshire Council, the application would be assessed in accordance with the Habitats Regulations where necessary.
- 5.22 Furthermore, the NP does not allocate any sites for development and this HRA has been carried out on the basis of the information provided within the plan and any supporting documents. Therefore, it is concluded that Policy 7 itself will not have adverse effects on the integrity of the River Avon SAC either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

### **Conclusion – River Avon SAC**

- 5.23 It is likely that any minor infill development that comes forward and is supported by Policies 1 and 2 would be within settlement boundaries and in small villages and as such would meet the criteria of Policy 2 of the WCS and constitute plan-led development. Therefore, such minor infill development would fall within the scope of the Council's strategic mitigation scheme for the River Avon SAC and for the purposes of this plan-level HRA, this is considered to apply to development supported by Policies 1 and 2.
- 5.24 Nonetheless, any proposals for infill development will be considered under the Habitats Regulations at the planning application stage to ensure the proposals would be covered by the strategic mitigation scheme and generic appropriate assessment. At that stage progress with the strategic mitigation scheme and generic appropriate assessment will be compared with projected occupation dates to ensure offsetting will be achieved in a timely manner. Any application for minor infill development that does not comprise plan-led development, and as such would not be covered by the generic appropriate assessment and strategic mitigation scheme, would need to be accompanied by bespoke mitigation measures and would only be permitted if phosphorus neutrality could be demonstrated. Therefore, no development would come forward or be permitted as a result of Policies 1 or 2 that would lead to a significant effect on the SAC or the integrity of its qualifying features.
- 5.25 Furthermore, Wiltshire Council has received some interim guidance from NE about small scale thresholds for non-mains system development which can be applied to planning applications so that it can be determined when discharge to non-mains systems may be considered to be *de-minimus*; i.e.

lead to impacts which are so minimal that they can be excluded from appropriate assessment and not require mitigation.

- 5.26 In terms of Policy 7, any development that comes forward which is supported by this policy will be subject to HRA at the planning application stage where necessary and appropriate mitigation measures will need to be secured at that stage where required.
- 5.27 It is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the NP will have no adverse effects on the integrity of the River Avon SAC either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

## **6. Appropriate Assessment – New Forest SPA/SAC**

### **Background to the New Forest SPA/SAC**

- 6.1 The New Forest comprises the largest area of ‘unsown’ vegetation in lowland England and includes the representation on a large scale of habitats formerly common but now fragmented and rare in lowland western Europe. The mosaic of habitats owes much to the local geology and traditional commoning grazing system, a situation which is uncommon in lowland England.
- 6.2 The habitats include lowland heath, valley and seepage step mire, or fen, ancient pasture woodland, including riparian and bog woodland and a range of acid to neutral grasslands.
- 6.3 The SPA supports an exceptionally rich bird fauna including internationally important breeding populations and wintering populations of bird species associated with these habitats. The SAC supports outstanding examples of 13 habitats of European interest which are represented with two priority habitat types, bog woodland and riverine woodland. These habitats support an exceptionally rich diversity of fauna and flora which is largely dependent on traditional management practices of grazing and complemented by annual heathland burning and cutting programmes.
- 6.4 The SPA’s qualifying features are detailed below:

- Qualifying individual species listed in Annex I of the Wild Birds Directive

During the breeding season the SPA regularly supports:

- A302 Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*) - 538 pairs representing at least 33.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain at the time of SPA classification
- A072 Honey Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), 2 pairs representing at least 10.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain at the time of SPA classification
- A224 Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), 300 pairs representing at least 8.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain at the time of SPA classification
- A246 Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), 177 pairs representing at least 12.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain at the time of SPA classification

During the non-breeding season the SPA regularly supports:

- A082 Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) 15 individuals representing at least 2.0% of the wintering population in Great Britain at the time of SPA classification

- Qualifying individual species not listed in Annex I of the Wild Birds Directive

During the breeding season the SPA regularly supports:

- A099 Hobby (*Falco Subbuteo*) – up to 25 pairs representing around 3% of the British breeding population at the time of SPA classification

- A314 Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – in excess of 350 pairs representing at least 3% of the British breeding population at the time of SPA classification.

