

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

**St Edmundsbury Core Strategy**

**Habitats Regulations Assessment:  
Screening**

September 2010

# St Edmundsbury Core Strategy

## Habitats Regulations Assessment: Screening

### Record of Assessment of Likely Significant Effect on a European Site Required by Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 September 2010

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# 1. Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Background to this Assessment

This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening has been carried out by Atkins Limited (Atkins) on behalf of St Edmundsbury Borough Council for the *St Edmundsbury Core Strategy: Submission Draft August 2009* (Draft 1, June 2009). The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) is referred to as ‘the Plan’ for the purpose of this report.

The Plan covers the whole of the administrative area of St Edmundsbury and is a high level strategic document that sets out the long-term spatial planning framework for the development of St Edmundsbury between 2008 and 2031.

## 1.2 Background to HRA

An HRA is required by Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) (the Regulations) for all plans and projects which may have adverse effects on European sites. European sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). HRA is also required, as a matter of UK Government policy for potential SPAs (pSPA), candidate SACs (cSAC) and listed Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) for the purposes of considering plans and projects, which may affect them<sup>1</sup>. Hereafter all of the above designated nature conservation sites are referred to as ‘international sites’.

Local development plans include general policies or proposals (i.e. such as development limits for settlements) that often do not relate to specific development proposals but provide an overall strategy for development which is desirable within the boundary of the Plan (such as the County, District or Unitary boundary). If the policies/proposals do not relate to a specific development proposal then it can be difficult to assess the effects on an international site from the policies. For instance a development limit set around a village will be considered to control the growth of the settlement but will not include specific development proposals. It is not possible to conclude whether the development limit will have a likely significant effect on an international site without knowledge of design, type and location of any development within the newly set development limit.

However, the local development plan can be written in such a way that international sites are considered. For instance, the Plan can state that any proposed developments under the Plan must have regard to and consider any adverse effects upon international sites. When a local authority considers a development proposal they must have regard to the whole plan including the introductory text and supporting text to the policies/proposals. Therefore the Plan may include text which states that consideration of international sites must be given in the development control process. This should ensure that developments are not permitted which could have significant adverse impacts on international sites. In these cases, further information will be required at the more detailed planning stage (e.g. preparation of Area Action Plans or other Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents) and the development control stage for certain projects / proposals to allow the competent authority (in this case St Edmundsbury Borough Council) to assess whether they are likely to have a significant impact on the international sites, and thus, determine whether a full Appropriate Assessment is needed

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, ODPM (August 2005)

## 1.3 Outline of this Report

Following this introduction:

- Section 2 of this report outlines the methodology used for this HRA screening;
- Section 3 provides details of the relevant international sites, namely Breckland SPA/SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC (including their Conservation Objectives and site vulnerabilities);
- Section 4 outlines details of the Submission Draft of the Plan and provisions within the document to protect the three international sites;
- Section 5 details the other plans and projects identified which may lead to in combination effects on the three international sites;
- Section 6 details the results of the HRA screening for the Breckland SAC/SPA;
- Section 7 details the results of the HRA screening for the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC; and
- Section 8 provides the conclusions of the HRA screening.

## 2. Methodology

### The Plan

The first step of the HRA process is to gather all available information regarding the Plan. This information is pivotal for the analysis of whether the Plan and its impact on the European sites. A summary of the Plan and its contents is given in Section 4.

### Determination of the European Sites included in the HRA

The next step is to determine which European sites should be included in the HRA. An initial review of the Plan in light of the Habitats Regulations has been undertaken by Atkins as part of the HRA process. This initial review looked at the geographic extent or zone of influence of any impacts which could arise as a result of the Plan and considered which international sites should be included within the assessment.

As a starting point all sites within St Edmundsbury and up to 20 km from the Borough boundary were identified<sup>2</sup>. There are three international sites within the district: Breckland SPA, Brecklands SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. Breckland SPA and SAC is an extremely large international site, of which parts falls within St Edmundsbury (along the north-western boundary of the Borough). Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC is located at the north-eastern extent of the Borough, near Hopton. There are also seven other European sites within 20 km of the district boundary. These are:

- Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site: 1.8 km east of the Borough;
- Rex Graham Reserve SAC: Located approximately 5 km north of the Borough;
- Norfolk Valley Fens SAC: Located approximately 8 km north of the Borough;
- Devils Dyke SAC: Located approximately 9.6 km north-west of the Borough;
- Fenland SAC: Located approximately 10.5 km north-west of the Borough;
- Chippenham Fen Ramsar site: Located approximately 10.5 km north-west of the Borough (within the extents of Fenland SAC); and
- Wicken Fen Ramsar site: Located approximately 17.5 km north-west of the Borough.

The Plan outlines potential sites for where future strategic housing development may take place. The Plan therefore focuses on regeneration and future development within the Borough. As such adverse effects from the Plan are considered unlikely to extend far beyond the Plan boundary. There are unlikely to be significant emissions to air or water which could be generated through developments such as large scale power stations and quarry operations as these types of development are not included in the Plan.

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<sup>2</sup> The Environment Agency Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) and Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) guidance notes that a proposal to construct a coal or oil fired power station should consider impacts on European sites up to 15 km away (Page 4 of the *Habitats Directive – Work Instruction: Appendix 7 Technical and Procedural Issues Specific to IPC and PPC* produced by the Environment Agency in July 2004). The most recent England Leisure Visits report states that people will travel up to 17.3 km to a countryside destination (*England Leisure Visits: Summary of the 2005 Leisure Visits Survey*, Natural England, 2005). As a precaution an additional 5 km is added to this distance to ensure that all sites that may be impacted by a new development are considered as part of the HRA process.

The Plan states that any future provision of housing will be concentrated in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. This will focus development on already built up areas which are surrounded by open areas of green space. As such the Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site, Rex Graham Reserve SAC, Norfolk Valley Fens SAC, Devils Dyke SAC, Fenland SAC, Chippenham Fen Ramsar site and Wicken Fen Ramsar site have been eliminated from the HRA process as it is extremely unlikely that there will be any adverse effects on these sites given their distance to these towns:

- Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site is located 49 km north-east of Haverhill and 22 km north-east of Bury St Edmunds;
- Rex Graham Reserve SAC is located 28 km north of Haverhill and 13 km north-west of Bury St Edmunds;
- Norfolk Valley Fens SAC is located 45 km north-east of Haverhill and 22 km north of Bury St Edmunds;
- Devils Dyke SAC is located 15.7 km north of Haverhill and 21.8 km west of Bury St Edmunds;
- Fenland SAC and Chippenham Fen Ramsar site are located 22.5 km north of Haverhill and 18 km north-west of Bury St Edmunds; and
- Wicken Fen Ramsar site is located 25 km north-west of Haverhill and 27 km north-west of Bury St Edmunds.

