

Habitat Regulations Assessment for The Plan for Stafford Borough - Publication in Respect of Natura 2000 Sites



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1 Introduction / Background

1.1 This screening opinion has been prepared in order to assist Stafford Borough Council in deciding whether an Appropriate Assessment of the new Local Plan, 'The Plan for Stafford Borough' (known hereafter as 'The Plan') in relation to Natura 2000 sites is required under the European Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive).

1.2 The screening opinion has been prepared in accordance with the Requirements of article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive and the draft Conservation (Natural Habitats and Conservation) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

1.3 This report has also drawn on guidance contained in PPS9, Circular 06/2005 and the EC publications 'Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC', and 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC'.

1.4 Following the ECL judgement on the 20th October 2005, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have drawn up guidance titled 'Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment', which has also been taken into account.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.5 A Habitats Regulations Assessment is the requirement that Local Authorities should consider whether projects or plans, as part of land use planning documents, will have adverse affects on Natura 2000 Sites (also known as European Sites). Natura 2000 Sites are nature conservation sites designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and includes species outlined in Regulation 10 of the Habitats Regulations 1994.

1.6 This requirement was brought about by the United Kingdom's failure to implement Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the European Directive regarding Habitats (92/43/EEC) and enforced through the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The Court ruled that UK law did not adequately transfer the Directive into British legislation.

1.7 Previous national planning policy stated that RAMSAR sites should receive the same protection as SPAs and SACs and so have been included in this assessment. The focus of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to allow development which is considered sustainable development. The NPPF states that development likely to have a significant effect on sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives would not be sustainable under the terms of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

1.8 EC guidance and the publication from DCLG titled Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment agree the following stages or tasks: -

Stage one: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

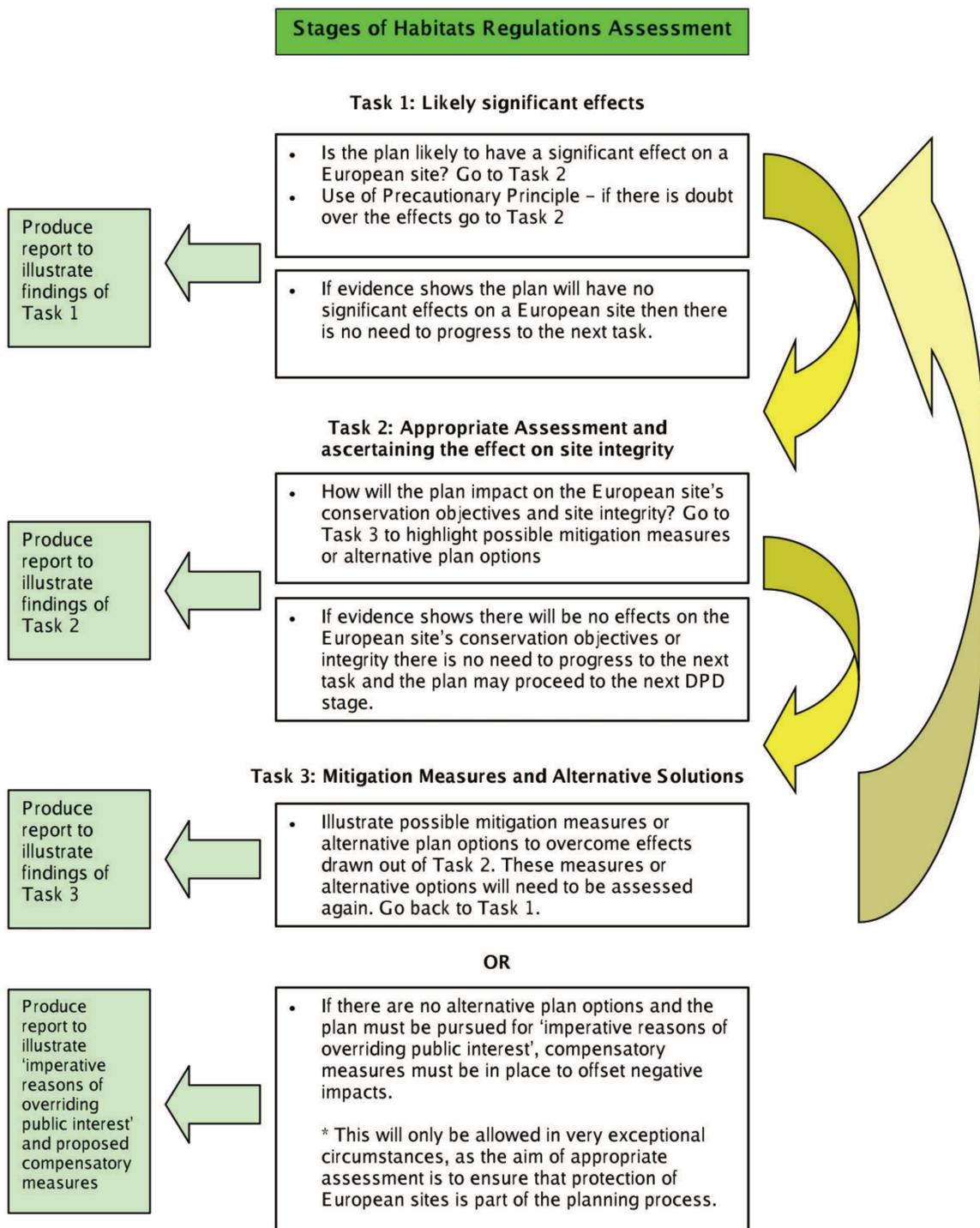
Stage two: Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining on the site integrity

1 Introduction / Background

Stage three: Mitigation and alternative solutions and

* Imperative reasons of overriding public interest

Picture 1.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process



1 Introduction / Background

Outcomes of Screening Decision

1.9 This report is dealing primarily with Stage One of the Habitats Regulations Assessment, the screening stage. This stage assesses in general terms whether the proposals in the The Plan, alone or in combination with other plans or projects are likely to have a significant impact on Natura 2000 sites. The Plan has been screened in detail to determine the potential impact on Natura 2000 sites within the administrative boundary, and outside if appropriate.

1.10 It is important to remember that the HRA process is concerned solely with identifying significant effects on the Conservation Objectives of European Sites. The effects of plans and proposals on wider aspects of the European Sites will be taken into consideration as part of the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) process.

1.11 If no likely effects are determined, the Appropriate Assessment stage need not be carried out and The Plan may continue through the plan making process. However, if the screening stage decides that the plans or projects will result in likely significant effects on any of the Natura 2000 sites, a separate Appropriate Assessment of The Plan will need to be carried out.

Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening) 2

2 Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

2.1 Screening has four tasks: –

Task 1: Determining whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site

Task 2: Describing the project or plan and any others that in combination have the potential to significantly affect the Natura 2000 site

Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects

Task 1: Determining whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site

2.2 The Plan for Stafford Borough is not directly necessary to the site management for nature conservation of any of the Natura 2000 sites listed in this document.

Task 2: Describing the project or plan and any others that in combination have the potential to significantly affect the Natura 2000 sites

2.3 The Plan for Stafford Borough is a strategic Borough-wide plan that will put the key strategies and policies in place and form part of the development plan for the District, guiding development to 2031. The Plan also contains a range of policies which will be used to assess all types of planning application when adopted in 2013. This report has been prepared alongside the Publication report to demonstrate that the Habitat Regulations Assessment has been carried out.

2.4 **The Plan sets out the following levels of development:**

- **Housing:** 10,000 new dwellings over the plan period. Of which 5,500 to be allocated at Stafford, 500 at Stone and 1,000 to come forward in the rural area over the plan period as planning applications, identified in neighbourhood plans or identified in a Sites and Allocations Development Plan Document.
- **Employment Land:** 93 hectares of readily available land for general employment uses over the plan period of which 63 hectares to Stafford, 18 hectares to Stone and 6 hectares to Ladfordfields Industrial Estate and 6 hectares to Raleigh Hall Industrial Estate.
- **Retail:** Extension of Stafford and Stone retail boundaries to allow for town centre uses to come forward over the plan period.

2.5 The Plan contains a number of policies which fall under the following topics: Development Strategy, Stafford, Stone, Economy, Transport, Communities, Environment and Infrastructure. The Plan is also linked to a delivery plan and contains a monitoring framework.

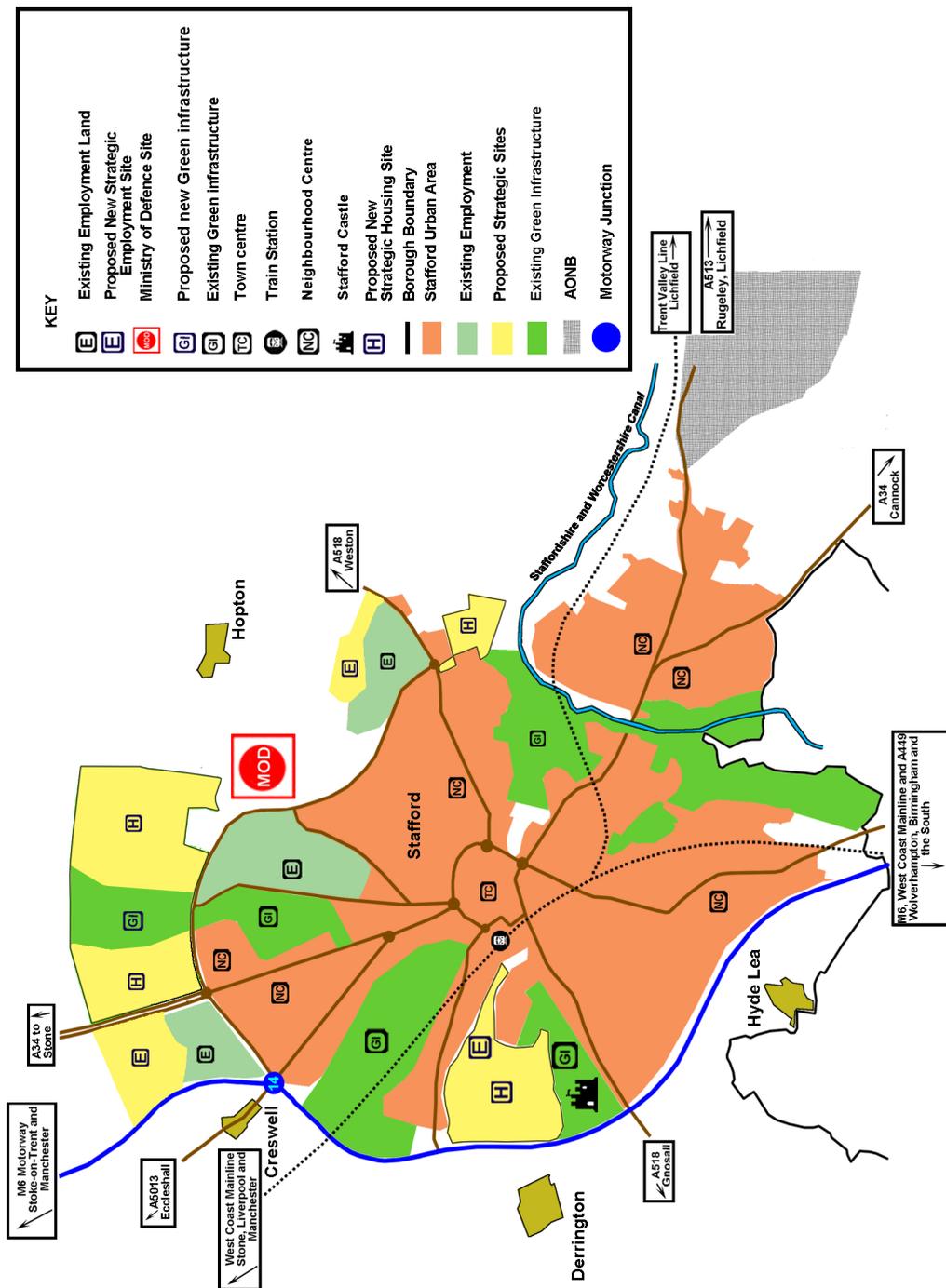
2.6 The Plan sets out the principles for consideration in the preparation of further documents including a Sites and Allocations Development Plan Document and Neighbourhood Plans.