6.5 The conservation objectives are available at [European Site Conservation Objectives for New Forest SPA - UK9011031 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/european-site-conservation-objectives-for-new-forest-spa-uk9011031). The conservation objectives require that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the World Birds Directive. NE published Supplementary Advice on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019<sup>17</sup> (available through the weblink above) which sets out the need to reduce the frequency, duration and intensity of disturbance on nesting, roosting, foraging, feeding, moulting and/or loafing birds so that the qualifying species are not significantly disturbed.

6.6 The qualifying features of the SAC are as follows:

- H3110. Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae); Nutrient-poor shallow waters with aquatic vegetation on sandy plains
- H3130. Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea; Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
- H4010. Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
- H4030. European dry heaths
- H6410. Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae); Purple moor-grass meadows
- H7140. Transition mires and quaking bogs; Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface
- H7150. Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
- H7230. Alkaline fens; Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens
- H9120. Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with *Ilex* and sometimes also *Taxus* in the shrublayer (*Quercion robori-petraeae* or *ilici-Fagenion*); Beech forests on acid soils
- H9130. *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests; Beech forests on neutral to rich soils
- H9190. Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains
- H91D0. Bog woodland\*
- H91E0. Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*); Alder woodland on floodplains\*
- S1044. *Coenagrion mercuriale*; Southern damselfly
- S1083. *Lucanus cervus*; Stag beetle
- S1166. *Triturus cristatus*; Great crested newt

6.7 The conservation objectives are available at: [European Site Conservation Objectives for The New Forest SAC - UK0012557 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/european-site-conservation-objectives-for-the-new-forest-sac-uk0012557). The conservation objectives require that the integrity of the SAC is maintained or restored as appropriate and that the site contributes to achieving the favourable conservation status of its qualifying features. NE published Supplementary Advice on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019<sup>18</sup> (available through the weblink above) which notes the following for several qualifying features:

*Trampling from human activities can cause soil compaction, changes to soil hydrology and with heavy use, erosion and compacted bare ground. This leads to reductions in soil invertebrates and changes in*

---

<sup>17</sup> Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features: New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA). Site Code UK9011031 Published by Natural England 19 March 2019

<sup>18</sup> Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features: The New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Site Code UK0012557 Published by Natural England 18 March 2019

*plant communities. The effects are most acute near to car parks, access points from the urban fringe and in and around campsites.*

6.8 Increased recreation is also noted to be a cause of:

- nutrient and sediment inputs to waterbodies;
- bank erosion, excessive bare ground and impoverished vegetation; and
- a reduction in veteran trees, dead standing wood and a decline in the nature conservation value of woodland near to recreational facilities.

6.9 With regards to planning, the main concern is the increase in recreational pressure on the New Forest SPA/SAC caused by additional residential and tourism developments within south Wiltshire. The Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy for the New Forest Internationally Protected Sites has been developed, and will be reviewed before March 2023, to provide mitigation for residential and tourism developments coming forward in Wiltshire.

### **Plans and projects to be considered in combination**

6.10 The HRAs (2012, 2013, 2014) to the WCS concluded that the WCS would not have any adverse effects on the integrity of the New Forest SPA/SAC in-combination with other plans and projects.

6.11 Core Policy 50 of the WCS identifies the need for a New Forest Mitigation Strategy to address the impacts of increased recreational pressure on the New Forest for additional development within Wiltshire. The WCS adopted the 8km ZoI identified within the HRA to the SWCS. However, as discussed in the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 this has been revised to 13.8 km due to further evidence provided by visitor surveys conducted in 2018/2019. Where demonstrated as necessary through a bespoke appropriate assessment this ZoI may be extended to 15km.

6.12 The Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy sets out the mitigation approaches of several neighbouring authorities including the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA), New Forest District Council and Test Valley Borough Council.

6.13 The approaches taken by the other local authorities fall into three categories:

1. Implementing mitigation, management and monitoring of visitors within the New Forest;
2. Provision of SANGs managed by Local Authorities / NGOs lying outside development sites; and
3. Provision of SANGs within larger development sites managed by management companies.