Given the distance of these international sites from these two towns it is considered highly unlikely that an increased number of dwellings in St Edmundsbury will lead to increased recreational pressure at these sites. Although the Rex Graham Reserve SAC and Devils Dyke SAC are within the 17.3 km of Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill respectively, it is considered extremely unlikely that residents from St Edmundsbury will visit these small, relatively unknown sites over and above the green space within the Borough.

Furthermore, Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar site, Fenland SAC, Chippenham Fen Ramsar site and Wicken Fen Ramsar site are all National Nature Reserves. Rex Graham Reserve SAC is also Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserve. These international sites are all well set up to receive visitors (they actively encourage people to visit the sites) and they are managed accordingly. As such, although it is highly unlikely that the increased number of dwellings in St Edmundsbury would lead to increased recreational pressure at these international sites (due to the distance of these international sites from Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill), should there be an increase in recreational pressure at these locations it is extremely unlikely that there will be any adverse effects on these sites,

Therefore this HRA is a record of the assessment of 'likely significant effects' from the Plan on three international sites: Breckland SPA/SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. Further details of these international sites including their location, designation details and conservation objectives are provided in Section 3.

### **Obtaining Information on European Sites with the Potential to be Affected**

The next step is to gather the information on the European sites to be included in the HRA. This includes contacting Natural England for the Conservation Objectives and Favourable Conditions Tables for each international site.

The Conservation Objectives and Favourable Conditions Tables for the Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC have been obtained from Natural England for the purpose of this assessment<sup>3</sup>.

### **Obtaining Information on Other Projects and Plans**

In accordance with the Habitat Regulations there is a need to consider the potential for likely significant effects of the Plan ‘in combination’ with other projects and plans.

Statutory bodies surrounding, or in close proximity to, the three international sites were contacted for details of any projects or plans that have been subject to HRA in order to determine if there is a cumulative impact on these international sites.

The following organisations have been contacted for details of other plans and projects which have the potential for adverse effects upon the three international sites.

- Suffolk County Council;
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council;
- Mid-Suffolk District Council;
- Babergh District Council;
- South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- East Cambridgeshire District Council;
- Forest Heath District Council;
- Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk;
- Breckland Council;
- South Norfolk Council;
- Natural England; and
- Highways Agency.

### **Assessing the Impacts of the Plan ‘Alone’ and ‘In Combination’**

Following the gathering of information on the Plan and the international sites, an assessment was undertaken to predict the likely significant effects of the Plan on the international sites ‘alone’. In order to inform this process, all parts of the Core Strategy were assessed to see if they could result in likely significant effects on the Breckland SPA/SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. This HRA assesses all 16 policies within the Plan.

Each of the policies within the Plan has been examined in detail to see if they will have a significant effect on the three international sites. A brief description of each policy as well as the findings of this assessment is given in Table A-1 in Appendix A. Sections 6 and 7 summarise the findings of the HRA in relation to the Breckland SPA/SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC respectively.

The potential for likely significant effects of the Plan ‘in combination’ on these three international sites with other projects and plans has also been considered in this HRA.

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<sup>3</sup> Conservation Objectives and Favourable Conditions Tables for the Breckland SPA/SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC were received from Natural England on 16/03/09.



All HRAs that have been completed due to possible impacts on Breckland SPA/SAC and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC were reviewed in order to determine whether there is the potential for in combination effects (see Section 5).

The integrity of an international site is defined as '*...the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.*' (Part I, Section B, Paragraph 20 of ODPM Circular 06/2005 accompanying Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation).

The assessment of integrity is largely based on the conservation objectives of the site. If any plan or project causes the cited interest features of a site to fall into unfavourable condition they can be considered to have had a significant adverse effect upon the integrity of the site.

Plans or projects can adversely affect the integrity of a site by:

- Causing delays in progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site;
- Interrupting progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site;
- Disrupting those factors that help to maintain the favourable conditions of the site; and
- Interfering with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of the favourable condition of the site.

HRA is an iterative process. Where necessary, suggestions can be made of how to amend the Plan to avoid likely significant effects on an international site. This iterative approach has been adopted as part of this assessment and recommendations for the final draft of the Core Strategy have been outlined.

### 3. The International Sites

This section includes information about Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC, their designation status, the location of the sites, a brief description of the sites and their conservation objectives.