2 Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

2.7 Below are diagrams showing the locations of development on Strategic Sites in Stafford, Stone and the rural areas.

Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening) 2

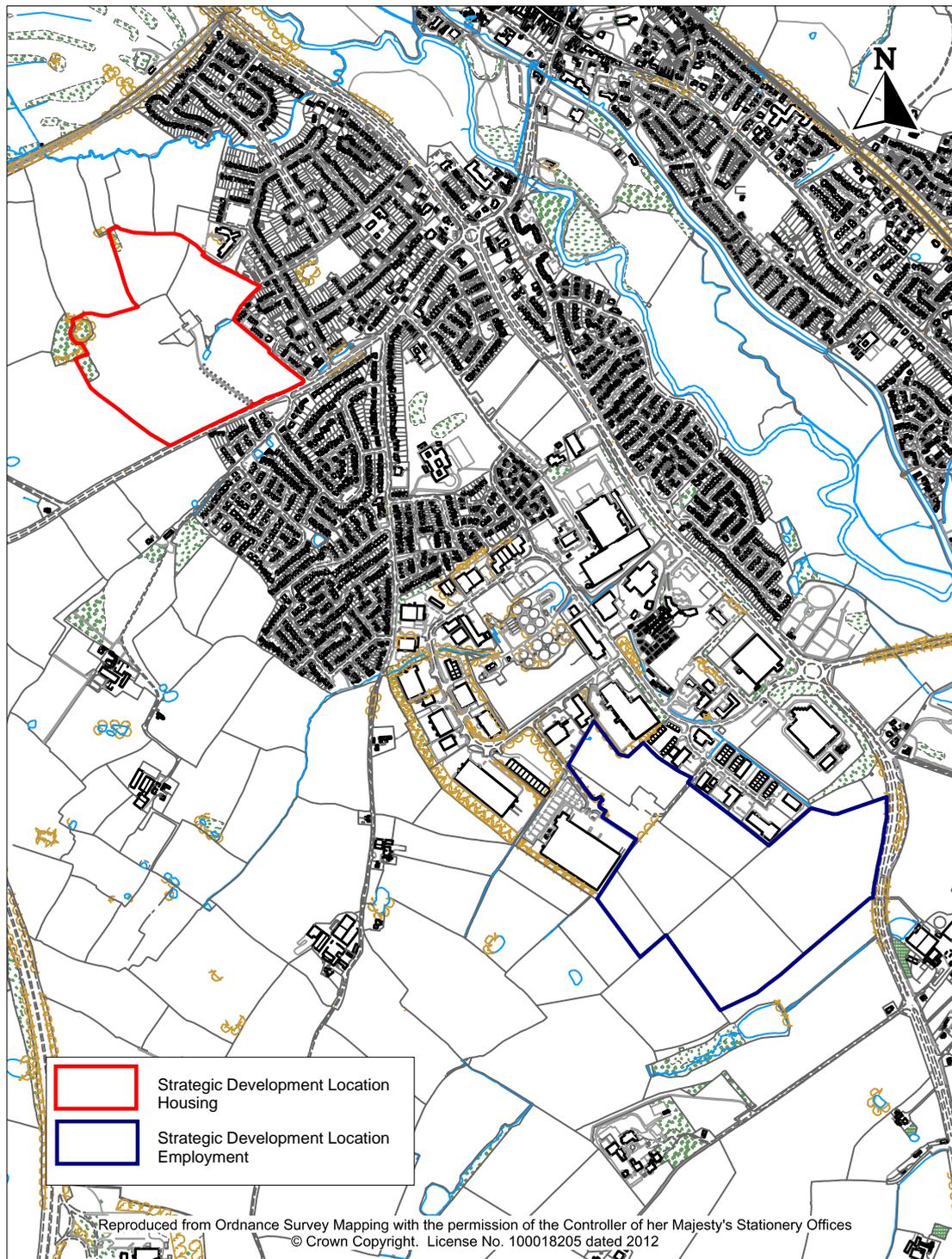
Strategic Development Locations at Stafford Town



2 Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

Strategic Development Locations at Stone

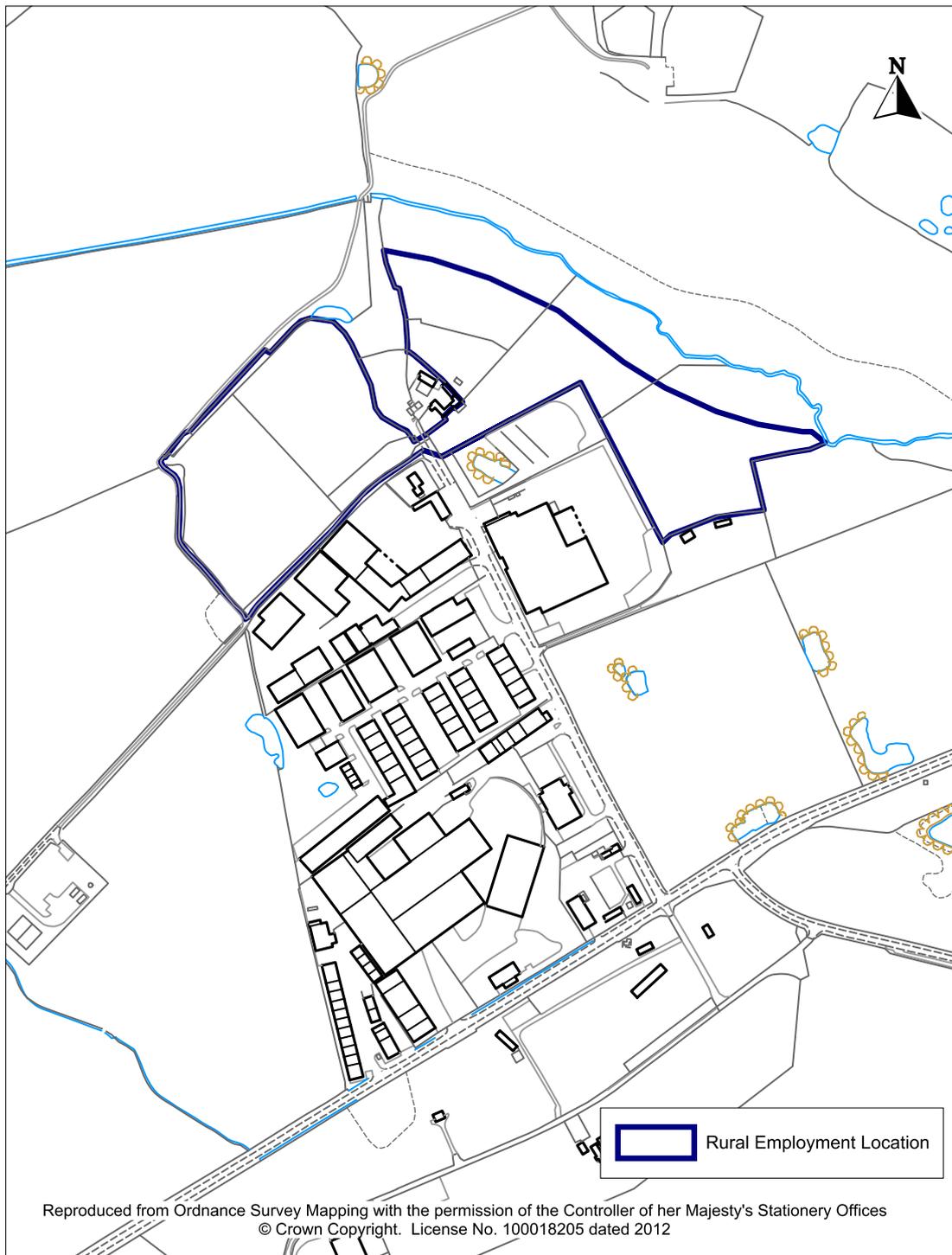
Development to the West and South of Stone



Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening) 2

Extension to Ladfordfields Rural Industrial Estate

Ladfordfields Industrial Estate

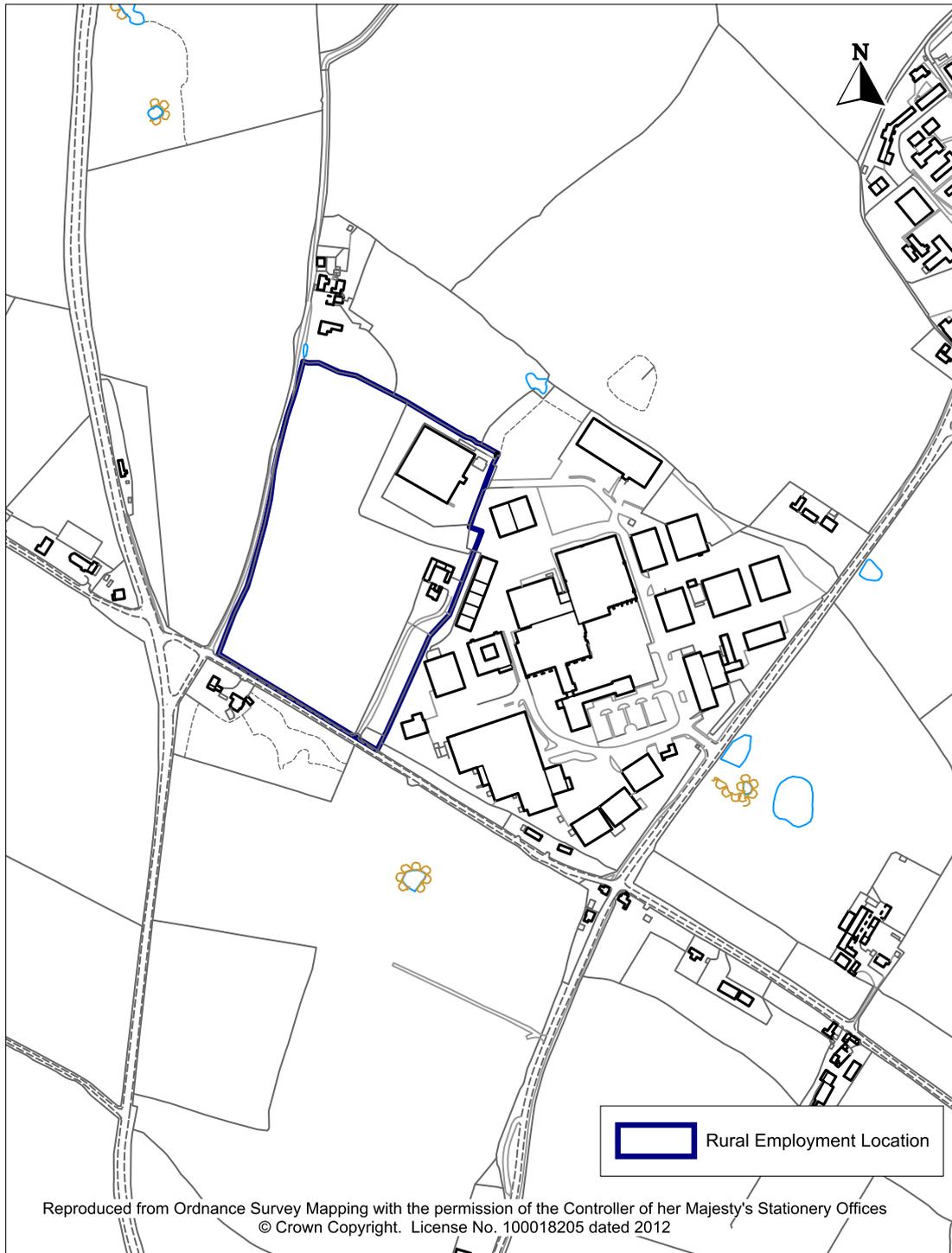


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2 Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

Extension to Raleigh Hall Rural Industrial Estate

Raleigh Hall Industrial Estate



Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening) 2

2.8 The main areas which could have an impact upon nature conservation interests of Natura 2000 sites are physical impacts from development proposed on the sites themselves and associated infrastructure such as roads, public transport, increased water abstraction to serve new development, increase in sewage, energy and flood alleviation schemes and impacts such as increased air pollution from increased levels of traffic passing through or near the sites.

2.9 The Publication document sets out the following policy:

2 Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

Policy N5

Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation Importance

The highest level of protection will be given to European Sites, with new development only permitted where:

- a. There will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or***
- b. If adverse effects are identified, it can be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation measures show that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site.***

In relation to air quality issues identified, planning permission will only be granted where:

- 1. It can be demonstrated that development will not significantly contribute to adverse effects caused by local and / or diffuse air pollution at European sites, alone or in combination with other plans and projects; or***
- 2. Where development would result in an increase in local and/or diffuse air pollution at European Sites, it would be expected to include measures to secure an equivalent improvement in air quality, or reduction in emissions from other sources; and***
- 3. Require a pollution-neutral strategy for major development near to European sites.***

In relation to water quality, supply and run-off issues, planning permission will only be granted where:

- i. There will be no demonstrable unauthorised impact on the integrity of the European site;***
- ii. The development takes account of the Water Cycle Study and Surface Water Management Plan and any other successor documents.***

Developments likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites. Cumulative effects will also be considered.

Development likely to have an adverse effect (either directly or indirectly) on:

- A Local Nature Reserve***
- A Site of Biological Importance, Biodiversity Alert Site or Regionally Important Geological site***
- A natural watercourse, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, canals and groundwater areas, including Water Framework Directive protected areas as listed in the Humber and Severn River Basin Management Plans.***

Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening) 2

will not be permitted unless:

(a) It can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal that outweigh the need to safeguard the special ecological / geological interest of the site

(b) It has been demonstrated, where development would result in significant harm, that it can not be reasonably located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm

(c) harm can be prevented, minimised, adequately mitigated or compensated for.

Where development is permitted, the authority will impose conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation and / or geological interest.

Where the Council considers that any designated site, protected species or any species or habitat of principal importance for conservation may be affected by a development proposal, an ecological assessment will be required to be submitted with the planning application.

Where development is permitted the Council will require developers to:

a. minimise disturbance;

b. protect and enhance the site's ecological value;

c. ensure appropriate management;

d. ensure appropriate mitigation measures are designed into the proposal and work on the site does not commence until these measures are in place;

e. work to approved methods; and

f. create new or replacement habitats equal to or above the current ecological value of the site if damage or loss is unavoidable.

New developments will be required to include appropriate tree planting, to retain and integrate healthy, mature trees and hedgerows, and replace any trees that need to be removed. Development will not be permitted that would directly or indirectly damage existing mature or ancient woodland, veteran trees or ancient or species-rich hedgerows.

Screening Methodology

2.10 The assessment considers the following impacts:

Direct impacts - represent a straight route between an action or event and a resultant effect on the ecological interest feature. For example, development that removes habitat for which a Natura 2000 sites was designated.

2 Stage One: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

Indirect impacts - do not arise directly from the plan but instead occur away from the original effect or as a result of a complex pathway. For example development which alters the hydrology of a catchment area may impact on water levels further downstream

Induced impacts - are secondary actions which may result from the actions set out in the plan, which may promote further development or change.

2.11 The following types of impacts have been considered as part of this screening assessment:

- Eutrophication associated with sewage discharges
- Diffuse air pollution
- Surface run-off
- Flooding
- Nitrogen deposition
- Spread of invasive plants
- Sedimentation
- Recreational pressure
- Water transfer impacts
- Nutrient increase
- Alterations in flow regime
- Water quality
- Habitat loss, fragmentation and reduction in quality of habitat
- Vegetation change
- Ongoing disturbance
- Reduction in the resilience of a feature
- Affecting restoration of a feature

Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects 3

3 Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC	<p>Pasturefields Salt Marsh is the only known remaining example in the UK of a natural salt spring with inland saltmarsh vegetation</p> <p>Inland salt meadows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for which this is the only known outstanding locality in the United Kingdom. • which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 10 hectares 	<p>The Conservation Objectives for this site are, subject to natural change, to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition (*), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar) as individually listed in Table 1.</p> <p>Habitat Types represented (Biodiversity Action Plan categories)</p> <p>Neutral Grassland</p> <p>Geological features (Geological Site Types)</p>	<p>Within the Borough.</p> <p>Approx 4.5km from Stafford Town</p>	<p>As an inland saltmarsh, this site is not affected by patterns of saltmarsh erosion, effects of sea level rise etc. However, it could be affected by agricultural improvement and changes in hydrology, the latter impacting on the extent of the saline influence.</p> <p>Abstractions from the ground aquifer pose a significant threat, as the site is dependent upon the brine source being maintained. The Environment Agency have reviewed their abstraction consents in order to meet the Habitat Regulations Assessment.</p>

3 Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
		<p>(*) or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable.</p>		
<p>Chartley Moss SAC</p>	<p>The site has been designated for its Swingingmoor vegetation including Sedges (<i>Carex</i>) species and Cranberry (<i>Vaccinium oxycoccos</i>)</p> <p>Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom <p>Transition mires and quaking bogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom 	<p>The Conservation Objectives for this site are to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition, with particular reference to any development component special interest features for which the land is designated as individually listed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dwarf shrub heath bog Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland <p>On this site favourable condition requires the maintenance of the extent of each designated habitat type. Maintenance implies restoration if evidence from condition assessment suggests a reduction in extent.</p> <p>To maintain the dwarf shrub heath, bog and wet woodland habitats at this site in favourable</p>	<p>Within Stafford Borough Approx 9.2km from Stafford Town and 11km from Stone Town</p>	<p>Septic tanks and drainage from the built environment are the biggest threat to this site. Increased nutrient enrichment, such as atmospheric deposition of nutrients pose a threat at these sites.</p> <p><i>NB Because of the danger to visitors, and the easily damaged nature of the bog surface, access to Chartley Moss is by permit only.</i></p> <p>A management agreement controls agricultural run-off at the site. Trees at this site trap airborne nutrients and provide roost areas for birds, but enrichment effect of both is only localised.</p>

Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects 3

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
Mottey Meadows SAC	Lowland hay meadows that hold a relatively large area (approx 40 hectares) of the habitat. The site is important for a range of rare meadow species, including Fritillary (<i>Fritillaria melagris</i>) at its most northerly native locality.	<p>condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features.</p> <p>The Conservation Objectives for this site are, subject to natural change, to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition (*), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadleaved, Mixed & Yew Woodland • Neutral Grassland • Standing Open Water <p>(*) or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable.</p>	0.11 of 43.87 hectares within Stafford Borough Approx 10km from Stafford Town	<p>The meadows are dependent upon traditional agricultural management - hay-cutting and aftermath grazing- with no use of agrochemicals, changes in agricultural practices and land use will have a significant effect on the sites.</p> <p>The site is vulnerable to nutrient run-off from adjacent agricultural land, and diffuse pollution from the built environment, such as farms.</p> <p>The site is also vulnerable to a lowering of both ground and surface water levels, because the floristic composition is dependent on a high water table in autumn and winter, pressures on water resources, along with climate change effects will then be a threat to the site.</p>

