

PRESHUTE 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 Preshute Neighbourhood Plan for 2021 to 2036 dated 10th June 2022, hereafter referred to as the NP, submitted to Wiltshire Council in June 2022.
- 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 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 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/424247/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017.pdf)

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 Preshute 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 other 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.
- 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 in Section 4 below). Where potential for likely significant effects have been identified, an appropriate assessment is presented in subsequent sections.

3. Higher Level HRAs

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- 3.1 The Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) 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. 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*

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

15km (it should be noted that the relevant parameter for the latter has since been revised on the basis of data obtained by means of visitor surveys and is now 6.4km):

- Salisbury Plain SPA / SAC
- River Avon SAC
- New Forest SAC / SPA
- Pewsey Downs SAC
- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC (added post adoption of WCS)
- North Meadow and Clattinger Farm 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 Wiltshire Core Strategy)
 - Mottisfont Bats SAC (added post adoption of Wiltshire Core Strategy)

Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan

- 3.2 Since the WCS 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 further 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 WCS subsequent to the acquisition of results from new surveys, and in light of advice from NE. This includes the zone of influence (Zol) 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 WCS 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 around the North Meadow element of 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 South Wiltshire Core Strategy (SWCS) adopted in 2012⁹. 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 Council¹⁰.
- 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.
- 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.

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

¹⁰ The Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy has not been reviewed by Natural England at the time of writing.

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.

Screening of Preshute NP Area

Recreation

- 3.10 The NP area lies approximately 5.5km to the north east of the closest point of the Pewsey Downs SAC and the site allocated in Policy PRES3 lies approximately 6.4km north east. As the NP area and allocated site lie more than 5km from the SAC, appropriate assessment with respect to this SAC has therefore been screened out.
- 3.11 The NP area lies approximately 44km from the New Forest SPA/SAC and is therefore a substantial distance beyond the 13.8km ZOI around the SPA/SAC within which the majority of day visitors to the

New Forest originate¹¹. Appropriate assessment with respect to the New Forest SPA/SAC has therefore been screened out.

- 3.12 Recreational pressure on the River Avon SAC is recognised to occur in limited circumstances predominately where significant development lies immediately adjacent or in close proximity to the river, which will not occur as a result of this NP as the closest component of the River Avon SAC lies approximately 4km south of the plan area at its closest point and has therefore been screened out of appropriate assessment.
- 3.13 In relation to Salisbury Plain, the SAC habitat features were screened out of appropriate assessment for the WCS on the advice of NE. 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 ZoI 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 Wiltshire Council in 2015.
- 3.14 In addition, the NP area is located approximately 10km south west of the interim 8km ZoI around the North Meadow element of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC, at its closest point, and as such appropriate assessment with respect of this European site can be screened out.

Hydrology / Hydrogeology

- 3.15 The Preshute NP area is located within the catchment of the River Kennet and tributaries, within the River Thames Basin District. This is within the Thames Water Swindon and Oxfordshire Water Resource Zones (WRZ). The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC is located down stream of the NP area, approximately 14.6km to the east, and supports one of the most extensive known populations of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* in the UK.
- 3.16 It is known that there is limited water available for abstraction from the Upper Kennet and Og rivers, both of which drain into the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC. Some of the components of the SAC have been assessed as being in unfavourable condition as they fail to meet target moisture levels which has been attributed to water abstraction. The Environment Agency (EA) has therefore declared a water resource status of 'Water not available for licencing' for much of these catchments in Wiltshire.
- 3.17 Policy PRES3 allocates a site for development (business and mixed use) approximately 110m north of the River Kennet. The policy proposes 3 affordable homes and a similar number of market homes if they are required to contribute to the provision of the affordable homes. As such, a potential pathway for effects on the River Kennet upstream of the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC, exists, as the development allocated by means of the policy would likely lead to an increase in water abstraction.

Air Pollution / Nitrogen Deposition

- 3.18 The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA 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 level¹². Although the Preshute NP does allocate a site for business and mixed use development, the number of dwellings proposed is small in relation to the total for the county. Furthermore, all of the European sites listed above are a considerable distance from the NP area and 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.

¹¹ Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

¹² Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)

Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines / Disturbance

- 3.19 The NP area is located approximately 10.8km from Salisbury Plain SPA and 26.9km from Porton Down SPA. Therefore, it is considered that the plan area and the allocated site are sufficiently distant from the two SPAs and known functionally linked habitat, 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. The plan area and allocated site are 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 either SPA.
- 3.20 It should be noted however, that two stone-curlew breeding plots exist approximately 0.5km from the northern boundary of the NP area. Stone-curlew are susceptible to disturbance from visual stimuli within 1km. Development at the allocated site would not have an effect on these breeding plots due to the distance, approximately 6.2km, between the allocated site and the nest plots. If the next draft of the NP were to allocate any sites for development in the north of the plan area, there could be a mechanism for a likely significant effect on stone-curlew which is a qualifying feature of the Salisbury Plain SPA and Porton Down SPA, and as such HRA of the plan could be necessary.
- 3.21 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/sever 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, the Mottisfont Bats SAC or the Chilmark Quarries SAC.