**Table 3.1: Information about the Breckland SAC/SPA**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Site Designation Status                     | <p>Breckland SAC</p> <p>Breckland SPA</p>   |
| Location of International Site              | <p>This is an extremely large site (particularly the SPA designation) and part of the SAC and SPA falls into St Edmundsbury (along the north-western border of the Borough).</p> <p>The majority of the SPA/SAC falls into Breckland although sections are located within St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath and King’s Lynn and West Norfolk.</p> <p>The SPA is located in close proximity to a number of rural villages in St Edmundsbury including Lackford, Wordwell and Barnham (with the village limits almost meeting the SPA boundary in these cases).</p> <p>The closest settlement to the SAC in St Edmundsbury is Barnham (located approximately 0.9 km east of the site).</p>   |
| Brief Description of the International Site | <p>Breckland SAC qualifies for European protection due to the habitats it supports including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inland dunes with open grey hair grass (<i>Corynephorus</i>) and bent (<i>Agrostis</i>) grassland,</li> <li>• natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i>-type vegetation,</li> <li>• European dry heaths; and</li> <li>• semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>)</li> </ul> <p>These are all Annex I habitats which are a primary qualifying feature of the site. Also present but not a qualifying feature of the site are Alluvial forests with alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) and ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) (an Annex 1 habitat) and great crested newts (an Annex II species). This site is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for these habitats and species.</p> <p>During the breeding season Breckland SPA regularly supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60.1% of the UK breeding population of stone curlew;</li> <li>• 12.2% of the UK breeding population of European nightjar; and</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28.7% of the GB breeding population of woodlark.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Conservation Objectives of the International Site</p> | <p>The Conservation Objectives for the European interests on the SAC and SPA are to maintain*, in favourable condition, the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European dry heaths;</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) and ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>);</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>); and</li> <li>• Inland dunes with open grey hair grass (<i>Corynephorus</i>) and bent (<i>Agrostis</i>) grasslands.</li> </ul> <p>And: To maintain*, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of the Annex 1 species of European importance (stone curlew, woodlark and nightjar) with particular reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heathland;</li> <li>• acid grassland; and</li> <li>• chalk grassland and/or inland dune communities.</li> </ul> <p>* maintenance implies restoration if the feature is not currently in favourable condition.</p>  |
| <p>Vulnerabilities of the International Site</p>         | <p>Breckland SAC is vulnerable to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrient deposition from the atmosphere and adjacent arable land;</li> <li>• invasion by self-sown trees/shrubs;</li> <li>• uncontrolled and inappropriate recreational activities;</li> <li>• cessation of traditional cutting and grazing management (leading to scrub and woodland spreading at the expense of the heathland and chalk grassland vegetation); and</li> <li>• Local ground water abstraction has a deleterious impact on the natural eutrophic lakes, the Breckland meres (subject of active liaison between Natural England and the Environment Agency).</li> </ul> <p>Breckland SPA is vulnerable to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stone curlew are largely reliant on arable land for nesting and are thus vulnerable to disturbance and nest destruction from agricultural operations;</li> <li>• Stone curlew, nightjar and woodlark are vulnerable to predation from corvids and foxes and to disturbance caused by human activity, including dog-walking;</li> <li>• Breckland heathlands and acid grasslands supporting stone curlew, nightjar and woodlark are fragile in terms of the high background levels of air pollution in the area, particularly high</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>nitrogen loads causing undesirable habitat changes; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting of eggs of stone curlew, and to some extent nightjar and woodlark, is believed to be a serious threat to individual birds and to population size. The loss of eggs to this illegal activity is not known.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**Table 3.2: Information about the Waveney Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Site Designation Status                           | Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC   |
| Location of International Site                    | <p>The site is located in the north-eastern corner of the Borough of St Edmundsbury. It is a small site that is split into three separate sections (two in St Edmundsbury and one in Breckland/Mid Suffolk).</p> <p>The nearest settlement to the SAC in St Edmundsbury is Hopton (located approximately 0.4 km east of the SAC).</p>   |
| Brief Description of the International Site       | <p>This site supports two Annex I habitats (that are a primary reason for the selection of this site): Purple moor-grass (<i>Molinia</i>) meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey silt laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) and calcareous fens with great fen-sedge (<i>Cladium mariscus</i>) and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>. This site is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for both these habitat types.</p> <p>This site occurs in the East Anglian centre of distribution of calcareous fens and contains very extensive <i>Cladium</i> beds, including managed examples, as well as stands in contact zones between small sedge mire and species-poor <i>Cladium</i>. The habitat type here occurs in a different hydrological situation to the Broads – spring-fed valley fen rather than flood-plain mire.</p> <p>This site is one of several representing Desmoulin’s whorl snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) in East Anglia. At Weston Fen populations of this snail occur in a valley fen. This is an Annex II species and its present is a primary reason for the selection of this site.</p> |
| Conservation Objectives of the International Site | <p>The Conservation Objectives for Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC are (subject to natural change) to maintain* the following habitats in favourable condition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calcareous fens with great fen-sedge (<i>Cladium mariscus</i>) and the species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>;</li> <li>Purple moor-grass (<i>Molinia</i>) meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</li> </ul> <p>And: To maintain*, in favourable condition, the habitats for the population of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desmoulin’s whorl snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)</li> </ul>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>* maintenance implies restoration if the feature is not currently in favourable condition.</p>   |
| Vulnerabilities of the International Site | <p>Traditionally, peat was cut for fuel, sedge and reed were harvested for thatching, and the fen meadows were mown for hay. This management declined between 1940 and 1960.</p> <p>Water abstraction, over-deepening of local rivers and land drainage have reduced the groundwater inputs while increasing outflows from the fens.</p> <p>Consequently some areas of peat have undergone periods of drying and rotting which has released nutrients into the system and allowed scrub to progressively invade the fens.</p> |

## 4. Plan Details

### 4.1 Proposed Plan

The St Edmundsbury Core Strategy DPD (the Plan) provides the strategic context that will guide the preparation of subsequent DPDs identified in the Local Development Scheme.

None of the proposals within the Plan are directly connected with, or necessary to the nature conservation management of the Breckland SAC/SPA or Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fen SAC.

### 4.2 Brief Description of Plan

The Plan includes a vision of how the area will develop in physical, economic, environmental and social ways to meet the needs of residents, businesses and others, strategic objectives to achieve this vision and a spatial strategy which will identify how many settlements and other areas will develop or be preserved.

The Plan includes a total of 15 core policies that will be used to establish development principles and broad indications of the location of strategic housing, employment, retail and other development proposals. The Key Diagram shows the broad locations of development proposals for the Borough (see Appendix B).

### 4.3 Provisions within the Plan that Protect International Sites

When planning applications are determined all of the relevant policies and supporting text in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision-making.

Policy CS1 – St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy and Policy CS2 - Sustainable Development. These policies aim to protect the environment, and as such seek to protect the three international sites.

Policy CS1 states that the protection of the natural and historic environment, the distinctive character of settlements and ability to deliver infrastructure will take priority when determining the location of future development. The recognition of the natural environment in this policy seeks to avoid impacts on the environment and as such helps to protect as the three international sites.

