NORTH BRADLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA)

1. Introduction

1.1. This version of the HRA relates to the North Bradley Neighbourhood Development Plan Final Screening Draft April 2019.

1.2. The HRA has been carried out to comply with Regulation 105 of the Habitats Regulations 2017. Under these Regulations, a competent authority must consider whether a relevant plan is likely to have a significant effect on any European sites 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[1], 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 the full 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*."[2]

1.4. Where appropriate assessment is undertaken, the competent authority may only authorise the plan or project having ascertained, in light of the sites' conservation objectives, that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or sites. Otherwise the plan cannot be authorised unless specific statutory tests are met.

1.5. Wiltshire Council has conducted the following HRA as competent authority for the North Bradley Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Where risks to European Sites are identified, the plan must be amended e.g. by the incorporation of mitigation measures, to remove these before the plan is made. Likewise, if the policies or planning context change

[1] Court of Justice of the European Union, Case C 323/17 "People Over Wind"/P. Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta
[2] Commission of the European Communities v UK and NI, opinion of Advocate General KoKott, 9 June 2005, Case C-6/04

after the HRA is completed, the HRA process must be repeated before the final plan is considered by a referendum and adopted.

2. Screening Methodology

2.1. Each element of the plan has been categorised against screening criteria developed by Natural England to provide a clear audit trail for the screening assessment.

2.2. The screening criteria used are as follows:

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

2.3. The effect of each policy has been considered both individually and in combination with other plans and projects (see table in section 4 below). Where potential for likely significant effects have been identified, an appropriate assessment is undertaken in section 5.

3. Higher Level HRAs

Wiltshire Core Strategy

3.1 The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA (October 2009, February 2012[3], March 2013[4], February 2014[5] and April 2014[6]) identified general parameters to determine the likelihood of potential impact on Natura 2000 (European protected) sites. The following parameters were identified and assessed for the following Natura 2000 sites.

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

[3] Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Draft – Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, February 2012
[4] Wiltshire Core Strategy – Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council, March 2013
[5] Update to the Wiltshire Core Strategy habitats Regulations Assessment, February 2014 (Exam/89)
[6] Wiltshire Core Strategy Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment, April 2014

    - River Avon SAC
    - New Forest SAC / SPA
    - Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC (added post adoption of core strategy)
- *Hydrology / Hydrogeology - 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 – 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 / Disturbance*
    - Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC
    - Porton Down SPA
    - Chilmark Quarried SAC (added post adoption of Core Strategy)
    - Mottisfont Bats SAC (added post adoption of Core Strategy)

3.2 In terms of recreational pressure, the NDP area lies well beyond the distance from which the majority of day visitors come to the New Forest and likewise the banks of the River Avon SAC are too remote to be affected by the plan. In relation to Salisbury Plain, the SAC habitat features were screened out of appropriate assessment for the Core Strategy on the advice of Natural England. However the majority of the NDP area lies within the 6.4km zone within which the majority of visitors to the plain are expected to live and policies within the plan must therefore be screened for their potential to affect the Salisbury Plain SPA.

3.3 In terms of hydrology/hydrogeology, North Bradley is located within the catchment of the Bristol Avon, rather than the Hampshire Avon, and therefore the River Avon SAC is not potentially impacted. No water resource issues have been identified for the Bath and Bradford

on Avon Bats SAC which is the only SAC from the above list to lie fully within the Bristol Avon catchment. The Bristol Avon is also not identified as a cause of water resource issues for the Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA

3.4 The Wiltshire Core Strategy identified that increased traffic would lead to potential effects through an increase in atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition upon a range of Natura 2000 sites within 200m of a main road. Such effects were considered to be very small and difficult to predict at the strategic level[7] (WCS HRA Update February 2014). The allocation in the NDP for approximately 25 dwellings is considered to be a small number in relation to the total for the county. All of the Natura 2000 sites listed above, except Salisbury Plan SAC/SPA and River Avon SAC are a considerable distance from the NDP area and effects are likely to be negligible. In relation to Salisbury Plan SAC/SPA and the River Avon SAC, the Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA concluded no likely significant effect where the existing approach to mitigation in Core Policy 55 is implemented. It is concluded that the proposals for housing in this NDP would not have an adverse effect on Natura 2000 sites through nitrogen deposition.

