

## **Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening**

### **Wiltshire Council, April 2015**

#### 1. Screening Methodology

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

The criteria used were as follows:

- Category A1: The policy will not itself lead to development e.g. because it relates to design or other qualitative criteria for development;
- Category A2: The policy is intended to protect the natural environment;
- Category A3: The policy is intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment;
- Category A4: The policy would positively steer development away from European sites and associated sensitive areas;
- Category A5: The policy would have no effect because no development could occur through the policy itself, the development being implemented through later policies in the same plan, which are more specific and therefore more appropriate to assess for their effects on European Sites and associated sensitive areas.
- Category B – no significant effect;
- Category C – likely significant effect alone; and
- Category D – Likely significant effects in combination.

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

#### 2. Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA

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

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

- None – there are no N2K sites within 5km of the plan area and Salisbury Plain SPA is more than 15km from the boundary of the plan area.

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

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

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

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

*Physical Damage / Interruption of Flight Lines*

- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC

3. Screening of Potential Impacts

Draft policies within the emerging Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan have been screened against each of the above potential impacts, for each Natura 2000 site.

*Recreation.*

There are no N2K sites within 5km of the plan area and Salisbury Plain SPA is more than 15km from the boundary of the plan area. There is therefore no mechanism by which the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan would impact on N2K sites through increased recreational pressure.

*Hydrology/Hydrogeology*

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

**Water Quality** – Sewage from Devizes town is treated at Webb’s Lane STW, which discharges into the Bristol Avon catchment, which is not designated as a Natura 2000 site. No development has been allocated in areas of the plan area which would discharge to the Hampshire Avon SAC.

#### *Nitrogen Deposition*

Given the small scale of development identified in the Devizes Area NP, and the distances from the European sites any impact of nitrogen deposition as a result of implementation of the plan would be *de minimis*. Core Policy 55 also ensures that development which could potentially impact upon Natura 2000 sites through contributions to aerial deposition will require an assessment of the likely impacts in accordance with published guidance and that where mitigation is required this may be delivered through a local emissions strategy; this provides a policy safeguard against potential effects of nitrogen deposition upon N2K sites.

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

The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan area is sufficiently distant from the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC that loss of habitat would not result in physical damage or interruption of significant bat flight lines or foraging habitats associated with the SAC.

#### 4. Screening of Emerging Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan includes draft policies to address the following policy objectives:

- Housing
- Education
- Getting Around
- Environment & Sustainability

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

5. Initial Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment of the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan

a. Screening assessment of individual policies

A / B (Green) – Screened out

C / D (Red) – Screened in

Policy Area	Policy	Categorisation in initial screening	Comments and recommendations
Housing	H1: Settlement Framework Boundary	B	
	H2: Built Environment & Sustainability	B	
	H3: Site Specific Allocations	B	
Education	E1: Education	B	
Getting Around	T1: Getting Around	A3	The policy seeks to help address congestion within the town and therefore reduce carbon emissions and nitrogen deposition. Any specific traffic management must align with objectives and policies in the current Local Transport Plan.
Environment & Sustainability	ESD1: Environment & Sustainability	A3	Although the policy does not seek to directly protect or enhance the natural environment it promotes the creation of green space through development, which will have some positive benefit for local biodiversity.

- b. Assessment of all elements of the plan 'in-combination', as a whole
  - The draft policies would not have any in-combination effects
- c. Assessment of the effects of the plan as a whole, in combination with other plans or projects
  - The plan would not have any in combination effects with the Wiltshire Core Strategy
  - Although there are major pending planning applications for Devizes (including Quakers Walk and Coate Road), which if permitted with the proposed plan allocation would increase planned housing numbers for the town significantly above that assessed in the Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA, given that lack of impact pathways it is still considered that the plan would not have any in-combination effects with any major permitted or pending projects.

## 6. Conclusion

Sites are allocated for development within the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan for a total of 455 dwellings over the plan period.

All Natura 2000 sites are sufficiently far from the plan area and given the small scale of development identified by the plan such that there would be no mechanism for impact, or any potential impacts have been deemed *de minimus*. Although there are additional in-combination effects not previously identified and assessed by Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA (pending planning applications), these are not of sufficient scale or nature to trigger any new likely significant effects which would require appropriate assessment.

It can therefore be concluded that the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan would have no likely significant effects upon the Natura 2000 network alone or in combination. As such, no appropriate assessment of the current submission draft is considered necessary, and no amendments, deletions or additions to the plan are required to make the plan HRA compliant.