Policy CS2 states that development needs to protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife and avoid impacts on areas of nature conservation interest (such as the three international sites) and that, where appropriate, the ecological features of a development site will be valued and enhanced. This policy also states that only development that will not adversely affect the integrity of the Breckland SPA will be permitted. It also states that:

- a 1.5 km buffer zone extending from the edge of those parts of the Breckland SPA that support, or are capable of supporting, stone curlews has been identified. In these areas development may only take place for the re-use of existing buildings and for development which will be completely masked from the SPA by existing development **or** provided it is demonstrated by an Appropriate Assessment that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. a 1.5 km buffer zone extending around areas outside of the SPA which have supported five or more nesting attempts by stone curlew since 1995 (shown on the Proposals Map) and as such act as supporting stone curlew habitat has been identified. In these areas development may only take place for the re-use of existing buildings and for development which will be completely masked from the SPA by existing development or provided it is demonstrated by an Appropriate Assessment that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. Additionally within this zone, where it can be shown that proposals to mitigate the effects of development would avoid or overcome an adverse impact on the integrity of the SPA or qualifying features, planning permission may be granted provided the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that those proposals will be implemented. In these areas development may also be acceptable providing alternative land outside the SPA can be secured to mitigate any potential effects.
- a 400 m buffer zone has been defined around those parts of the SPA that support or are capable of supporting nightjar and woodlark. Any development proposal within this zone will need to clearly demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA; and
- development at Risby (which lies partly within the 1.5 km stone-curlew buffer) will only be possible if it is fully screened from the Breckland SPA by existing development. The policy states that a project level appropriate assessment should be undertaken to ensure no adverse affect upon the integrity of the SPA.

Text present within the Section 1 of the Plan entitled 'Appropriate Assessment' clearly states that any proposed development that may have an adverse effect on internationally important sites will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA) by the competent authority (see Inset 4.1 below).

The Plan therefore ensures that the competent authority (in this case St Edmundsbury Borough Council in consultation with Natural England) will give consideration to international sites in order to inform development control decisions. The text states that where it cannot be demonstrated that a development proposal will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a site of European or international importance to nature conservation, such development is not supported by the Plan and will not be permitted. However, where there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest and the competent authority is unable to conclude no adverse effect on the integrity of an international site, the authority will notify the Secretary of State and allow them to call in the application for determination. In these situations compensatory measures to protect the European site must be implemented.

Therefore, any specific development proposals will need to be in line with the Core Strategy and will need to satisfy St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Natural England that there will either be no likely significant effects from the development on the Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated/compensated.

#### **Inset 4.1: Text included in the 'Appropriate Assessment' Section of the Plan**

Under Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations) an appropriate assessment has been carried out for the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy Submission Draft in order to see whether its proposals could have the potential to result in adverse effects upon an internationally important site. These are sites that have been designated for their international nature conservation interests and include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under European Council Directive 92/43/EEC(a) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the European Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive); and,
- The UK Government (in the accompanying circular to Planning Policy Statement 9) as a matter of policy has chosen to apply the appropriate assessment procedures in respect of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), candidate SACs (cSACs) and potential SPAs (pSPAs) even though these are not European sites as a matter of law.

Within St Edmundsbury there are three international sites. Those of relevance to the Plan are the Breckland SAC, Breckland SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.

In accordance with Regulation 48 of the Habitats Regulations an Appropriate Assessment screening has been carried out to determine whether this document is likely, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, to have a significant effect upon the international sites identified.

The results of the Appropriate Assessment screening show that there are no likely significant effects on the three international sites. The accompanying Appropriate Assessment report shows the outcome of the assessment (copies of these reports and a summary are available on request and can be accessed on the Council's website).

If a proposed development could have a likely significant effect on an international site, further consideration and assessment will need to be made for these proposals at the development control stage or as part of lower tier development plan documents (including the Bury St Edmunds Area Action Plan, the Haverhill Area Action Plan and the Rural Site Allocations Development Plan Document). This will require a thorough ecological assessment of the potential effects upon the relevant international site(s) so as to allow the Competent Authority (in this case St Edmundsbury Borough Council) the ability to determine whether the development is likely to result in significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the site(s).

Any development that cannot demonstrate that it would not have a significant adverse effect upon the integrity of a European site, or that impacts can be adequately mitigated, will be refused (and in the case of lower tier development plan documents, these site allocations will not be taken forward in the final plans). This is in accordance with the precautionary principle enshrined within the Habitats Regulations. Where there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest and the authority is unable to conclude no adverse effect on the integrity of a site, the authority will notify the Secretary of State and allow them to call in the application for determination. In these situations compensatory measures to protect the European site must be put in place.



## 5. Other Projects and Plans

There are three HRAs that have been carried out due to the possibility of likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and two HRAs that have been carried out due to the possibility of likely significant effects on Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.

The details of each HRA and a summary of their findings are given in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: HRAs carried out due to possible impacts on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC**

| Statutory Body                | Title of HRA  | Findings of HRA  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Forest Heath District Council | Habitat Regulations Assessment: Forest Heath District Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2009)                    | Initial assessment of the Core Strategy showed likely significant effects from the Plan on the Breckland SAC/SPA. Mitigation has been put in place in the Plan so as to avoid likely significant effects on these two international sites.   |
| Breckland Council             | Habitat Regulations Assessment: Breckland Council Submission Core Strategy and Development Controls Policies Document (November 2008) | Initial assessment of the Core Strategy showed likely significant effects from the Plan on the Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. Mitigation has been put in place in the Plan so as to avoid likely significant effects on these three international sites. |
| Mid-Suffolk Council           | Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) (October 2007)   | The HRA found no likely significant effects from the Plan on the Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.  |

## 6. HRA Results: Breckland SAC/SPA

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Site Designation Status</p>   | <p>Breckland SAC<br/> Breckland SPA</p>   |
| <p>Describe the individual elements of the Plan likely to give rise to impacts on the International Site</p> | <p>None of the fifteen policies within the Plan will lead to likely significant effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA.</p> <p>One of the fifteen policies seeks solely to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity, and as such protect this international site. This is Policy CS2 - Sustainable Development. The protection of the natural environment is also recognised in Policy CS1 – St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy.</p> <p>Eleven of the fifteen policies will not lead directly to development (e.g. they relate to design and other qualitative criteria). There are Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS3 - Design and Local Distinctiveness;</li> <li>• CS4 - Settlement Hierarchy and Identity;</li> <li>• CS5 - Affordable Housing;</li> <li>• CS6 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople</li> <li>• CS7 - Sustainable Transport;</li> <li>• CS8 - Strategic Transport Improvements;</li> <li>• CS10 - Retail, Leisure, Cultural and Office Provision;</li> <li>• CS13 – Rural Areas;</li> <li>• CS14 – Community Infrastructure Capacity and Tariffs; and</li> <li>• CS15 - Plan, Monitor and Manage.</li> </ul> <p>Four of the fifteen policies will lead to development in the long term. These are Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS1 - St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy;</li> <li>• CS9 - Employment and the Local Economy;</li> <li>• CS11 - Bury St Edmunds Strategic Growth; and</li> <li>• CS12 - Haverhill Strategic Growth.</li> </ul> <p>There will be no likely significant effects on the International sites due to the proposals for development outlined in Policies CS1, CS9 and CS11 as these elements of the Plan are at a strategic level (e.g. the exact details of where the strategic development sites will be located, their design and/or when (or if) these sites will be constructed upon are not known). Lower tier</p> |