3.5 In terms of causing physical damage, interrupting flight lines and disturbance, urban development in the NDP area is too remote to have implications for bats at Chilmark Quarries SAC or stone curlews breeding at Porton Down SPA / Salisbury Plain SPA. However most of the NDP lies within the high and medium risk zones for bats associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and therefore policies in the plan are screened below for their potential to affect this European site.

Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan

3.6 Since the Core Strategy was adopted, the Council has published a pre-submission draft of the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (HSAP) 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 final schedule of changes and an Addendum to the HRA incorporating minor factual changes were published in September 2018 for public consultation.

3.7 The screening criteria for the HSAP were modified for some European sites from those used for the core strategy following the results of new surveys and in light of advice received from Natural England. The following screening applies the most up to date criteria available from the HSAP.

4. Screening of Policies in North Bradley Neighbourhood Development Plan Final Screening Draft April 2019

4.1 The North Bradley Neighbourhood Development Plan comprises 7 planning policies.

4.2 The two European Sites where there is a mechanism for effect from this NDP are the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and Salisbury Plain SPA. All parts of the draft plan have been screened for potential impacts on these sites. Five policies have the potential to give rise to significant effects and are therefore taken forward to appropriate assessment in section 5 below.

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

4.3 Other policies would either not lead directly to development or would have no significant effects due to the scale and nature of the proposals in the plan.

TABLE: Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening of the North Bradley Neighbourhood Development Plan

A / B (Green) – Screened out

C / D (Red) – Screened in

Policy	Initial screening Category	Issue
Policy 1: Landscape Setting Gap and HSAP Housing Sites	C and D for Bats SAC D for Salisbury Plain SPA	The HSAP housing allocations H2.1, H2.2 and H2.6 are accepted subject to reduction in quantum of units to 175. Layout of Site H2.2 shall follow the general layout indicated in the comprehensive policy map. Key to an acceptable layout that protects bats and maintains a landscape setting for North Bradley village will be concentrating development in the north and east of the site with a wide landscape buffer to be created between the built areas and North Bradley. To the extent that the policy is completely consistent with the HSAP, the NDP can rely on the HRA for the HSAP. However in defining the fields where development should take place, the NDP goes further than HSAP policy H2.2 and it would be safer to consider it through its own appropriate assessment for both the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and Salisbury Plain SPA.
Policy 2: Housing - General	D for Bat SAC D for Salisbury Plain SPA	This policy proposes that windfall developments should be permitted where they meet specific criteria. By identifying that such development should be located within the settlement boundary, impacts to bat habitat will be minimised. Nevertheless, it will contribute to in-combination effects of recreational pressure on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and the Salisbury Plain SPA and this policy should therefore be considered through appropriate assessment.
Policy 3: Housing Site	C and D for Bats SAC D for Salisbury Plain SPA	1 site is allocated by the NDP: 54 Woodmarsh which is allocated for approximately 25 dwellings on a greenfield site. The effects of this alone and in combination with other development should be considered through an appropriate assessment in relation to both European sites.
Policy 4: Local Green Space	D for bats SAC	4 sites are proposed for designation as local green space. One of these, Trowbridge Town FC football Field, lies outside the North Bradley settlement area. While there are no specific proposals in the plan to enhance these sites for recreation, the policy gives scope for recreational enhancements which could give rise to in-combination effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. This policy should therefore be considered through an appropriate assessment.
Policy 5: Bat Conservation Policy	A1 and A2	The policy and supporting text emphasises the need for development to comply with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy. None compliant applications are unlikely to be permitted.
Policy 6: Infrastructure Priorities	C and D for Bats SAC	The provision of new and upgraded foot / cycle paths and crossing points could lead to impacts on the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC alone if lighting adversely affects habitats used by SAC bat species for foraging, commuting or roosting. Effects could also occur in-combination with other schemes. This policy should therefore be considered through an appropriate assessment.
Policy 7: Parish Burial Ground	A2	A new burial ground is a land use which is compatible with maintaining the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Design details would be considered at planning application stage

5. Appropriate Assessment – Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC

Background to the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC

5.1 The following account clarifies the key geographical and ecological relationships between the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and the North Bradley NDP area, as far as these are currently known. Details of the conservation objectives are available online. The current version is dated 27 November 2018 and can be accessed on line together with Natural England's Supplementary Advice dated 10 February 2019 through the following link, http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6279810384920576.