3 Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
Cop Mere Ramsar site	<p>The site comprises a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog</p> <p>Supports a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands including 5 nationally scarce species together with an assemblage of rare wetland invertebrates (3 endangered insects and five other British Red Data Book species of invertebrates)</p>	<p>The Conservation Objectives for this site are, subject to natural change, to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition (*), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated (SSSI, cSAC, SPA, Ramsar)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broadleaved, Mixed & Yew Woodland ● Neutral Grassland <p>Standing Open Water</p> <p>(*) or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable.</p>	<p>Within Stafford Borough</p> <p>Approx 10.5km from Stafford Town and 9.4 from Stone Town</p>	<p>Eutrophication continues to be a threat, leading to an increase in algae growth and loss of water plants</p> <p>Introduction or invasion of non-native plant species</p> <p>Increased visitor use</p>

Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects 3

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
Aqualate Mere Ramsar site	<p>The site comprises a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog</p> <p>Supports a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands including 5 nationally scarce species together with an assemblage of rare wetland invertebrates (3 endangered insects and five other British Red Data Book species of invertebrates)</p>	<p>The Conservation Objectives for this site are, subject to natural change, to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition (*), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Open Water • Broadleaved, Mixed & Yew Woodland • Fen, Marsh & Swamp <p>Geological features (Geological Site Types)</p> <p>Static (Fossil)</p>	<p>Within Stafford Borough</p> <p>Approx 12k from Stafford Town</p>	<p>Biggest threat is the quantity of sediment being washed up into the lake and reducing its depth.</p> <p>Eutrophication continues to be a threat, leading to an increase in algae growth and loss of water plants</p> <p>Increased visitor use</p>

3 Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
<p>Betley Mere (under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase I Ramsar designation)</p>	<p>The site comprises a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog</p> <p>Supports a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands including 5 nationally scarce species together with an assemblage of rare wetland invertebrates (3 endangered insects and five other British Red Data Book species of invertebrates)</p>		<p>10km from the Borough Boundary</p>	<p>Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species and eutrophication</p>
<p>Black Firs and Cranberry Bog (under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase II Ramsar designation)</p>	<p>The site comprises a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog.</p> <p>Supports a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands, including the nationally scarce cowbane (<i>Cicuta virosa</i>) and, elongated sedge (<i>Carex elongata</i>). Also present are the nationally scarce bryophytes (<i>Dicranum affine</i> and <i>Sphagnum pulchrum</i>).</p>		<p>10km from the Borough Boundary</p>	<p>Pollution - pesticides/agricultural Runoff</p> <p>Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species</p> <p>Eutrophication</p>

Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects 3

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
	Also supports an assemblage of invertebrates including several rare species. There are 16 species of British Red Data Book insect listed for this site			
Cannock Chase Extension Canal SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floating water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> 	Maintain favourable condition as this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.	10km from the Borough Boundary	The population of <i>Luronium natans</i> in this cul-de-sac canal is dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic. If the canal is not used, the abundant growth of other aquatic macrophytes may shade-out the <i>Luronium natans</i> unless routinely controlled by cutting. An increase in recreational activity would be to the detriment of <i>Luronium natans</i> . Existing discharges of surface water run-off, principally from roads, cause some reduction in water quality.
Humber Estuary SAC	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estuaries Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.	Approximately 115 miles from the Borough Boundary.	The Humber Estuary is subject to the impacts of human activities (past and present) as well as ongoing processes such as sea level rise and climate change. Management intervention is therefore necessary to enable the estuary to recover and to secure

3 Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
	<p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time ● Coastal lagoons * ● Priority feature ● Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand ● Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) ● Embryonic shifting dunes ● Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes') ● Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes') * Priority feature ● Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> 	<p>Estuaries, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, of which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Coastal lagoons, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Embryonic shifting dunes, which are considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>		<p>the ecological resilience required to respond to both natural and anthropogenic change. Key issues include coastal squeeze, impacts on the sediment budget, and geomorphological structure and function of the estuary (due to sea level rise, flood defence works, dredging, and the construction, operation and maintenance of ports, pipelines and other infrastructure), changes in water quality and flows, pressure from additional built development, and damage and disturbance arising from access, recreation and other activities. Coastal squeeze is being addressed through the development and implementation of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy. All proposals for flood defence, development, dredging, abstractions and discharges which require consent from any statutory body, and land use plans which may have impacts upon the site are subject to assessment</p>

Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects 3

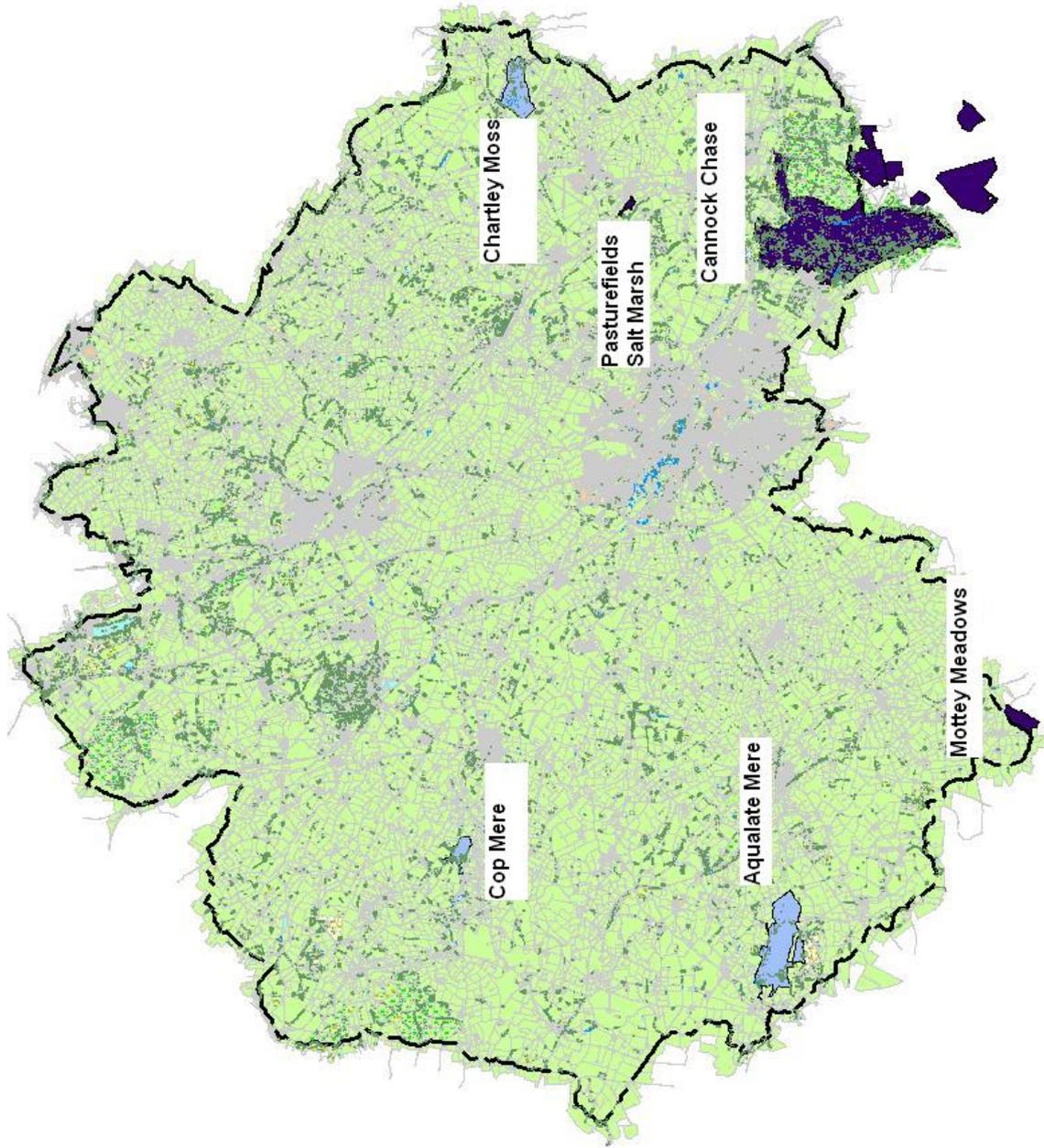
Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
	<p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) • River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) • Grey seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) 	<p>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes"), for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes"), for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>, which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i>, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p><i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p><i>Halichoerus grypus</i> for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>		<p>under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (the "Habitats Regulations"). Diffuse pollution will be addressed through a range of measures including implementation of the Waste Water Framework Directive and Catchment Sensitive Farming initiatives.</p> <p>Other issues are addressed via a range of measures including regulation of on-site land management activities and implementation of the Humber Management Scheme, developed by all relevant statutory bodies to assist in the delivery of their duties under the Habitats Regulations.</p>

3 Task 3: Characteristics of the site and identification of possible effects

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Distance from Stafford Borough Boundary	Identified Impacts
River Mease SAC	<p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spined loach <i>Cobitis taenia</i> Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 	<p>Maintain the river as a favourable habitat for floating formations of water Crowfoot (<i>Ranunculus</i>), populations of bull head, spined loach and white clawed crayfish and the river and adjoining land as habitat for populations of otter</p>	<p>Approximately 18.5 km from the Borough</p>	<p>The River Mease is an unusually semi-natural system in a largely rural landscape, dominated by intensive agriculture. Water quality and quantity are vital to the European interests, whilst competition for water resources is high. Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation are catchment-wide issues, which have the potential to affect the site. The SSSI assessment report undertaken in 2007 notes the site's adverse condition and identifies the following issues: drainage, invasive freshwater species, water pollution – agriculture/run-off, water pollution – discharge. Significant new development could take place within the catchment as a result of new housing and employment development in North-West Leicestershire, South Derbyshire and East Staffs, which may impact upon water quality and quantity.</p> <p>The continuing creation of the National Forest will lead to further catchment wide changes in land use.</p>

4 Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 sites in Stafford Borough



5 Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects

5 Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects

Table 5.1a Salt Pasturefields SAC significant effects table

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Table 5.1b Salt Pasturefields SAC significant effects table

	Assessment of Effects
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	<p>Possible impacts include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased eutrophication associated with sewage discharges • Diffuse Air pollution • Dilution of salt marsh • Nutrient contamination from the adjacent River Trent • Salt Pasturefields is approximately 4.8km from Stafford urban area, 1km from Hixon and adjacent to the A51 and Pasturefields Enterprise Park • The River Trent runs southwards from north Staffordshire • Increase surface water run-off and flooding <p>Decline in salt marsh community</p> <p>Climate change could result in increased flooding, similar to the flooding of summer 2007. These could increase the nutrient deposition on the SAC as flood water may carry high pollution loads, with negative impacts on the salt marsh community.</p>

Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects 5

Assessment of Effects

Maintaining the salt marsh in a favourable condition, depends on the quality of water supply, seasonal flooding and vegetation management.

