

## West Lavington Neighbourhood 2017 - 2026 Plan (draft plan November 2017)

### Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

V2. November 2017

#### 1. Screening Methodology

Each element of the draft West Lavington Neighbourhood 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.

#### 2. Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA

The 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 West Lavington Neighbourhood Plan Area identifies the following issues to be assessed and the Natura 2000 site which would potentially be affected.

*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 SPA and SAC

*Hydrology / Hydrogeology – Sites that fall wholly or partly within either the Thames Water (Swindon) and Oxford Water Resource Zone WRZ (SWOX WRZ), or the Wessex Water North WRZ, may be susceptible to impact*

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

- Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC

### 3. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Draft policies within the emerging West Lavington neighbourhood plan have been screened against each of the above potential impacts, for each Natura 2000 site.

*Recreation.*

**Salisbury Plain SPA/SAC** - The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA assessed that the issues relating to additional recreational pressure as a result of residential development growth are dealt with sufficiently in the “Salisbury Plain SPA HRA and Mitigation Strategy” which requires developer contributions to deliver monitoring and adaptive management on the plains, (to be obtained through the Community Infrastructure Levy, CIL). Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy implements this approach.

*Hydrology/Hydrogeology*

The majority of the sites listed under this topic in Section 2 above are sufficiently far away from the NP area and therefore no likely significant effect is expected. With regard to the Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA, the issues of water resources and water quality are considered.

**Water Resource** - The small amount of residential development proposed by the West Lavington Neighbourhood Plan will be accommodated within the existing abstraction license levels. Current licences have undergone HRA by the Environment Agency, as has Wessex Water’s Water Resource Management Plan therefore the Council is satisfied that the issue does not require further assessment at the Neighbourhood Plan level.

**Water Quality** – Issues of water quality, including surface water drainage will be dealt with through Development Management as described in Core Policy 50. The use of SUDS and suitable pollution control measures will be required for most proposals. The small scale of the proposed housing development sites is unlikely to result in impacts on watercourses outside of the West Lavington NP area.

*Air Pollution/Nitrogen Deposition*

The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA identified potential LSE upon a range of Natura 2000 sites through increased traffic, which would in turn increase atmospheric pollution and nitrogen deposition on sites within 200m of a main road, albeit such effects are considered to be very small and difficult to predict at the strategic level (WCS HRA Update February 2014). The housing site allocation in the draft West Lavington NP allows for an additional 50 – 100 dwellings spread over a possible four sites, which is considered to be a small number in relation to the total for the county. The majority of the sites listed under this topic in Section 2 above (apart from Salisbury Plan SAC/SPA and River Avon SAC) are sufficiently

far away from the NP area and therefore no likely significant effect is expected. The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA (2014) 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 the draft NP would not have an adverse effect on Natura 2000 sites through nitrogen deposition.

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

The West Lavington 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 flight lines or foraging areas associated with the SAC.

#### **4. SCREENING OF EMERGING WEST LAVINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES**

The West Lavington Neighbourhood Plan includes draft policies to address the following policy objectives:

- Built Environment
- Housing
- Economy
- Community Facilities
- Natural Environment

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 West Lavington 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
Built Environment	BE1 – Settlement Boundary	A1/B	The policy itself will not directly lead to development and the settlement boundary is sufficiently distant from any N2K site that development within this boundary will have no mechanism for effect.
	BE2 – Design of New Development/Local Distinctiveness	A3/B	The policy itself will not directly lead to development.
	BE3 – Highway Impact	A1/B	The policy itself will not directly lead to development. Any impact to highways and solutions to reduce/mitigate such impacts are likely to be sufficiently distant from any N2K site such that negative impact does not occur as a result
	BE4 – Protection of Heritage Assets	A1	The policy itself will not directly lead to development.
Housing	H1 New Housing	B	Iterative development of the Neighbourhood Plan has resulted in the number of allocated housing sites within the plan being reduced to one. In addition to this site, other, non-allocated sites may be accepted for small scale development as long as they are within the settlement boundary and meet the objectives of the other NP Policies as well as all over-arching policies. The allocated site selected within the West Lavington NP will be subject to the “Salisbury Plain SPA HRA and Mitigation Strategy” which requires developer contributions to deliver monitoring and adaptive management on the plains, (to be obtained through the Community Infrastructure Levy, CIL). Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy implements this approach.
Economy	E1 – Retention of Employment Land and Buildings	A1	The policy will ensure that existing employment sites continue to be used as such, not provide alternative uses such as residential.

Policy Area	Policy	Categorisation in initial screening	Comments and recommendations
	E2 Employment Development	A1	The policy itself will not directly lead to additional development as it addresses the future use of existing buildings and as long as those buildings are within the settlement boundary or very close outside of it, there is unlikely to be any mechanism for impact on N2K sites. However, future use of agricultural buildings should be carefully assessed within planning, in terms of the protected species they may support and their potential function for biodiversity within the wider landscape e.g. nesting/roosting site for barn owls, bats, birds.
Community Facilities	CF1 – Community Facilities	A1	The policy will not lead directly to development. If future provision of additional community facilities is within the settlement boundary, these would be sufficiently distant and of a small enough scale such that they would not result in impacts on N2K sites.
	CF2 – Educational Facilities	A1	Expansion of educational facilities will be within land set aside for educational purposes i.e. existing school grounds. Efforts should be made to increase connectivity for wildlife around and throughout these sites when adding new facilities.
Natural Environment	NE1 - Designation of Local Green space	A1	Designation of local green spaces will not itself lead to any development and will help to retain areas of natural habitat.
	NE2 – Setting of West Lavington Parish	A1	The policy itself will not lead to any adverse effects on N2K sites. The species for which the SPA and SAC (N2Ksites) are designated would not benefit from habitat enhancement within the settlement boundary except by restriction of urbanisation, however other wildlife species could benefit greatly. It would be of benefit to local wildlife if a programme of enhancements for biodiversity, focusing on connectivity of habitat could be implemented to increase the permeability of the landscape, throughout the local area. Development of a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Parish would help protect the green areas even further.

## **DRAFT WEST LAVINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) SCREENING**

- b. Assessment of all elements of the plan 'in combination'**
  - The draft policies in the West Lavington NP would not have any in combination effects
  
- c. Assessment of the effects of the plan as a whole, in combination with Wiltshire Core Strategy**
  - The draft plan would not have any in combination effects with the Wiltshire Core Strategy

### **6. CONCLUSION**

One site is allocated for development within the West Lavington draft Neighbourhood Plan but is not within or immediately adjacent to the Salisbury Plain SAC/SPA and will not result in direct impact through land take within the European site. Increased visitor pressure and its effects on the features of the Salisbury Plain SPA are dealt with through CIL payments that contribute to delivery of monitoring and adaptive management on the plains.

All other Natura 2000 sites are sufficiently far from the plan area and the scale of development described by the plan is sufficiently small such that there would be no mechanism for impact.

It can therefore be concluded that the West Lavington draft Neighbourhood Plan would have no likely significant effects upon the Natura 2000 network alone or in combination, and no appropriate assessment is currently considered necessary by Wiltshire Council as competent authority. However, if any further iteration of the draft plan is produced, which may result in alterations to the draft policies, this HRA must be reviewed.

***Assessment carried out by: Fiona Elphick, Senior Ecologist***

***Date: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017***