5.2 The SAC designation extends across former stone mines which are hibernation and swarming sites for the three species of bat which are features of this SAC; greater horseshoe and lesser horseshoe and Bechstein's bats. The nearest mine is at Winsley approximately 8km from North Bradley. Others occur near Box and Bath. The mines are mainly used by bats during the winter and autumn.

5.3 While the SAC lies some distance from North Bradley, the bats roost and feed across a much wider area during the spring and summer. Horseshoe bats generally breed in buildings while a significant breeding colony of Bechstein's bats occurs in woodlands to the south of Trowbridge. The Council has prepared guidance to demonstrate how development across the whole bat landscape must take account of the SAC[8]. It identifies a number of core roosts with core areas around them (termed "consultation zones") to show where bat activity is likely to be concentrated and where particular precautions will be required.

5.4 Under the above guidance, Green Lane and Biss Woods, and Picket and Clanger Woods are all core roosts for Bechstein's bats and the core areas around them extend across the majority of the North Bradley NDP area. Comparatively little is known about this species as it cannot be identified from bat detectors and is therefore generally under-recorded. However, there are several records for Bechstein's in the NDP area resulting from radio-tracking studies.

5.5 There are several reported horseshoe bat roosts in the NDP area including one at St Nicholas's church in North Bradley. The core area for a greater horseshoe core roost in Westbury extends into the southern part of the NDP area. Both horseshoe species are known to use the NDP area for foraging.

5.6 It is likely all three species fly through open countryside in the NDP area to access the SAC.

Plans and Projects to be considered in-combination

5.7 The screening Assessment found that the North Bradley NDP could lead to significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC in combination with other plans and projects. The following assessment has been conducted taking the following plans and projects into consideration:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015)
- Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan submission document May 2018 with proposed schedule of changes dated September 2018
- Application 15/04736/OUT Ashton Park, Trowbridge

[8] Bat Special Areas of Conservation, planning guidance for Wiltshire. Issue 3.0, 10 September 2015

- Application 16/04468/OUT land South West of Ashton Road, Trowbridge
- Application 16/00547/FUL Land SE of Southview Park, Trowbridge
- Application 17/12509/FUL Land SE of Southview Park, Trowbridge
- Application 18/00985/OUT The Grange, Hilperton
- Application 16/00672/OUT Land W of Elizabeth Way, SW of Hilperton Marsh, Trowbridge
- Application 17/09961/OUT Land West Of Biss Farm, West Ashton Road, Trowbridge
- Permission 13/06879/OUT Land South of Devizes Road, Hilperton
- Permission W/11/01932/REM Land North East of Green Lane Farm, Trowbridge (completed)
- Permission W/04/02105/OUTES Land adjacent to scrapyard, Trowbridge (completed)
- Application 18/02671/FUL Sunnyside Yarnbrook Road
- Corsham Neighbourhood Development plan 2016-2026 Submission Draft February 2018
- Southwick Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026 Screening Draft August 2018
- West Ashton Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2016, Screening Draft September 2018

HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan pre-submission draft

5.8 The HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan pre-submission draft (HSAP) included an appropriate assessment of the six allocations proposed for Trowbridge and this has been supplemented by an Addendum HRA (September 2018).

5.9 The HRA and its addendum concluded these allocations have the potential to lead to adverse effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Impacts were anticipated to occur from both recreational pressure and loss / degradation of habitat and the plan proposed these would be addressed through the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS). The strategy went through public consultation in February 2019 and supported the HSAP through its examination in public in April 2019. The draft document will be finalised with a view to adoption as SDP alongside the HSAP. The TBMS seeks to mitigate greenfield developments allocated in the HSAP and neighbourhood plans as well windfall development within the Trowbridge settlement boundary.

5.10 The TBMS sets out at a strategic level the mitigation that will be required to be confident that significant adverse effects to the SAC will be prevented. Provision of mitigation is dependent on a development's location in respect of three zones:

- A high risk zone extending to 600m from woodlands identified as core roosting sites for Bechstein's bats. It is anticipated new build development within this zone would be unable to adequately mitigate for increases in recreational pressure and loss / degradation of habitat and therefore is unlikely to satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.
- A medium risk zone for habitat loss and degradation where green field development will be required to provide 100% mitigation for habitat loss and also contribute to a Council scheme for mitigation of residual and in-combination effects on bat habitat.