4. Screening of Policies in Preshute Neighbourhood Plan – 10th June 2022

- 4.1 The Preshute NP comprises 12 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. One Policy, Policy 7 allocates a site for additional business and mixed use development. This site is located upstream of the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC and therefore there is a potential pathway for effect on the SAC. This policy has however been screened out as set out in Table 1 below and an appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
- 4.3 None of the other policies allocate sites for development or would lead directly to development, nor would they 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.
- 4.4 Any further drafts of the NP and/or changes made to the NP as a result of the examination in public should be subject to a rescreening assessment before the plan is adopted.

TABLE 1: Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening of the Preshute Neighbourhood Plan

A / B (Green) – Screened out			
C / D (Red) – Screened in			
Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
PRES1: Natural and Historic Landscape	A2 and A3	<p>This policy seeks to protect the natural and historic landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB within the plan area. Development proposals should seek to demonstrate that full account has been taken of the landscape and historic character, visual quality and local distinctiveness. The policy expects development proposals to enhance, restore and better manage the natural and historic landscape and any significant landscape features and elements, for example key views and settlement patterns.</p> <p>This policy aims to protect the natural and historic landscape of Preshute and will not lead to development or give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES2: North Wessex Downs AONB	A2 and A3	<p>This policy seeks to protect the North Wessex Downs AONB by stating that the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape, its character and spatial qualities will be given great weight when determining any development proposals. This policy only supports major developments within the NP area where the development can satisfy the exception tests set out in national policy and guidance.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect the North Wessex Downs AONB and only supports major development in exceptional circumstances. Development will not take place as a direct result of this policy and it will not lead to a likely significant effect on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES3: Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands	A3	<p>This policy seeks to conserve and enhance the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trees of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historic value,</i> • <i>Veteran trees,</i> • <i>Hedgerows of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historic value,</i> 	

Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Woodland of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historic value.</i> <p>The policy calls for compensatory planting where trees, woodland or hedgerows are removed due to development, and requires those affected developments to consider the potential for new or extended woodland to assist with carbon storage and biomass fuel.</p> <p>This policy aims to conserve and enhance trees, hedgerows and woodland and will not lead to development or give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES4: Biodiversity	A3	<p>This policy states that <i>‘Development will be required to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and where possible, provide net gains.’</i></p> <p>This policy aims to conserve and enhance biodiversity and will not lead to development or give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES5: Historic Environment and Heritage Assets	A1 and A3	<p>This policy states that when considering development proposals great weight will be given to the conservation of any designated or undesignated heritage asset or setting. The policy supports development proposals that <i>‘sustain and enhance the character, appearance and significance of historic or heritage assets and their settings and put them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.’</i></p> <p>This policy aims to ensure that the historic environment and heritage assets are protected and enhanced. While this policy supports development, development will not take place as a direct result of this policy and it will not lead to a likely significant effect on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES6: Landscape Character and Skylines	A1 and A3	<p>This policy requires development proposals to be supported and informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and sections that demonstrate the visibility of the development. The policy only supports development;</p>	

Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>which has no material adverse effect on the character or appearance of the landscape, and</i> • <i>which preserves the unbroken skylines that form an essential feature of the AONB and in particular the views of, into and across the AONB from key public vantage points including National Trails such as The Wansdyke and White Horse Trail and other well used Public Rights Of Way.</i> <p>Development outside of the development boundary will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>This policy aims to protect the landscape character and skylines of the NP area, and while it supports development that does not have an adverse effect on the landscape or the AONB development will not take place as a direct result of this policy and it will not lead to a likely significant effect on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES7: Development Site Elm Tree Business Area	B	<p>This policy allocates a site at Elm Tree business area as suitable for additional business use for appropriate use classes and a mixed use development of residential and business use. The site is considered to be a discreet area of land within the curtilage of the Elm Tree business area. The policy sets out that the <i>‘the land is also considered suitable for residential development comprising of no more than three affordable houses. If it can be demonstrated that delivery of the three affordable houses required cross subsidy, up to three market houses alongside the affordable houses would be considered appropriate. A mixed development of Class E employment uses and up to three affordable homes and three market houses may also be appropriate.’</i></p> <p>The policy goes on to state that any development will need to be accompanied by a Heritage Statement, the scope of which <i>‘will need to be agreed with the Wiltshire Council conservation officer in consultation with Historic England’</i>.</p>	

Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
		<p>The whole of the NP area lies within the catchment of the River Kennet and is within the Thames Water Swindon and Oxfordshire WRZ.</p> <p>This policy allocates the site for additional business use and mixed use development. The site is not located within or close to any European sites however the site is located approximately 110m from the River Kennet.</p> <p>It is considered that there is a potential pathway for effect on the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC as a result of policy PRES7 as the proposed development site is within the catchment of the River Kennet and tributaries and would likely necessitate an increase in water abstraction.</p> <p>Thames Water Utilities Ltd has confirmed in writing that the Water Resources Management Plan 2019¹³, which has been subject to a HRA, has included additional headroom to allow for uncertainties in the total growth for the area and therefore has capacity to accommodate additional growth.</p> <p>The EA has confirmed in writing that the existing water abstraction licence, which Thames Water has advised could accommodate additional development, has been subject to thorough assessment by the EA under the Habitats Regulations with the conclusion of no adverse impact on the European sites associated with the River Kennet. The EA also confirmed that existing consents have been subject to HRA over the last 15 years to ensure they are not resulting in adverse effects on European sites.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that the small quantum of housing proposed in Policy PRES7 could be accommodated within the headroom of the existing consents which have been subject to a HRA by Thames Water and the Environment Agency, and therefore would not have likely significant effects on the Kennet and Lambourn Flood Plain SAC. Policy PRES7 has therefore been screened out of appropriate assessment.</p>	

¹³ Water Resources Management Plan 2019, Thames Water Utilities Ltd, April 2020

Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
		<p>Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES 8: Infrastructure Required for Development		<p>This policy, proposed by Thames Water, states that for developments requiring offsite water/wastewater infrastructure upgrades, conditions should be attached to the planning permission so that occupation is aligned with the delivery of the upgrades. The policy encourages early engagement with the water/wastewater company to identify any potential water and wastewater network reinforcement that are required. The policy also states that if a capacity constraint is identified, phasing conditions should be applied by the Local Planning Authority to ensure that any necessary upgrades are delivered ahead of the occupation of the relevant phase of the development.</p> <p>This policy seeks to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the water/wastewater network and that any necessary infrastructure improvements are delivered before developments are occupied. This policy will not lead to development and therefore will not lead to a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES9: Water Efficiency	A1	<p>This policy seeks to ensure that development is designed to be water efficient and to reduce water consumption. A maximum of 106 litres of water per person per day (plus an allowance of up to 5 litres for external use) is set out in the policy as advised by Thames Water. Planning conditions are expected to be applied to new residential development to ensure water efficiency standards are met.</p> <p>This policy aims to increase water efficiency and reduce water consumption for developments. This policy will not lead to a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
PRES10: Sustainable Drainage Systems	A1	<p>This policy, recommended by the Environment Agency, states: <i>'New -build development and change of use of buildings will be required to incorporate appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems to reduce surface water run-off.'</i></p>	

Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
		<p>This policy seeks to reduce surface water run-off from developments. This policy will not lead to a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
<p>PRES11: Re-use of derelict rural buildings</p>	<p>A1 and A3</p>	<p>The conversion and reuse of redundant rural buildings is supported, in principle, through this policy provided the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The building must be shown to be truly redundant and unused. 2. The building is re-usable without substantial and fundamental demolition and re-building. 3. The conversion would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape. 4 The building is already or can be provided with essential utilities for its purpose and the site has sufficient space for vehicle parking appropriate for its new use. 5 The building is reasonably accessible from a highway. 6 The conversion and new use would lead to its long term viability. <p>The policy goes on to identify the following as examples of sustainable new uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Residential • Tourist including accommodation • Storage • cultural such as educational, sporting, or exhibition • Other appropriate uses <p>A high standard of design is required along with a minimum carbon footprint, energy efficiency and sympathetic integration into its surroundings.</p> <p>This policy aims to ensure that the re-use of buildings is appropriate and of a high standard of design. This policy will not lead to a likely significant effect upon any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application stage to ensure they comply with this policy, the NPPF and other relevant Development Plan policies.</p>	
<p>PRES12: Economic Viability</p>		<p>New businesses or developments that contribute to the viability of existing rural business and provide local employment are supported in principle through this policy provided that the following criteria are met:</p>	

Policy	Initial Screening Category	Policy Summary and Assessment under Habitats Regulations	Comments and Recommendations
		<p>1. <i>The new development is in keeping with the scale and nature of existing nearby buildings and structures.</i></p> <p>2. <i>The development would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape.</i></p> <p>3. <i>The proposal will not give rise to dust, noise, traffic or disturbance inappropriate to its tranquil rural setting and the proposal would have no adverse impact on residential amenity.</i></p> <p>This policy supports, in principle, new businesses and development that supports existing businesses and provides local employment, however development will not take place as a direct result of this policy and it will not lead to a likely significant effect on any European sites. Developments will be considered at the planning application 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 current draft of the Preshute 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'.

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