Water Quality and Flooding

The *HRA for the Phase II Revision of the RSS for the West Midlands* draws on technical studies carried out by the Environment Agency, stating that of the sewage treatment works upstream of the SAC, 1 is at high risk and 1 at medium risk of breaching either discharge quality or quantity standards. This in combination with flooding increases the risk that floodwater will carry a high pollution load.

The *Met Office Annual Summaries* indicate that since 2002, 5 years in the Midlands have had a higher annual level of rainfall than the average level of rainfall between 1961 - 1990.

The UK Climate Impacts Programme and Sustainability West Midlands publication *The Potential Impacts of Climate Change in the West Midlands 2004* predicts an increase between 0 - 10% of winter rainfall by 2020's and a possible increase up to 20% by 2050's. The report also predicts a decrease in summer rainfall of 0 - 20% by 2020's and possible 30% decrease by 2050's.

Increased levels of housing and other development upstream will result in greater surface run off contributing to flooding and pollution deposition problems.

Vegetation management

Pasturefields SSSI Nature Reserve Management Plan 2005 - 2010, by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust describes the management of the site.

Before 1987, much of the grassland around the marsh had been agriculturally improved to provide silage (receiving quantities of artificial fertiliser and pesticide).

After 1987, the Trust managed the grassland outside the saltmarsh as summer hay meadows. This was followed approximately a month later by aftermath grazing with cattle on both the saltmarsh and meadows. The grass was initially cut in early August to allow possible second broods of waders to fledge chicks.

5 Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects

	Assessment of Effects
	<p>Unfortunately, this late cutting regime resulted in low quality hay and the saltmarsh was not grazed until late August / early September. In 1996 the cutting regime was brought forward to July. However, by the late 1990's, the species composition and height of the saltmarsh sward was deteriorating rapidly with coarser vegetation becoming increasingly dominant.</p> <p>In 2000 the long-term grazier discontinued his involvement in the site. Subsequent grazing regimes have failed to achieve such a desirable sward.</p> <p>It is impossible to say if current management of the site would either improve the saltmarsh, or exacerbate the unfavourable condition of the site</p> <p>Pasturefields salt marsh SAC and SSSI are located 2.4km downstream of the discharge point of Weston WwTW. The site condition is currently unfavourable recovering, and is subject to the quality of the water it receives. Management should ensure the protection of appropriate water quality which is usually dependent on land-use in the wider catchment. Although the plan does not allocate land at Weston, planning applications could come forward for infill or redevelopment within the area over the plan period and as such the developments proposed are unlikely to have a significant impact on the discharge and its quality.</p> <p>The Environment Agency in its Review of Consents (RoC) found that Salt Pasturefields is not impacted by abstraction levels. Any applications for development which would lead to an increase in abstraction in this area would have to carry out a habitat regulations assessment as stated in Policy N5, taking into account known issues in the Surface Water Management Strategy and Water Cycle Study. Therefore, providing this policy remains in the adopted plan, it is considered that the likely effects are not significant</p>
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.

Table 5.2a- Chartley Moss SAC significant effects table

Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	Direct Habitat loss/protected species	Impact on species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

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Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

Table 5.2b- Chartley Moss SAC significant effects table

Assessment of Effects	
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	<p>Potential increase in nitrogen deposition through increased atmospheric pollution, in combination with current exceedence of acid and nitrogen deposition.</p> <p><i>Department of the Environment study of the effects of pollution climate upon peat chemistry and drainage water (year unknown).</i> The study results present a strong link between precipitation chemistry and peat chemistry, with a clear link that microbial activity in peat is affected by incident acid load.</p> <p><i>The Habitat Regulations Assessment for the West Midlands RSS Phase II revision</i> indicates that the critical loads for acid deposition and nitrogen deposition are currently being exceeded on the West Midlands Mosses SAC. The effect these levels are having on Chartley Moss is undetermined.</p> <p>Public access to Chartley Moss SAC is not permitted, but only through arrangements with Natural England, who manage the site. Possible increased visitor numbers are not thought to be a significant issue. Unlikely that development at Stafford would increase surface run-off at Chartley Moss due to distance away from the site. A management agreement controls agricultural run-off at the site, and so surface run off not thought to be a significant issue.</p> <p>The Environment Agency in its Review of Consents (RoC) found that Chartley Moss is not impacted by abstraction levels and the plan would not lead to an increase of abstraction through allocations. It is considered that the possible effects are not significant.</p> <p>The relatively isolated nature of this site and the high levels of protection afforded to the site would suggest that it is unlikely that the site will be impacted directly by future infrastructure enhancements.</p>

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Assessment of Effects	
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.

Table 5.3a- Cop Mere significant effects table

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	T						

Table 5.3b- Cop Mere significant effects table

Assessment of Effects	
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	<p>The Plan for Stafford Borough does not contain any development proposals near Cop Mere. There may be sites and small developments which come through over the plan period, which could occur in the rural area. The Plan contains a number of policies which aim to address water quality issues in future planning applications which are considered to offer protection of water features of and to Cop Mere. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy N2: Climate Change - section on Sustainable Drainage as well as referring developers to guidance contained in the Southern Staffordshire Water Cycle Study • Policy N4: The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure - sets out criteria to meet the Water Framework Directive • Policy N5: Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation Importance - states that in relation to water quality, supply and run-off issues, planning permission will only be granted where there will be no demonstrable unauthorised impact on the integrity of the European site; <p>And the development takes account of the Water Cycle Study and Surface Water Management Plan and any other successor documents. The policy also states that development affecting a watercourse, lake, reservoir, river, canal or groundwater areas including Water Framework Directive protected areas as listed</p>

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Table 5.4b- Aqualate Mere significant effects table

Assessment of Effects	Assessment of Effects
<p>Assessment of effects and why not considered significant</p>	<p>Possible impacts on Aqualate Mere include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in habitat area, due to reduced lake depth caused by sedimentation ● Reduction in species density and mere habitats due to spread of invasive plants ● Change in water quality due to increased surface run-off and associated increased nutrient load <p>Severn Trent Water supply water to Stafford Borough. Severn Trent Water public water supply sources are located at Hollies, approximately 3.5km from Aqualate Mere and Newport, approximately 1.7km from Aqualate Mere. In their Water Resources Plan 2005 - 2010, Severn Trent Water do not include plans for increased abstraction at Hollies or any new abstraction sites near Aqualate Mere. A new Water Resources Plan will be published in March 2008 and will be considered under the 'in combination' test.</p> <p>According to Natural England information on Aqualate Mere, the site receives approximately 250 visitors annually. The impact this is having on the Ramsar site is undetermined and it is impossible to say if the Core Strategy would be responsible for increases in visitor numbers, without clearer indication of locations of development.</p> <p>It is however thought that recreation pressures are suitably controlled at the site, due to location of car parking, paths etc and so it is unlikely that recreational pressure will have a significant impact.</p> <p><i>The Recent sedimentation history of Aqualate Mere (Central England): Assessing the potential for lake restoration (2005) Hutchinison, S, Journal of Paleolimnology</i> indicates that the rapid recent sedimentation of the mere is thought to be derived from the nearby canal. The Stafford Borough Core Strategy does not currently propose any canal associated development which may increase this sedimentation further.</p> <p>British Waterways and the Newport and Shrewsbury Canal Trust aim to preserve the canals remaining features and promote restoration amongst local authorities here are existing issues surrounding abstraction, moorings and septic tanks at Norbury Junction.</p> <p>Aqualate Mere was part of the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme and was signed off in 2011 with the recommendation to continue monitoring but no licence changes were required. This concluded a detailed investigation made by Severn Trent Water Limited (STWL) in AMP4 (2005-10) when they investigated the</p>

Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects 5

Assessment of Effects	
	impact of their groundwater abstraction on the SSSI. The Environment Agency has also investigated other abstractions in the vicinity of the SSSI. It is considered that the Plan will not lead to an increase in abstraction from allocations.
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.

Table 5.5a- Mottey Meadows SAC significant effects table

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Recreational Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Table 5.5b- Mottey Meadows SAC significant effects table

Assessment of Effects	
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	<p>None of the policies or the proposals present in the Plan will lead to likely significant effects on Mottey Meadows SAC. Should any planning applications arise, all policies within the Plan will be taken into account and used as the basis for decision making to determine the application. Policy N5: Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation Importance sets out the basis for any considerations, including air quality and water quality and supply. Therefore, any planning application would also have to take into account the possibility of likely significant effects on the qualifying features.</p> <p>In addition, South Staffordshire Core Strategy contains a policy 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment' which includes internally designated sites as well as policies addressing water quality. It is considered that these approaches are consistent.</p>

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Assessment of Effects	
	The Environment Agency in its Review of Consents (RoC) found that Motte Meadows is not currently impacted by abstraction levels. The Plan, alone or in combination with other plans, such as South Staffs Core Strategy will not lead to increase in abstraction through allocations. It is considered that there will any effect will not be significant to Motte Meadows.
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.

Table 5.6a- River Mease SAC significant effects table

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Table 5.6b- River Mease SAC significant effects table

Assessment of Effects	
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	Site lies 18 km from Stafford Borough. The vulnerability of the site is from localised agricultural run off, diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation, and invasive freshwater species. The proposals in Stafford Borough will have no significant impact on this. The Southern Staffordshire Water Cycle Study has identified issues relating to the waste water treatment works where the Mease is the receiving watercourse. There could potentially be significant effect upon the SAC from development in the affected areas - none of which are in Stafford Borough or are related to The Plan.

Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects 5

Assessment of Effects	
	<p>Atmospheric pollution may be generated from the increased vehicular movements associated with new development as part of the plan, this is generally restricted to roads within 200m of the site. With the exception of the M42, there are no major routes passing close to the SAC and therefore due to the distance any proposed development would be from the River Mease there is unlikely to be any significant impact arising and any in combination assessments are not expected to arise from implementing the plan.</p> <p>The Environment Agency undertook a RoC investigation into the impacts of abstraction on the SAC. As a result of the review STWL revoked one of their licenses, South Staffs Water changed one of their licenses and 6 agricultural abstractors in the catchment signed up to an agreement to limit the amount of water they take in any year. These actions mean the SAC is protected.</p> <p>The River Mease SAC lies within Lichfield District; neither Tamworth Borough Council nor Lichfield District Council are responsible for its management. Any pressure on the River Mease will arise from development mainly upstream, and potentially through outflows from sewage treatment works which are already at capacity. Severn Trent Water Authority (STWA) are the waste water undertakers for both Core Strategy areas and have recently had their consents reviewed by the Environment Agency. There is no requirement to alter their consents in light of the proposed development in either of the Core Strategies. The Lichfield District Core Strategy: Shaping Our District consultation document does include specific policies which enable protection of water quality, quantity and biodiversity of the SAC to be safeguarded from development. It is therefore considered that the impacts on the River Mease arising from the Lichfield Core Strategy and Tamworth Core Strategy will not be significant, however this is based on the information known at the present time and does not preclude the need to undertake further assessment work when more information is known and other plans such as Land Allocations are prepared.</p>
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.

Table 5.7- Betley Mere Ramsar Site Significant Effects Table

Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to No impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

5 Task 4: Assessing the significance of any effects

Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Assessment of effects and why not	Betley Mere lies approximately 15km north west of Stafford Borough Boundary. There are no strategic allocations within 20km of the site.						
considered significant	The site was assessed as part of the Environment Agency's RoC and was found not to be impacted by abstraction.						
	It is not considered that there will be any significant effect on Betley Mere, alone or in combination from bringing the plan into effect.						
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.						

Table 5.8- Black Firs and Cranberry Bog Ramsar Site Significant Effects Table

Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Assessment of effects and why not	Black First and Cranberry Bog lies approximately 17km north west of Stafford Borough Boundary. There are no strategic allocations within 20km of the site.						
considered significant	The site was assessed as part of the Environment Agency's RoC and was found not to be impacted by abstraction.						
	It is not considered that there will be any significant effect on Betley Mere, alone or in combination from bringing the plan into effect.						
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.						

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Table 5.9- Cannock Chase Extension Canal SAC Significant Effects Table

Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	These sites were assessed as part of the RoC and found not to be impacted by abstraction.						
Conclusion	The main possible impacts, that could result from Stafford Borough Core Strategy in combination with other Core Strategy's, plans to re-join the canals and current abstraction and moorings, are reduced lake depth due to increased surface run off, change in water quality due to increased surface run off and increase in nutrients due to discharge from built development.						
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.						

Table 6.0- Cannock Chase Humber Estuary SAC Significant Effects Table

Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressure	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is the plan likely to impact upon the site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	The Keadby Power Station's abstraction licence was changed to include a condition to put fish screens on the intake to protect lamprey which has now been removed. Any Surface Water abstraction in the Trent catchment will have a condition that prevents abstraction at low flows to protect the estuary.						
Conclusion	Screened Out: No direct or in-combination impact apparent.						

6 Screening Results and conclusion

6 Screening Results and conclusion

This report looks at possible impacts as a result of implementing The Plan for Stafford in combination with other plans, policies and programmes. The Plan for Stafford Borough contains several policies that address many of the possible impacts including water quality and supply, surface run off and air quality through the aim of the development strategy. The report concludes that implementing The Plan for Stafford Borough alongside other plans, policies and programmes will not result in likely significant effects.

The Plan for Stafford Borough Publication states that development not identified at this stage will come forward via Neighbourhood Plans and/or a Sites and Allocations document. Future planning policy documents will need to demonstrate that there will be no likely significant impact on European Sites, using the potential impacts identified in this report as a basis for assessment.

7 Next Steps

This HRA Stage 2 Report is not formally open to public consultation. It will be open to stakeholder consultation with Natural England, the Environment Agency and any other interested stakeholder organisations alongside The Plan for Stafford Borough - Publication.

Members of the public are welcome to make comments on this document if they wish.

Any comments will be incorporated into a revised report which will be part of the The Plan for Stafford Borough examination library.

i Relevant Plans

The following plans and projects have been considered as part of the 'in combination' impacts:

Table i.1

WM Regional Spatial Strategy and Phase II Revision	Identifies the need to locate 365,600 new homes within the West Midlands region to 2026. The Plan identifies impacts are likely and further work has been commissioned, the effects have been considered in detail in the preparation of more specific and local LDFs. The Government has signalled its intention to abolish Regional Plans, but this has not yet taken place.
Staffordshire County Council Minerals Core Strategy Issues and Options 2008	This document sets out a long-term spatial vision for the development of minerals within Staffordshire County and will indicate where minerals can be worked. The Plan identifies broad areas of search where new minerals development could take place. Whilst proposed areas of search are located in both districts they are not close to areas of significant growth. Given this fact, the Core Strategy is not expected to give rise to in combination effects alongside this or other strategies.
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Waste Emerging Core Strategy 2010-2026 Publication Consultation document	This document underwent examination in 2012 and is scheduled to be adopted in Spring 2013. Appropriate Assessment work significant in combination assessments are not expected to arise as a consequence of implementing the Local Plan and its policies for Stafford Borough.
Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Consultation Plan 2011-2026 (LTP3)	This is the transport plan for Staffordshire County area, it is a strategic document based on the themes - supporting growth and regeneration; maintaining the highway network; promoting equality of access and opportunity; maintaining safety and security; reducing road transport and emissions and its effect on the highway network; improving health and quality of life; respecting the environment. The plan is not yet adopted. HRA undertaken for the document and effects on Natura 2000 reported.
Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014	Plan setting out the importance of Cannock Chase and how the area should be managed with regard to landscape, visitors, education and awareness and quality. The plan is now agreed. The plan has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment and concluded that there could potentially be positive effects upon the biodiversity in the area and that certain policies could have harmful impacts from increase in visitor usage, this could lead to trampling of vegetation and erosion, these aspects will be monitored and mitigation measures will be put into effect to reduce the

	<p>impact. In combination effects on Cannock Chase SAC are possible and are being investigated with a joint assessment.</p> <p>The West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option sets out a draft requirement for 5,300 new homes to 2028 together with 88 hectares of employment land. Cannock Chase District Council are currently undertaking work as part of the Habitats Regulations and in combination effects have been considered for both the Cannock Extension SAC and Cannock Chase SAC.</p> <p>The West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option sets out a draft requirement for 5,300 new homes to 2026 together with 84 hectares of employment land. Cannock Chase District Council are currently undertaking work as part of the Habitats Regulations and in combination effects have been considered for both the Cannock Extension SAC and Cannock Chase SAC.</p> <p>The West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option set out the figure for the amount of new housing within East Staffordshire between 2006 and 2026. This figure is set at 13,000 net with the majority to be in located in and around Burton upon Trent. Current consultation is considering extending the plan period to 2031 and states that a proportion of the development will need to occur on greenfield sites. Potential impacts upon the River Mease SAC will need investigating.</p> <p>The joint core strategy for Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, will provide 63,000 houses up to 2026. There is potential for in combination effects on the Cannock Extension SAC which are being investigated with Cannock Chase District Council and the Cannock Chase SAC which are being investigated with a joint assessment.</p> <p>The emerging Core Strategy seeks to provide 50,600 homes and deliver 100,000 new jobs up to the period 2026. There is potential for in combination effects on the Cannock Chase SAC and these are being investigated with a joint assessment.</p> <p>The plan states the population will grow by 100,000. With over 5,000 homes in the City Centre. Increase the size of the City centre. No in combination effects are likely due to the proximity of the Natura 2000 sites and the strategic growth points in the Lichfield and Tamworth LDF.</p> <p>Requires the provision of 15,250 new homes from 2001 to 2026. Of these the emerging East Midlands RSS seeks to make provision for 6,430 new homes contiguous to Derby City with the remainder mainly being located within or as sustainable urban extensions to Swadlincote. There are potential in combination effects on the Mease SAC as a result of combined new housing growth in North-west Leicestershire and East Staffordshire.</p>
Cannock Chase Core Strategy: Local Plan (Part 1) Publication document	
South Staffordshire District Core Strategy : Submission 2011	
East Staffordshire Borough Core Strategy : Pre Publication Strategic Options August 2011	
Black Country Adopted Joint Core Strategy 2011	
Birmingham Core Strategy 2026 : Consultation Draft December 2010	
Big City Plan : Birmingham	
South Derbyshire Core Strategy Preferred Growth' Strategy, 2012	