Development Plan Documents (DPDs) will arise from these two Policies including:

- Bury St Edmunds Area Action Plan (AAP);
- Haverhill AAP; and
- Site Allocations DPD (including Rural Allocation sites and the Gypsy and Travellers sites).

The lower tier Plans will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses.

The Plan seeks to protect international sites (in line with Policy CS2). Furthermore the Plan commits to an HRA being carried out of any future DPDs when they are produced (in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment text in Section 1 of the Plan). As such the HRA of these documents will need to satisfy St Edmundsbury Borough Council (in consultation with Natural England) that there will either be no likely significant effects from any of the proposed allocations sites in these DPDs on Breckland SAC/SPA or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated or compensated. If this cannot be proven the Council will not include the allocations site which may lead to significant effects on the international site in the lower tier plan.

There are no likely significant effects from Policy CS12. This is because the strategic growth in this town is located 21.5 km south-west of Breckland SPA and 26.5 km south-west of Breckland SAC. Given these distances (all over 20 km from Haverhill) it is extremely unlikely that there will be significant effects on these international sites. Furthermore, as outlined above, the proposals for development outlined in Policy CS12 are at a strategic level. The Haverhill AAP will arise from this policy and this will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses. In accordance with the text above, an HRA will also be undertaken of this document (ensuring that there will be no likely significant effects on the international sites).

The Initial AA Screening Results Table in Appendix A gives a full justification of the conclusions drawn for each of these four policies.

Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan on the International Site by virtue of:

- Size and scale;
- Land take;
- Resource requirements

The Plan seeks to protect international sites (in line with Policy CS2). Due to the high level strategic nature of the Plan only broad details of future development possibly arising from Policies are given. As such the Plan commits to HRAs being carried out of any future DPDs when they are produced (in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment text in Section 1 of the Plan). Future allocations sites will only be taken forward if it can be proven through HRA that there will either be no likely significant effects from any of the proposed allocations sites in these DPDs on Breckland SAC/SPA or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated or compensated.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(i.e. water extraction etc);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</li> <li>• Excavation requirements;</li> <li>• Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc.; and</li> <li>• Other.</li> </ul>   | <p>As such there are no likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan on the international site.</p>  |
| <p>Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>• Disturbance to key species;</li> <li>• Habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>• Reduction in species density;</li> <li>• Changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. water quality); and</li> <li>• Climate change</li> </ul> | <p>The Plan seeks to protect international sites (in line with Policy CS2). Due to the high level strategic nature of the Plan only broad details of future development possibly arising from Policies are given. As such the Plan commits to HRAs being carried out of any future DPDs when they are produced (in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment text in Section 1 of the Plan). Future allocations sites will only be taken forward if it can be proven through HRA that there will either be no likely significant effects from any of the proposed allocations sites in these DPDs on Breckland SAC/SPA or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated or compensated.</p> <p>As such there are no likely changes to the international site as a result of the Plan.</p> |

## 7. HRA Results: Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Site Designation Status   | Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC  |
| Describe the individual elements of the Plan likely to give rise to impacts on the International Site | <p>None of the fifteen policies within the Plan will lead to likely significant effects on the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p> <p>One of the fifteen policies seeks solely to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity, and as such protect this international site. This is Policy CS2 - Sustainable Development. The protection of the natural environment is also recognised in Policy CS1 – St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy.</p> <p>Eleven of the fifteen policies will not lead directly to development (e.g. they relate to design and other qualitative criteria). There are Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS3 - Design and Local Distinctiveness;</li> <li>• CS4 - Settlement Hierarchy and Identity;</li> <li>• CS5 - Affordable Housing;</li> <li>• CS6 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople</li> <li>• CS7 - Sustainable Transport;</li> <li>• CS8 - Strategic Transport Improvements;</li> <li>• CS10 - Retail, Leisure, Cultural and Office Provision;</li> <li>• CS13 – Rural Areas;</li> <li>• CS14 – Community Infrastructure Capacity and Tariffs; and</li> <li>• CS15 - Plan, Monitor and Manage.</li> </ul> <p>Four of the fifteen policies will lead to development in the long term. These are Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS1 - St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy;</li> <li>• CS9 - Employment and the Local Economy;</li> <li>• CS11 - Bury St Edmunds Strategic Growth; and</li> <li>• CS12 - Haverhill Strategic Growth.</li> </ul> <p>There will be no likely significant effects due to the proposals for development outlined in Policies CS1, CS9 and CS11 as these elements of the Plan are at a strategic level (e.g. the exact details of where the strategic development sites will be located, their design and/or when (or if) these</p> |

sites will be constructed upon are not known). Lower tier Development Plan Documents (DPDs) will arise from these two Policies including:

- Bury St Edmunds Area Action Plan (AAP);
- Haverhill AAP; and
- Site Allocations DPD (including rural allocations sites and the Gypsy and Travellers sites).

The lower tier Plans will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses.

The Plan seeks to protect international sites (in line with Policy CS2). Furthermore the Plan commits to an HRA being carried out of any future DPDs when they are produced (in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment text in Section 1 of the Plan). As such the HRA of these documents will need to satisfy St Edmundsbury Borough Council (in consultation with Natural England) that there will either be no likely significant effects from any of the proposed allocations sites in these DPDs on Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated or compensated. If this cannot be proven the Council will not include the allocations site which may lead to significant effects on the international site in the lower tier plan.