- A medium risk zone for recreational impact where new residential development will contribute to new offsite recreational provision through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

5.11 The TBMS is supported by a study investigating recreational use of publicly accessible open spaces, including the woodlands south of Trowbridge used by roosting Bechstein's bats[9]. The findings suggest that residents from North Bradley are more inclined to visit Picket and Clanger Woods and Southwick Country Park as opposed to Green Lane and Biss Woods. This is to be expected as the former sites are closer to North Bradley. The evidence suggests people drive to these sites and it is notable that Picket and Clanger Woods draw visitors from a greater distance than Southwick Country Park.

Analysis of policies in the NDP screened into appropriate assessment

Policy 1 Landscape Setting Gap and HSAP Housing Sites

5.12 This policy lends unqualified support for HSAP allocations for Elm Grove (H2.1) and Southwick Court (H2.6). These two allocations are being considered under the appropriate assessment for the HSAP and need not be considered further here.

5.13 Policy 1 also supports the allocation in the HSAP for Land off the A363 at White Horse Business Park (H2.2) provided it is reduced from 225 to 175 dwellings and this reduction has been incorporated into the Council's published Schedule of Proposed Changes. In addition Policy 1 requires development to follow the layout set out in the Comprehensive Policy Map accompanying the policy and requires there should be no development in the North Bradley Landscape Gap. Assuming this allocation is acceptable under the appropriate assessment for the HSAP, the question for the appropriate assessment of this NDP is whether the layout constraint imposed by the NDP could in itself lead to adverse effects.

5.14 Evidence from ad-hoc records indicates that North Bradley NDP area is of importance to the SAC features. In relation to Bechstein's, it appears this is due to the NDP area being located between the large breeding roosts south of Trowbridge / Westbury and the hibernation sites east of Bath. For greater and lesser horseshoes the attraction is likely to be the availability of suitable buildings within a pastoral setting. The records suggest that key habitats for all three species are likely to be the River Biss corridor, railway corridor and the network of small grazed fields / hedgerow boundaries, but no systematic survey has been completed. Such a survey would be impractical on the basis of cost and would be unfeasible for Bechstein's due to the limitation of current survey techniques which cannot distinguish this species on bat detectors.

5.15 Preliminary work for the TBMS identified that loss of habitat within several hundred metres of breeding woodlands had a high risk of causing negative impacts on Bechstein's. Land allocated at White Horse Business Park (H2.2) lies outside this high risk zone but falls within the medium risk zone where land take will require significant mitigation. Having identified H2.2 as being available and appropriate for development, Wiltshire Council sought to ensure it would be suitable for development by constraining housing quantum / footprint to ensure a sizeable proportion of open land would be retained and enhanced for bat mitigation. A precautionary

[9] Panter, C., Lake, S. & Liley D. (2018) Trowbridge Recreation Strategy and Visitor Surveys. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology for Wiltshire Council

approach was taken, as required by the Habitats Regulations. By allocating the site for 175 dwellings, the Council was able to demonstrate, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that the allocation would not adversely affect the SAC.

5.16 Close examination of H2.2 shows that potential for habitat use by bats is as follows:

- Pasture and field hedgerows, particularly around Little Common Farm / Willow Grove, Kings Farm / Kings Folly and at the northern end of the allocation – potential for foraging by all three species, commuting by greater horseshoes and Bechstein's
- Tree belt along western edge of White Horse Business Park – potential for foraging and commuting by all three species
- Individual trees with existing holes etc (survey required to determine whether any currently exist in the allocation) – potential for night and day roosting by Bechstein's, low possibility of small maternity roosts (Bechstein's)
- Individual trees without holes etc – potential for future night and day roosting by Bechstein's, small maternity roosts of Bechstein's

5.17 The Comprehensive Policy Map in the NDP identifies which of the fields in H2.2 should be developed for housing in order to ensure that a sizeable landscape gap is retained between them and North Bradley.