6.14 These approaches have been tested at Examination in Public and the HRAs which support them have been scrutinised by NE. Several principles emerged from these existing strategies:

- Tariffs should be applied to all residential development;
- Mitigation must be delivered for the lifetime of the developments being permitted;
- Mitigation is required for all new and tourism/visitor accommodation;
- Charges should include a contribution towards monitoring and research;
- Charging rates can be designed to reflect the amount of visitor pressure that may arise conditional on a developments nature and location.

- SANGs provided within larger developments must meet minimum design criteria and be managed for the lifetime of the development

6.15 The Council's mitigation approach is based on providing suitable alternatives (SANGs) close to where people live to avoid impacts and working with the NFNPA to deliver measures that reduce and mitigate the impact of unavoidable recreational pressure within the European sites themselves, by requiring CIL contributions towards access management and monitoring for the lifetime of the strategy.

### **Analysis of policies in the NP screened into appropriate assessment**

#### Policies 1 and 2

- 6.16 As stated above, the Laverstock and Ford Communities NP does not allocate any sites for development. Policies 1 and 2 would not themselves lead to development, however, they support minor infill development defined in the NP as a maximum of two dwellings within gaps in the developed area of the village. The majority of the NP area lies within the 13.8km Zol for the New Forest SPA/SAC as set out in the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, and a small area lies within the 15km Zol.
- 6.17 The potential for recreational effects from new development within the 15km Zol has been scoped out of the assessment as dwelling numbers between 1 and 49 on either greenfield or brownfield land are not considered to have likely significant effects on the SPA/SAC at this distance. Old Sarum is located wholly within the 15km Zol and only a fraction of the south eastern edge of Longhedge is located within the 15km Zol. Development coming forward within these villages would comprise minor infill development as defined in the NP, therefore, in accordance with the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy these villages have been scoped out of this appropriate assessment.
- 6.18 The whole of Laverstock, the majority of Ford and a small area of the Old Sarum Conservation Area are located within the 13.8km Zol and therefore will be considered as part of the appropriate assessment of Policies 1 and 2.
- 6.19 The Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy addresses mitigation requirements arising from the following where sites fall within the relevant zone of influence, in this case 13.8km:
- Housing development which was permitted between 2015 and 2021 excluding that which has already been mitigated either through SANGs (i.e. for WCS strategic allocations) or through contributions (i.e. Land off Salisbury Road, Downton) already received.
  - Housing allocation sites from the WHSAP
  - Other relevant housing
  - Tourism development from September 2021
- 6.20 The strategy aims to deliver high quality alternatives to visiting the New Forest by delivering SANGs while at the same time recognising that not all visits to the New Forest can be offset. Therefore, the strategy also relies on contributions being made towards access management and monitoring for the lifetime of the strategy. The approach to mitigation for residential dwellings within the 13.8km Zol involves larger developments being encouraged to provide a SANG and all other smaller housing schemes being required to contribute funding towards strategic SANGs and access and visitor management within the New Forest itself.



- 6.21 The modest number of dwellings that could come forward in the 13.8km ZoI supported by Policies 1 and 2 in the NP would fall within the scope of the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy and would be required to provide a CIL contribution in line with the strategy, or subsequent iteration of the strategy.
- 6.22 Any development that comes forward would need to demonstrate compliance with the Habitat Regulations at the planning application stage and would need to adhere to the most recent/final version of the Recreation Mitigation Strategy.

### **Conclusion – New Forest SPA/SAC**

- 6.23 The minor infill development supported by Policies 1 and 2 would be covered by the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy. The interim strategy applies until a coordinated strategic approach is agreed with the NFNPA and other neighbouring authorities and will be reviewed before the end of March 2023. Any developments coming forward will therefore need to comply with the most recent/final version of the strategy.
- 6.24 It is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the NP will have no adverse effects on the integrity of the New Forest SPA/SAC either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

Prepared by [REDACTED] Ecologist, Wiltshire Council, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
V2.0 14.03.2022