There are no likely significant effects from Policy CS12. This is because the strategic growth in this town is located 42.5 km south-west of Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. Given this distance it is extremely unlikely that there will be significant effects on this international site. Furthermore, as outlined above, the proposals for development outlined in Policy CS12 are at a strategic level. The Haverhill AAP will arise from this policy and this will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses. In accordance with the text above, an HRA will also be undertaken of this document (ensuring that there will be no likely significant effects on the international site).

The Initial AA Screening Results Table in Appendix A gives a full justification of the conclusions drawn for each of these four policies.

Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan on the International Site by virtue of:

- Size and scale;
- Land take;
- Resource requirements (i.e. water extraction etc);
- Emissions (disposal to

The Plan seeks to protect international sites (in line with Policy CS2). Due to the high level strategic nature of the Plan only broad details of future development possibly arising from Policies are given. As such the Plan commits to HRAs being carried out of any future DPDs when they are produced (in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment text in Section 1 of the Plan). Future allocations sites will only be taken forward if it can be proven through HRA that there will either be no likely significant effects from any of the proposed allocations sites in these DPDs on Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated or compensated.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>land, water or air);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excavation requirements;</li> <li>• Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc.; and</li> <li>• Other.</li> </ul>  | <p>As such there are no likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan on the international site.</p>  |
| <p>Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>• Disturbance to key species;</li> <li>• Habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>• Reduction in species density;</li> <li>• Changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. water quality); and</li> <li>• Climate change</li> </ul> | <p>The Plan seeks to protect international sites (in line with Policy CS2). Due to the high level strategic nature of the Plan only broad details of future development possibly arising from Policies are given. As such the Plan commits to HRAs being carried out of any future DPDs when they are produced (in accordance with the Appropriate Assessment text in Section 1 of the Plan). Future allocations sites will only be taken forward if it can be proven through HRA that there will either be no likely significant effects from any of the proposed allocations sites in these DPDs on Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC or that any significant effects can be effectively mitigated or compensated.</p> <p>As such there are no likely changes to the international site as a result of the Plan.</p> |

## 8. Conclusions

### **Is the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy likely to have a significant effect 'alone or in combination' on the Breckland SAC, Breckland SPA or Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC?**

Eleven of the fifteen policies will not lead directly to development as they relate to design and other qualitative criteria (Policies CS3, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7, CS8, CS10, CS13, CS14, and CS15). One of the fifteen policies seeks to protect the natural environment, including international sites and biodiversity (Policy CS2).

Four of the fifteen policies in the Core Strategy will lead to development in the long term. These are Policies CS1 - St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy, CS9 - Employment and the Local Economy, CS11 - Bury St Edmunds Strategic Growth and CS12 - Haverhill Strategic Growth. These elements of the Plan are at a strategic level as the exact details of where the strategic development sites will be located, their design and/or when (or if) these sites will be constructed upon is not known at this stage.

The Plan seeks to protect international sites through Policy CS2 and is also recognised in Policy CS1. Policy CS2 puts in place a 1.5 km buffer zone around Breckland SPA for stone curlew and a 400 m buffer zone for woodlark and nightjar. This policy also puts in place a 1.5 km buffer zone around areas outside of the SPA which have supported five or more nesting attempts by stone curlew since 1995 and as such act as supporting stone curlew habitat. In these areas development may only take place for the re-use of existing buildings and for development which will be completely masked from the SPA by existing development or provided it is demonstrated by an Appropriate Assessment that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA.

Furthermore, lower tier Development Plan Documents (DPDs) will arise from Policies CS1, CS9, CS11 and CS12 including Bury St Edmunds Area Action Plan (AAP), Haverhill AAP and Site Allocations DPDs (including Rural Allocation Sites and the Gypsy and Travellers sites). The lower tier Plans will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses. The Plan commits to an HRA being carried out at the development control stage/lower tier development plan stage for any development arising out of these policies. If it cannot be proven that there will no significant impacts on the international sites and/or it is not possible to mitigate/compensate for these impacts the development will not be included in the lower tier plans and/or be granted planning permission.

As such there will be no likely significant effects due to the proposals for development outlined in Policies CS1, CS9, CS11 and CS12 or from any of the other policies included in the Plan.

Furthermore, there is no potential for in combination effects as no other current plans or projects that are likely to lead to significant effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA or the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC have been identified, or where impacts have been identified they have been adequately mitigated.



# Appendix A

## Initial HRA Screening Results Table

## A.1 Initial AA Screening Results Table

This appendix contains Table A-1 (see below) which summarises the features of each of the proposed policies within the Plan and whether each policy is considered to have a likely significant effect on the three international sites.

The likely significant effects take into account the measures in the Plan which seek to protect the international sites.

Where possible, policies that have been found to have no likely significant effect on a European site have been categorised into four different types:

- **Policy Type 1:** Policies that will not themselves lead to development (e.g. because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development, or they are not a land use planning policy);
- **Policy Type 2:** Policies intended to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity;
- **Policy Type 3:** Policies intended to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on a European site; and
- **Policy Type 4:** Policies that positively steer development away from European sites and associated sensitive areas.

This has been based on *The Habitats Regulations Assessment of Regional Spatial Strategies and sub-Regional Strategies (Draft Guidance)* produced by Natural England in March 2007.