5.18 On the basis of 30 units per hectare, it appears this layout would be able to accommodate the 175 units allocated in the HSAP. It would lead to loss of pasture land, fragmentation of hedgerows, deterioration of the remaining hedgerows due to light spill and loss of trees due to amenity / health and safety issues. However, in principle, I consider that the scale and nature of these losses is consistent with that anticipated for the HSAP and could be mitigated within the undeveloped landscape gap. Importantly the layout maintains a continuous wide corridor of habitat running the full length of the allocation from north-west to south-east through Little Common Farm which would maintain habitat connectivity between core roosts. Drainage lagoons and open space, provided these did not include any lighting, would be compatible with bat mitigation measures located within the gap.

5.19 I note that, until detailed surveys of trees are undertaken, it remains unclear whether any existing Bechstein's maternity roosts are present on site. My presumption is that such a roost would have to be retained within a buffer of habitat and as such it is very unlikely it could be integrated within the development site. However, I believe the risk of a maternity roost this far from the main breeding woodlands is low. There is a greater risk of surveys identifying horseshoe roosts in buildings either within or outside the allocation boundary however I consider the layout is generally robust to this possibility.

5.20 As a result of street lighting on the A363 and Woodmarsh/Westbury Road which together completely encircle the allocation, there is no obvious dark route of entry for bats. Concentrations of lighting columns at roundabouts on the A363 and A350 may be influential in directing bat flight lines. In view of this and radio-tracking studies conducted for Ashton Park, it is possible that bats approaching from the east will be more likely to cross the A350 east of Yarnbrook and then the A363 just north of Meridan Park where an area of land in the White Horse Business Park remains undeveloped. The Comprehensive Policy Map would

accommodate this scenario but bat flightlines from the south would be more constrained due to development of the field immediately west of Hitachi. The design of development in this field, and ultimately its housing capacity would be heavily dependent on the results of detailed bat surveys.

5.21 This layout has the potential to accommodate the proposed quantum of housing while still allocating sufficient land for mitigation, preserving habitats with the most potential for bats and maintaining habitat connectivity within and beyond the site boundary. In the absence of detailed bat survey data, it could be counterproductive to place further spatial restrictions to secure bat flightlines but given that planning applications will need to comply with the TBMS (see Policy 5) I consider it is possible to conclude that policy 1 will not lead to adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.

Recommendation for Policy 1: Landscape Setting Gap and HSAP Housing Sites. No changes required.

Policy 2 Housing - General

5.22 Residential development within the settlement boundary at North Bradley has the potential to lead to increased recreational use of the publically accessible woodlands containing core bats roosts, i.e. Pickett and Clanger Woods, Green Lane and Biss Woods. Recent development at Castlemead demonstrates recreational pressure could be having an adverse impact on this sensitive species and while recreational pressure from any single development is unlikely to trigger effects, there is a significant risk that the combined pressure from proposed development around Trowbridge would cause a gradual reduction in both breeding success and use of the woodlands by this bat species.

5.23 Few residents will be expected to visit the woodlands on foot from North Bradley due to the distance; most will park at Green Lane Wood and Pickett and Clanger Wood. Such parking is limited but understood to not yet be at full capacity. Windfall development can therefore be expected to make a small contribution to recreational impacts in-combination with other allocations and windfall development. The TBMS provides a mechanism to mitigate these impacts through CIL contributions and no impact is therefore expected to occur as a result of this policy.

5.24 The supporting text for Policy 2 states at paragraph 8.30 that *"All new housing in the NDP area will lead to recreational impacts on core bat roosts in woodlands to the south of Trowbridge in combination with other developments. Any development in the Plan area should refer to the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS). Developer contributions may be required to provide mitigation measures as set out in the TBMS."* This provides confidence that development coming forward through the NDP will not be in conflict with the TBMS.

Recommendation for Policy 2: Housing – General. No changes required.

Policy 3 – Housing Site

5.25 Land at 54 Woodmarsh is allocated for an indicative number of 25 dwellings which will lead to loss of bat habitat and recreational impacts on the woodlands used by breeding Bechstein's.