i Relevant Plans

<p>North West Leicestershire Core Strategy Consultation document 2011</p>	<p>Requires the provision of 15,250 new homes from 2001 to 2026. Of these the emerging East Midlands RSS seeks to make provision for 6,430 new homes contiguous to Derby City with the remainder mainly being located within or as sustainable urban extensions to Swadlincote. There are potential in combination effects on the Mease SAC as a result of combined new housing growth in North-west Leicestershire and East Staffordshire.</p>
<p>North Warwickshire Pre-Submission Core Strategy consultation November 2012</p>	<p>North Warwickshire have published for consultation an Interim Planning Policy Statement, it seeks land to be found for 3,800 dwellings from 2006 to 2028 and 31 hectares of employment land. There is now no requirement for Regional Logistics Sites at Birch Coppice or Hams Hall, however permission has recently been given for 40 Ha of employment land at Birch Coppice. No in combination effects are likely due to the proximity of the Natura 2000 sites and the strategic growth points in the Lichfield and Tamworth LDF.</p>
<p>Rugeley Power Station Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) plans</p>	<p>Rugeley Power Station is presently installing a flue gas desulphurisation plant in order to comply with European Union Large Combustion Plant Directive, which aims to apply tighter limits on sulphur dioxide emissions. The 2002 Rugeley Power Station Proposed FGD Plant – Environmental Statement states that the plant may lead to an increase in carbon dioxide emissions, but these should be insignificant. The process will result in decreased Sulphur emissions but there will be an increase in Nitrogen. These effects will be considered in the further in relation to the in combination effects on the Cannock Chase SAC.</p>
<p>Environment Agency consents for water extraction</p>	<p>The purpose of The Tame, Anker and Mease Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy Consultation Draft 2007 plan is to enable the Environment Agency to manage water resources at the local level in order that the need for water for housing, employment and agricultural users can be balanced with the needs of the water environment. The existing CAMS indicated that there is no water available for abstraction from the River Mease to serve additional abstraction need.</p>
<p>Severn Trent Water Limited: Water Resource Plan Asset Management Period 2005-10</p>	<p>Looks to 2030, but specifically covers the period to 2010. It considers key issues, which could have an impact on water supply, and sets out objectives to ensure STW can deliver its planned level of service. The plan considers drought management, abstraction reductions, leakage water efficiency etc</p>
<p>South Staffordshire Water PLC Water Resources Plan 2009</p>	<p>The report identifies that there is sufficient capacity for the proposed increase in population during the 25 year period 2010-2035. Sets out objectives to improve service, reduce leakage and improve resource development to meet future needs. Also reports on performance of previous water resource management plan including efforts to reduce the impact of water abstraction from sensitive sites. The report identifies that work is needed to consider a reduction in water</p>

	<p>abstraction licences on the River Mease and River Humber and that Environment Agency will be involved in this process.</p> <p>Strategy which considers the impact of abstraction on the Tame, Anker and Mease Rivers. Existing abstraction licences, including those for public water supply in the Mease catchment, were assessed for their impact on the SAC during the review of consents process.</p>
Tame, Anker and Mease Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy. March 2008	
Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy. July 2007	<p>Catchment abstraction management strategies (CAMS) are six-year plans that record how the Environment Agency are going to manage water resources in each catchment area.</p>
Outline Planning Application for housing development at Curborough, Lichfield District	<p>Planning Application for 5,000 houses and associated facilities as a freestanding new settlement close to Lichfield City.</p>
National Forest Strategy 2009-2014	<p>Sets out a strategy to increase tree cover from 6% to around 33% across an area of around 200 square miles of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. Parts of the National Forest lie within Lichfield District and Tamworth. To date over 7 million trees have been planted in the entire National Forest since 1994 increasing woodland cover to 16%. The strategy also promotes the development of woodland related tourism and business development throughout the National Forest. The strategy also promotes the development of woodland related tourism and business development throughout the National Forest.</p>
Lichfield District Council Core Strategy pre-application	<p>The will set out what the District Council would like to achieve in Lichfield City, Burntwood and the rural areas and will set out broadly what type of development is required in the District, how much and where. It will influence the physical environment; the way people live and work; and will help deliver the needs of the District's residents, employers, retailers and visitors. The consultation documents allowed for discussion on appropriate levels of development, but identified an emerging strategy for the following local requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing: 8,000 homes. ● Employment Land: 127 hectares of readily available land for general employment uses between 2006-2026.

i Relevant Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Retail: Up to an additional 35,000m² of retail floorspace (gross) within Lichfield City and up to 16,000m² (gross) in Burntwood . ● Offices: Up to 30,000m² of floorspace focused on Lichfield City Centre and allowing up to 5,000m² within Burntwood town centre.
<p>Stoke -on-Trent and Newcastle Core Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing Requirement of 6,257 and 13,500 dwellings for Newcastle and Stoke ● 25,000m² of additional gross comparison retail floorspace to 2021 and a further 10,000m² to 2026; ● 60,000m² of additional gross office floorspace within, or on the edge of the town centre, to accommodate new employment of a type in keeping with the role of the Town Centre. ● Long term employment land supply 84 hectares and 165 hectares for Newcastle and Stoke.
<p>Tamworth Borough Council Core Strategy Preferred Option</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing: 5,500 dwellings. ● Employment Land: a five year reservoir of 14 hectares, a minimum of 28 hectares up to 2016, with a longer term requirement of 56 hectares. ● Retail: 25,000 square metres of floorspace up to 2021 followed by a further 10,000 square metres. ● Offices: 20,000 square metres of floorspace. <p>The Option report proposed a sequential approach to delivering the spatial strategy for the town and recognised that land outside of the urban area will be required to deliver growth and that there were a number of constraints to achieving this.</p>
<p>Telford and Wrekin Core Strategy</p>	<p>The plan runs from 2006 to 2016 and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1330 new dwellings per annum up to 2011, and a maximum of 700 new dwellings per annum 2011-2016 ● A maximum of 2850 dwellings will be brought forward under the New Growth Points Initiative ● Development to be focused at Telford, including the Strategic Sites of Lightmoor, Lawley and East Ketley, will be the location for the overwhelming majority of new homes and 60 new dwellings per annum at Newport. 170 new dwellings to the rural area ● Telford to continue to be the focus of retail and office development

<p>Outline Planning Application and masterplan for housing development at Pye Green</p>	<p>Proposal for 700 houses and open space, approx 230 metres south west of the Cannock Chase SAC. A HRA setting out the following mitigation measures has also been supplied:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No development within 400 metres of the perimeter of the SAC. 2. The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) within the site to encourage residents to use local green spaces rather than visit the SAC. 3. Encourage residents to use areas outside the SAC (and AONB) for recreation. 4. Educate new residents through a Local Information Pack on the importance of the SAC, how they could protect it, encourage them to use SANGS etc.
<p>Proposed Stafford Area Improvements Norton Bridge Grade Separation Scheme</p>	<p>Proposal to develop a grade separated junction improvement on the West Coast Mainline (WCML). The proposed development is located approximately 5km northwest of Stafford. Works include:</p> <p>New infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laying approximately 5km new track • Construction of new cutting and embankment • Construction of 11 new road and river bridges • Provision of overhead line equipment and signalling for the new rail lines • Realignment of the B5026 • Diversion of 2 public footpaths, and river diversion and flood compensation measures. <p>Temporary construction works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary construction compounds and internal site haul roads • Minor modifications to a junction on the A5013 north of Little Bridgeford for the construction of a haul road access, and • construction of a temporary junction on the B5026 to the west of Station Road for a haul road access.

i Relevant Plans

	<p>Modifications to existing infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• existing line realigned slightly for the new tie in at the eastern end.
<p>Walking Mill Pre application information</p>	<p>Details of enabling development as part of the repair and refurbishment of the listed building. Reports show the project would not alter the flow pattern or depth of Cop Mere.</p>

ii HRA of Regional Spatial Strategy

The Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Regional Spatial Strategy prepared by URSUS Consulting Ltd & Treweek Environmental Consultants in 2007 highlighted the following likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites within Stafford Borough:

Pasturefields Saltmarsh

This site is periodically affected by flood water from River Trent which has high sewage loadings and additional loadings from surface water runoff. This problem could be exacerbated by housing development upstream. There could be possible impacts associated with water abstraction in future if further water is sourced from the River Trent.

Midland Meres and Mosses

Midlands Meres and Mosses Sites are likely to be affected by different pressures depending on their location. Some may be liable to significant effects. Risks are possible from water quality and supply issues, recreational pressures, land take and invasive species.

iii Wastewater Information

iii Wastewater Information

Wastewater Treatment - information from the Southern Staffordshire Water Cycle Study July 2010

All wastewater transmitted in the combined or foul sewer networks, either by gravity systems or pumps, is taken to a WwTW to be cleansed and subsequently released back into the river network. The number of WwTWs is decreasing due to a preference for the utilisation of fewer larger works, although the Environment Agency is now trying to reduce the trend in amalgamating smaller works as it is not always the most viable option environmentally.

The capacity of these systems is an important consideration when planning new development. This is judged in terms of the ability of the WwTW to receive more flow and the quality of the watercourse into which it discharges. For a WwTW to increase its capacity, it has the potential to require an increase in Consented Dry Weather Flow (CDWF). If the quality of the river in question is already marginal or poor, it may prove to be a barrier to the increase in CDWF due to the enhanced influence an increase in treated effluent will have upon the aquatic ecosystem. However, should consent be granted, the conditions will undoubtedly be stringent and require additional capital investment by STWL in order to meet the higher effluent standard, particularly with regards to the level of phosphates discharged. The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) is designed to make sure all wastewater in the EU is treated to the appropriate standard. An essential element of the Directive is that quality standards for effluent fall into categories depending on the size of the treatment works and the sensitivity of the receiving watercourse. As populations grow, some WwTW may exceed the UWWTD threshold that requires nutrient removal. In locations where households cannot be connected to existing sewers, particularly of concern in the rural areas of the Study Area, this may result in additional septic tank discharges to waterbodies in which levels of phosphates and nitrates are already very high. Under the Water Resources Act a 'consent to discharge' must be obtained from the Environment Agency before any polluting material is legally discharged into a watercourse. The consents are based upon the quality and volume of the wastewater and the quality and capacity of the receiving watercourse. If a WwTW needs to expand due to new development with it may be necessary for a new consent for increased flow to be applied for. The Phase 2 RSS states that although the Environment Agency may grant this it is likely to set tighter limits on the pollutant concentrations to ensure overall loading is unaltered. When the initial RSS targets were released, the Environment Agency carried out a study to assess the impact of housing growth on water quality and wastewater infrastructure. This assessed the main WwTWs within the West Midlands with regards to the risk posed to the flow and quality of the receiving watercourse.

There are a total of 84 WwTWs located within the Study Area and 31 of these will be affected by the proposed developments.

This analysis indicates that some of the WwTWs are already operating under pressure and, as a result will require either an increase in CDWF or an improvement in their operating capacity to accommodate any potential new development in these areas.

When reviewing discharge consents the Environment Agency have two over-arching policies which they adhere to:

1. Growth - they will not allow any breach of a statutory standard due to growth and will minimise any deterioration due to growth;

2. No deterioration - they will minimise the deterioration to water quality.

Where they are not satisfied that control measures are in place to prevent deterioration of the watercourse in the current class (as stated in the RBMPs), they may object to proposals for growth.