Table A.1 – Initial HRA Screening Results

| Policy Number                                | Policy Title                    | Detail of Policy Content  | Will Policy have a Likely Significant Effects on the International Sites? | Justification of finding   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Framework for Sustainable Development</b> |                                 |   |   |  |
| CS1  | St Edmundsbury Spatial Strategy | <p>Policy states that at least 15,631 new homes (net) will be built in the Borough between 2001 and 2031.</p> <p>The exact locations of where these new homes are to be provided is not given in this policy. The Key Diagram identifies the broad locations for future strategic growth in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill.</p> <p>However, it is stated that the Area Action Plans (AAPs) for Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) for the rural area will identify the location and precise boundaries of future development land.</p> <p>The policy also states that the protection of the natural environment will take priority when determining the location of future development.</p>  | No  | <p>This policy will lead to development in St Edmundsbury. As such this policy has the potential to lead to likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased levels of recreational activity possibly leading to higher levels of disturbance to Breckland SPA Annex I bird species (stone curlew, nightjar and woodlark) and possible degradation of Annex I habitats within Breckland SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC (e.g. through increased levels of trampling and littering). This is due to more people living in the Borough and visiting the countryside close to and/or within these international sites; and,</li> <li>Increased levels of traffic generated air pollution leading affecting sensitive areas features of the Annex I habitats within the Breckland SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. This is due to a possible increase in the number of cars in the Borough (associated with an increased number of dwellings in the area).</li> </ul> <p>There are no anticipated effects on the international sites through increased water abstraction as the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment produced by St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath Council<sup>4</sup> concluded that there would be no significant effects on international sites from water abstraction or discharge.</p> <p>However, given the strategic nature of the Plan the exact location and design of the strategic sites are not known at this stage and furthermore it is not known when these strategic sites would be built. As such it is not possible to undertake an assessment of likely significant effects of this policy with any degree of confidence. For these reasons, the Plan commits to an HRA at the lower tier plan stage (e.g. the AAPs for Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill and the Site Allocations DPD). This is in accordance with the text in Section 1 of the Plan. The AAP will contain more specific details about the strategic growth of Bury St Edmunds. The HRA of the AAP will have to prove that the proposed allocations sites will not have significant adverse effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC (or that significant impacts can be adequately mitigated or compensated for). If it cannot be proven that there will no significant adverse impacts on these international sites and/or it is not possible to mitigate/compensate for these impacts the Council will not allow the development to be constructed and it will not be included in the lower tier plans. The Plan therefore seeks to protect the integrity of the international sites.</p> |
| CS2  | Sustainable Development         | <p>Policy aims to ensure that a high quality, sustainable environment will be achieved by designing and incorporating measures into any new development.</p> <p>This includes measures such as protecting and enhancing natural resources (including avoiding impacts on areas of nature conservation interest) and the sustainable design of the built environment.</p> <p>It also states that a network of designated sites, protected habitats and species, wildlife or green corridors and other green spaces will be identified, protected and conserved.</p> <p>This policy also states that only development that will not adversely affect the integrity of the Breckland SPA will be permitted.</p> <p>It also states that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a 1.5 km buffer zone extending from the edge of those parts of the SPA that support, or are capable of supporting, stone curlews has been identified. In these areas development may be only take place for the re-use of existing buildings and for development which will be</li> </ul> | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 3:</b> Policy intended to protect the natural environment (including biodiversity). It also seeks to enhance the natural environment where possible.</p>   |

<sup>4</sup> Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council SFRA and Water Cycle Study: Level 1 SFRA and Outline Water Cycle Study (August 2009)

| Policy Number | Policy Title                      | Detail of Policy Content   | Will Policy have a Likely Significant Effects on the International Sites? | Justification of finding   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
|               |                                   | <p>completely masked from the SPA by existing development (or provided it is demonstrated by an appropriate assessment that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a 1.5 km buffer zone has been defined which extends around those areas (shown on the Proposals Map) outside of the SPA which have supported five or more nesting attempts by stone curlew since 1995 and as such act as supporting stone curlew habitat;</li> <li>Development at Risby (which lies partly within the 1.5 km stone-curlew buffer) will be possible if it is fully screened from the Breckland SPA by existing development. A project level appropriate assessment should be undertaken to ensure no adverse affect upon the integrity of the SPA;</li> <li>A 400m buffer zone has been defined around those parts of the SPA that support or are capable of supporting nightjar and woodlark. Any development proposal within this zone will need to clearly demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA.</li> </ul> |   |  |
| CS3           | Design and Distinctiveness        | Local  | No  | <b>Policy Type 1 and Type 3:</b> Policy will not lead to development itself. Furthermore the policy states that it will seek to protect the natural environment.   |
| CS4           | Settlement Hierarchy and Identity |  | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy will not lead directly to development itself but categorises the settlement types in the Borough.</p> <p>The supporting text of the policy outlines the development criteria for each settlement type. However the policy gives no specific locations for future development (to be given in the Rural Site AAP). Consideration to the protection and enhancement of internationally important sites will have to be taken into account prior to allocation of land for development into these sites (in accordance with Policy CS2). Furthermore any development arising from this policy will also have to take the text in Section 1 of the Plan relating to HRA. As such, due consideration will be paid to the international sites during the planning process. Allocation sites in the rural will be specified in the lower tier AAP, meaning the need for an HRA will be highlighted in the screening of that Plan. As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p> |
| CS5           | Affordable Housing                |  | No  | <b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy relates to design and other qualitative criteria for development and will not lead directly to   |