5.26 The TBMS recognises that green field sites will come forward as part of neighbourhood plans in addition to the 6 sites allocated for Trowbridge. The TBMS takes the same approach for neighbourhood plan allocations as HSAP allocations to ensure a consistent approach to compliance with the Habitats Regulations. In particular:

a) Land lost to development must be offset by 100%, usually within the application site boundary;

b) The continuity of core bat habitat must be maintained and buffered from the effects of development by a width of at least 15m where lux levels are a maximum of 1 lux (details in TBMS);

c) S106 contributions are required towards Council provision of offsetting for in-combination effects, and;

d) Part of the CIL contributions paid by developers will go towards offsetting recreation pressure

5.27 Offsetting for a) above is anticipated to be within the application boundary as this ensures the land will be retained and managed in perpetuity. In this context, I note the quantum projected for 54 Woodmarsh may not be achievable. In order to achieve 25 dwellings therefore, it is likely that additional land will need to be identified in a suitable location and included in the planning application boundary.

5.28 I note that the Policy draws the attention of the developer to this matter at point (iv) where it states, "*In view of the risks this development presents to the SAC, this development will be expected to be surveyed, designed and mitigated in full accordance with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy. Full mitigation for loss of habitats must be achieved within the application boundary*." This wording provides confidence that the policy will not lead to adverse effects for the SAC.

Recommendation for Policy 3: Housing NDP Sites. No changes required.

<u>Policy 4 Local Green Space</u>

5.29 Trowbridge football field is located immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary on the south side of Trowbridge. From aerial photographs most of the field is closely mown pitches and it is enclosed on all four sides by farmland hedgerows. It lies within a corridor of green fields on the south side of Trowbridge which are presumed, on a precautionary basis, to be of significance for those bat species which are features of the SAC. It is also adjacent to HSAP allocations for Elm Grove Farm and White Horse Business Park 2.

5.30 Policy 4 allows for "…extension or enhancement of the existing recreational facilities for the recreational benefit of the community…" The main concern from a bat perspective would be installation of lighting, especially floodlighting as this has the potential to lead to impacts alone and in-combination with other development. There are no specific proposals in the plan

but anticipating that new housing will lead to more intensive use of sports facilities, an application for flood lighting is not unlikely. Applications would be tested under the Habitats Regulations and potentially refused if it could not be demonstrated there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC. The TBMS provides detailed guidance on surveys and mitigation which will be expected from lighting proposals in the Trowbridge area. Full reference is made to the TBMS in Policy 5 drawing specific attention to lighting issues and therefore I conclude there will be no adverse effect of this policy on the SAC.

Recommendation for Policy 4: Local Green Space. No changes required.

Policy 6 Infrastructure Priorities

5.31 This policy identifies that improving existing footpaths and installing new cycle paths to Trowbridge will be priorities for CIL spending by North Bradley Parish Council. As discussed for Policy 4 above, such works can impact on bat flight lines, roosts and foraging habitat by removing, damaging or illuminating vegetation used by bats. The TBMS provides detailed guidance on surveys and mitigation which will be expected from footpath and cycle path proposals in the Trowbridge area. Full reference is made to the TBMS in Policy 5 and therefore I conclude there will be no adverse effect of this policy on the SAC.

Recommendation for Policy 6: Infrastructure Priorities. No changes required

Conclusion for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC

5.32 I consider that no changes are required to the NDP in order to conclude, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that there would be no adverse effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, alone or in- combination with other plans and projects.

6 Appropriate Assessment – Salisbury Plain SPA

Background to the Salisbury Plain SPA

6.1 Salisbury Plain SPA encompasses a plateau of chalk grassland, which supports the following SPA features: breeding common quail, Eurasian hobby, stone-curlew and non-breeding hen harrier. Details of the conservation objectives are available online http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5745803545018368. The current version is dated 21 February 2019. Natural England has also published Supplementary Advice on conserving and restoring the site features[10] and this is available from the same weblink. This recognises that often active and ongoing conservation management is needed to protect, maintain and restore the function of supporting habitat both within and outside the SPA in order to sustain the stone-curlew population. The MoD estate and other landowners through Environmental Stewardship are actively involved in delivering these measures.

[10] Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features: Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA) Site Code UK9011102 dated 27 October 2017

6.2 Evidence from research has demonstrated that stone-curlew is particularly susceptible to recreational pressure. Mitigation for the impacts of the Core Strategy was agreed with Natural England in 2012 and comprised Council funding for monitoring breeding bird numbers and working with farm managers to maximise breeding success. As a consequence, the HRA for the Core Strategy which was supported by a strategic HRA for housing development[11] was able to conclude no adverse effect. This has been updated to support the HSAP[12] and these documents should be referred to for the background details for this European site.