Summary of Southern Staffordshire Water Cycle Study

Strongford and Wombourne WwTWs have been identified as having minimal headroom with regards to water quality and Alrewas, Bassets Pole, Codsall, Edingale, Haughton, Lichfield, Penkridge and Pirehill have been identified as having minimal hydraulic capacity. However, whilst WwTWs may not have sufficient spare capacity to accept the levels of development being proposed in their catchment area this does not necessarily mean that development cannot take place. Under Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991 sewerage undertakers have an obligation to provide additional treatment capacity as and when required. Where necessary STWL will discuss any discharge consent implications with the Environment Agency. If there are specific issues which may prevent or delay the provision on additional capacity these have been highlighted within the assessment. It is therefore vital that Councils and developers consult with STWL as early as possible in the development process. The Councils should notify STWL as soon as preferred development options are developed. This is especially important for development proposed in the WwTW catchments listed above. This will assist STWL in their discussions with the Environment Agency regarding their consent limits and in planning and budgeting the phasing of treatment work improvements across the planning period.

This assessment indicates that a number of the WwTWs assessed by STWL are reaching, or exceeding, their consented discharge limits. However, from their assessment of the spare capacity at each of these work STWL has no concerns regarding their ability to increase the capacity to accommodate the proposed development. However, this is reliant upon the Environment Agency granting the additional consents and the WwTWs retaining the required water quality targets.

Water Quality and Environmental Issues

This assessment is primarily based upon the watercourses which are affected by the discharge from WwTWs impacted by the proposed development. As discussed above it is anticipated that 21 WwTWs will be responsible for dealing with the associated discharges.

Table 5.8 identifies the WwTWs within Stafford Borough that are affected by the proposed development, the watercourse into which they discharge and the distance from the discharge point of the WwTW to the nearest environmentally designated site (this has only been undertaken for the WwTWs affected by the key potential development sites). These watercourses will be reviewed in more detail within this Section

Brancote WwTW is situated upstream of three designated areas, one of which is a SAC. The WwTW discharges into an unnamed ditch which enters the River Trent. The closest site is Baswich Meadows SSSI, which is located 200m upstream of the area. Cannock Chase SAC and SSSI is located 2km downstream of the WwTW. However, this site is not located along the watercourse it is considered that altering the discharge of the Brancote WwTW will not have any impact on its condition or interest features.

3.2km downstream of the discharge point is Rawbones Meadow SSSI, which is currently in an unfavourable recovering condition. This is a wet grassland site which is tolerant to flooding but can be affected by agricultural chemicals.

iii Wastewater Information

A large number of dwellings are planned for the Brancote area and this can be expected to affect WwTW discharge flows. However, none of the designated sites are likely to be directly impacted by these developments due to their location and sensitivity.

Woodseaves WwTW is situated 700m upstream of Loynton Moss SSSI. The SSSI is currently in unfavourable recovering condition, although the unfavourable assessment was primarily due to changing and conflicting land uses. The site's management should "ensure that the local surface water that drains into the fen via ditches, or by seeping through permeable soils such as sand, is of appropriate quality" (Natural England, 2005). However there is a limited amount of residential development, and no employment-related development, proposed for the Woodseaves area. It is therefore considered that any environmental impacts will be minimal and will have not affect the interest features of the SSSI.

Pasturefields salt marsh SAC and SSSI are located 2.4km downstream of the discharge point of Weston WwTW. The site condition is currently unfavourable recovering, and is subject to the quality of the water it receives. Management should ensure the protection of appropriate water quality which is usually dependent on land-use in the wider catchment. A small number of dwellings are proposed for the Weston area and as such the developments proposed are unlikely to have a significant impact on the discharge and its quality.

Summary

There are a large number of environmentally significant sites located within Stafford Borough and all, in some form, are at risk of degradation due to development. It is therefore important that the Council undertakes the appropriate environmental surveys before they decide on the final sites they wish to bring forward for development. This assessment has briefly reviewed the potential impact increased water abstraction or wastewater treatment may have upon the most significant of these sites. It has concluded that measures will be required to minimise this impact and to follow the Environment Agency's guidelines and regulations.

A simple scoring system has been used to assign a colour code to each of the potential development sites to summarise the conclusions of the water quality and environmental analysis as follows:

Stafford Borough Water Quality: At a Glance...

- The River Sow and River Meese (in relation to one of its tributaries within the Borough) have been identified as currently having low water quality from the 2006 assessment.
- The River Sow and The River Trent have been identified as having 'poor to moderate' ecological status in the RBMP and the Church Eaton Brook, Doxey Brook, Gayton Brook, River Blithe and River Penk as having 'moderate' ecological status.
- Potential developments within the catchments of these watercourse may be impacted by abstraction and wastewater treatment limitations and should be discussed with STWL and the EA, either by the Council at options appraisal or by the developers at planning application stage.
- WwTWs identified as requiring additional capacity and being located on, or upstream, of a watercourse identified as having a poor water quality at present or being vulnerable to the impact of new development may struggle to obtain the required increases in consent from the Environment Agency.

Additional consultation will be required for sites in those catchments, most notably:

- o Eccleshall and Sturbridge
- o Weston
- o Brancote
- o Pirehill
- o Penkridge

It is unlikely this will prevent development, but a delay whilst new consents are negotiated or STWL upgrades/improves its WwTWs.

iv Evidence Base

iv Evidence Base

- Stafford Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Department of the Environment study of the effects of pollution climate upon peat chemistry and drainage water (year unknown)
- Scoping Opinion for Proposed Stafford Area Improvements Norton Bridge Grade Separation Scheme: October 2011
- Southern Staffordshire Outline Water Cycle Study: July 2010
- Correspondence with Environment Agency (see below)

Naomi Perry

From: Austen, Richard [richard.austen@environment-agency.gov.uk]
Sent: 06 February 2012 13:58
To: Naomi Perry
Cc: Perry, Laura
Subject: RE: HRA and EA abstraction

Hi Naomi,

Thankyou for your enquiry about abstraction and the RoC for Habitats Directive sites potentially impacted by your LDF. I have put comments against each site as provided by yourself. We have completed the RoC process at all of the sites and have implemented solutions where necessary to meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Any new abstraction licence applications will have to demonstrate that they are not having an impact on any SAC before a licence would be granted. This would also have to be agreed by Natural England.

* Motte Meadows, Salt Pasturefields, Cop Mere, Chartley Moss
These sites were assessed as part of the RoC and found not to be impacted by abstraction.

* Aqualate Mere
Aqualate Mere was part of the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme and was signed off in 2011 with the recommendation to continue monitoring but no licence changes were required. This concluded a detailed investigation made by Severn Trent Water Limited (STWL) in AMP4 (2005-10) when they investigated the impact of their groundwater abstraction on the SSSI. The Environment Agency has also investigated other abstractions in the vicinity of the SSSI.

* Cannock Chase SAC
We assessed the impact of abstraction upon the Wet Heath areas of the Cannock Chase SAC with STWL during AMP4. As a result of the review STWL reduced their abstraction licenses at 2 of their sources to ensure no impact on the SAC.

And outside the Borough:

* River Mease SAC
We undertook a RoC investigation into the impacts of abstraction on the SAC. As a result of the review STWL revoked one of their licenses, South Staffs Water changed one of their licenses and 6 agricultural abstractors in the catchment signed up to an agreement to limit the amount of water they take in any year. These actions mean the SAC is protected.

* Cannock Chase Extension Canal SAC, Betley Mere (under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase I Ramsar designation), Black Firs and Cranberry Bog (under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase II Ramsar designation)
These sites were assessed as part of the RoC and found not to be impacted by abstraction.

* Humber Estuary SAC
We changed Keadby Power Station's abstraction licence to include a condition to put fish screens on the intake to protect lamprey and agreed to review before implementation date (2014) if new evidence was available. New evidence was provided, proving no impact on Lamprey, so we have now removed the condition. Any Surface Water abstraction in the Trent catchment will have a condition that prevents abstraction at low flows to protect the estuary.

Hopefully this covers what you need to know but if you need any more information or any clarifications please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
Rich

Richard Austen

iv Evidence Base

Senior Environment Planning Officer (Restoring Sustainable Abstraction)
Environment Agency - Central Area/Midlands Region
email: richard.austen@environment-agency.gov.uk

Tel Internal: 722 4888
Direct line: 01543 404888

Sentinel House
9 Wellington Crescent
Fradley Park
Lichfield
WS13 8RR

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

P If you see environmental incidents or fish in distress call our incident hotline on
0800 80 70 60

-----Original Message-----

From: Steele, Naomi
Sent: 25 January 2012 10:35
To: Taylor, Anne; Austen, Richard
Cc: nperry@staffordbc.gov.uk
Subject: FW: HRA and EA abstraction

Hi both,
Please see email below from Naomi Perry at Stafford Borough Council. Please could you
respond to her- I think there are sites across both your areas.

Many thanks
Naomi

-----Original Message-----

From: Naomi Perry [mailto:nperry@staffordbc.gov.uk]
Sent: 25 January 2012 10:28
To: Steele, Naomi
Subject: HRA and EA abstraction

Good morning,

My name is Naomi Perry and I'm a planning officer at Stafford Borough Council. I am
currently preparing the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening opinion looking at
potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites within and outside the Brough, as a result of the
Local Development Framework in combination with other plans.

After reviewing neighbouring authorities work, I note you have provided confirmation on
current abstraction licenses/review of consents in relation to european sites. Would you
be able to provide something for my records? The sites in the Borough are:

- * Mottey Meadows
- * Salt Pasturefields
- * Cop Mere
- * Aqualate Mere
- * Chartley Moss
- * Cannock Chase SAC

And outside the Borough:

Evidence Base iv

- * River Mease SAC
- * Cannock Chase Extension Canal SAC
- * Betley Mere (under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase I Ramsar designation)
- * Black Firs and Cranberry Bog (under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase II Ramsar designation)
- * Humber Estuary SAC

I appreciate that some might not have abstraction licenses but any information you can provide will be really useful for our HRA, in order for us to confirm no impacts or address potential impacts through suitable policies.

Kind Regards

Naomi Perry
Planning Officer
Stafford Borough Council
Tel: 01785 619591

Get involved with the LDF online at <http://staffordbc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/>

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