6.3 In consultation with Natural England, the other features are not considered to be vulnerable to recreational pressure.

Plans and projects to be considered in combination

6.1 The screening Assessment found that the North Bradley NDP would not lead to significant effects on the Salisbury Plain SPA alone. Impacts would only occur in combination with other plans and projects. The following plans and projects have been taken into consideration:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015)
- Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan submission document May 2018 with proposed schedule of changes dated September 2018
- Army basing Programme delivering 917 dwellings at 4 sites in close proximity to the Plain
- Neighbourhood plans. Those with allocations within 6.4km of Salisbury Plain SPA include the following
    - Chirton and Conock (max 10, all within WCS housing requirement)
    - Devizes (93 within 6.4km, 32 of which are over the WCS housing requirement)
    - Porton (32, proportion within WCS housing requirement unknown)
    - North Bradley (60, proportion within WCS housing requirement unknown)
    - Pewsey (27-43 dwellings over the WCS housing requirement)
    - Potterne (20, proportion within WCS housing requirement unknown)
    - Urchfont, Wedhampton and Lydeway (37, proportion within WCS housing requirement unknown)
    - Market Lavington (88 dwellings, within WCS housing requirement)

HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan pre-submission draft

6.4 Evidence from a visitor survey commissioned by the Council in 2015 demonstrated that 75% of visitors accessing the plan lived within 6.4km of the SPA boundary and 1% of the population within that distance would be expected to visit on a regular basis. Using these findings the HSAP HRA calculated that the housing sites plan would increase visitor numbers to the Plain by 1% over the estimates calculated for the Core Strategy. This figure incorporated a number of precautionary assumptions to counteract any constraints of the data used. Taking the favourable condition of the SPA into consideration, it was considered that existing mitigation

[11] HRA and Mitigation Strategy for Salisbury Plain SPA (in relation to recreational pressure from redevelopment), Wiltshire Council, 30 March 2012
[12] HRA and Mitigation Strategy for Salisbury Plain SPA (in relation to recreational pressure from residential development), Wiltshire Council, reviewed in May 2018

measures in place for the Core Strategy would continue to provide an effective, timely and reliable means of mitigating any additional effects from the HSAP should they arise.

Analysis of policies in the NDP screened into appropriate assessment

Policy 1 Landscape Setting Gap and HSAP Housing Sites

6.5 As for the Bats SAC, the only matter for the current assessment is whether the proposed layout in policy 1 could contribute to adverse effects Salisbury Plain SPA.

6.6 The White Horse Business Park allocation lies just inside the 6.4km radius where housing numbers are assumed to contribute to recreational pressure. Although a small part of the allocation lies outside this limit, this is insufficient in area to accommodate the 175 dwellings being allocated. In any case the 6.4km is a tool for estimation purposes and does not represent a precise boundary where impacts will or will not occur. The distribution of housing resulting from Policy 1 is likely to be no worse or better in terms of the number of recreational visits it generates to the Plain that any other layout proposed for the allocation.

Recommendation for Policy 1: Landscape Setting Gap and HSAP Housing Sites. The policy does not give rise to adverse effects. No changes are required to wording of the policy or supporting text.

Policy 2 Housing - General

6.7 This policy places constraints on windfall development but does not propose development in itself. In view of the mitigation measures currently in place for the Core Strategy, which were re-tested for the HSAP and found to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, I do not consider that this policy would lead to adverse effects.

Recommendation for Policy 2: Housing - General. The policy does not give rise to adverse effects. No changes are required to wording of the policy or supporting text.

Policy 3 – Housing Site

6.8 Approximately 25 dwellings are allocated through this policy at 54 Woodmarsh which lies 6km away from the SPA boundary. Twenty five dwellings will give rise to 57 people, 1% of which can be expected to visit the Plain on a regular basis. This scale of visitor pressure would not contribute significantly to pressures on the Plain and is readily covered by the mitigation approach taken adopted for the Core Strategy and the HSAP.

Recommendation for Policy 3: Housing Site. The policy does not give rise to adverse effects. No changes are required to wording of the policy or supporting text.

Conclusion for the Salisbury Plain SPA

6.9 I consider that no changes are required to the NDP in order to conclude, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that there would be no adverse effects on the Salisbury Plain SPA, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

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