| Policy Number | Policy Title                                  | Detail of Policy Content   | Will Policy have a Likely Significant Effects on the International Sites? | Justification of finding   |
|---------------|---|--|---|--|
|               |   | amount of affordable housing in any new development.   |   | development  |
| CS6           | Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople | <p>Policy lists criteria required in order to allow development of gypsy and traveller sites in the Borough.</p> <p>The supporting text of the policy states that a separate DPD for the allocation of a minimum of 20 gypsy and traveller sites by 2011 will be produced by the Council. This text also states that proposals for gypsy and traveller sites must have particular regard to policies that seek to protect the environment of St Edmundsbury.</p>   | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy relates to qualitative criteria that development must meet in order to be permitted and will not lead directly to development.</p> <p>However, the supporting text of this policy notes that up to 20 gypsy and traveller sites must be provided by the Council by 2011 and that a DPD will be produced showing the location of temporary and permanent accommodation.</p> <p>Although the policy specifies the need for gypsy and traveller sites no specific locations are given. When planning applications are determined all the relevant policies in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision making. As such consideration to the protection and enhancement of internationally important sites will have to be taken into account prior to allocation of land for development into these sites (in accordance with Policy CS2). Furthermore any development arising from this policy will also have to take the text in Section 1 of the Plan relating to HRA. As such, due consideration will be paid to the international sites during the planning process. The locations of the gypsy and travellers sites will be specified in the lower tier DPD, meaning the need for an HRA will be highlighted in the screening of that Plan. As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p>   |
| CS7           | Sustainable Transport                         | <p>Policy states that the Council will seek to develop and promote a high quality and sustainable transport system across the Borough and to reduce the need for travel through spatial planning and design.</p> <p>The policy states that all proposals for development will have to provide for travel by a range of means other than private car (including walking, cycling and public transport)</p>  | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy relates to design and other qualitative criteria for development and will not lead directly to development.</p>   |
| CS8           | Strategic Improvements Transport              | <p>Policy states that the Council will work to achieve improvements at a number of locations (including Junctions 42 and 44 of the A14 and the A1307) as well as improving rail infrastructure in the Borough and the public transport network in towns and rural areas. The policy also seeks to improve rights of way in the Borough.</p>  | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy relates to design and other qualitative criteria for development and will not lead directly to development.</p> <p>Although the policy specifies the need for improvements at a number of locations within the Borough (e.g. Junctions 42 and 44 of the A14) it does not states what these improvements are or when they will be undertaken. When planning applications are determined all the relevant policies in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision making. As such consideration to the protection and enhancement of internationally important sites will have to be taken into account prior to any improvement works (in accordance with Policy CS2). Furthermore any development arising from this policy will also have to take the text in Section 1 of the Plan relating to HRA. Due consideration will therefore be paid to the international sites during the planning process (meaning a project specific Appropriate Assessment will be carried out where necessary). As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p>   |
| CS9           | Employment and the Local Economy              | <p>Policy states that employment land will be allocated in sustainable locations in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill and two allocations sites are identified (68.28 hectares to extend the existing Suffolk Business Park at Bury St Edmunds and 12 hectares at Hanchett End in Haverhill).</p> <p>The location of these sites is shown on the Key Diagram. No detail of the development to be provided at each of these sites is given in the Policy or the supporting text. However, the supporting text states that a Bury St Edmunds Area Action Plan (AAP) and a Haverhill AAP will be produced and that these documents will contain details of employment sites.</p> <p>The policy also states that existing employment areas will continue to meet needs of local towns and that proposals for growth at Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres will be expected to include provision for employment land..</p> | No  | <p>This policy will lead to development in Bury St Edmunds, at an allocation site to the east of Suffolk Business Park. Breckland SPA is located approximately 10 km west of this allocation site. Breckland SAC is located approximately 15 km north-west and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC is located approximately 16.5 km north-east of this allocation site.</p> <p>As such this policy has the potential to lead to likely significant effects on these international sites through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased levels of traffic generated air pollution leading affecting sensitive areas features of the Annex I habitats within the Breckland SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. This is due to a possible increase in the number of cars and lorries in the Borough (associated with an increased employment in the area).</li> </ul> <p>The allocated sites are located outside of the 1.5 km buffer zone around the SPA for stone curlew and 400 m buffer zone around the SPA for woodlark and nightjar. They are also not located within the 1.5 km buffer zones for stone curlew around known breeding sites. As such there will be no likely significant effects on the qualifying features of the SPA.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is considered that the allocation site in Bury St Edmunds will lead not to increased levels of recreational activity within Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. This is due to the site being allocated for employment purposes and the likelihood that people will travel to and from the allocation site solely for work purposes.</p> <p>There are no anticipated effects on the international sites through increased water abstraction as the Strategic Flood</p> |

| Policy Number                       | Policy Title                                   | Detail of Policy Content  | Will Policy have a Likely Significant Effects on the International Sites? | Justification of finding  |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
|                                     |  |   |   | <p>Risk Assessment produced by St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath Council<sup>5</sup> concluded that there would be no significant effects on international sites from water abstraction or discharge.</p> <p>This policy will also lead to development in Haverhill, at the Hanchett End allocation site. However Breckland SPA is located approximately 22 km north-east of this allocation site. Breckland SAC is located approximately 27.5 km north-east and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens is located approximately 45 km north-east of this allocation site. Given these distances (all sites are over 20 km from Haverhill) it is considered highly unlikely that there will be significant effects on these three international sites from this part of the policy.</p> <p>Given the strategic nature of the Plan the exact design of the strategic sites are not known at this stage and furthermore it is not known when the two allocations site and other strategic employment sites (locations not yet identified) would be built. As such it is not possible to undertake an assessment of likely significant effects of this policy with any degree of confidence (particularly in relation to water abstraction and air pollution). For these reasons, the Plan commits to an HRA at the AAP stage (as in accordance with the text in Section 1 of the Plan). The AAP will contain more specific details about the strategic growth of Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill (including these two allocations sites). The HRA of the AAPs will have to prove that the proposals for these allocation sites will not have significant adverse effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA and/or Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC (or that significant impacts can be adequately mitigated or compensated for). If it cannot be proven that there will no significant adverse impacts on these international sites, appropriate mitigation or compensation will need to be designed into the proposals, otherwise the Council will not allow the proposed development to be constructed. The Plan therefore seeks to protect the international sites and there are no likely significant effects on these three international sites from this Policy.</p> |
| CS10                                | Retail, Leisure, Cultural and Office Provision | Policy states that the town centres in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill will continue to be the focus for new retail, leisure and office development with some retail and leisure activity also to be focused on Key Service and Service Centres identified in Policies CS4, CS11 and CS12. Criteria that any new development in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill have to meet are also listed.   | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy relates to design and other qualitative criteria for development and will not lead directly to development.</p> <p>When planning applications are determined all the relevant policies in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision making. Therefore, any planning application arising as a result of this policy would also have to take into account the possibility of likely significant effects on the three international resulting from the proposed works (through consideration of Policy CS2 and the text relating to HRA in Section 1 of the Plan). The need for an HRA would be identified as a result. As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p>   |
| <b>Strategy for Bury St Edmunds</b> |  |   |   |   |
| CS11                                | Bury St Edmunds Strategic Growth               | <p>Policy identifies the broad location for future strategic growth of the town (together with the Key Diagram). Five sites are identified with an outline of the possible number of houses and land uses for each site.</p> <p>The policy also states that the amount of development will be determined by environmental considerations.</p> <p>The supporting text states that the Bury St Edmunds AAP will provide more information on site boundaries and the mix of uses at each site.</p> | No  | <p>This policy will lead to development in Bury St Edmunds. Breckland SPA is located approximately 6 km north-west of this town. Breckland SAC is located approximately 9.2 km north-west of Bury St Edmunds and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC is located approximately 16 km north-east of this town.</p> <p>The broad locations for future strategic development are located outside of the 1.5 km buffer zone around the SPA for stone curlew and 400 m buffer zone around the SPA for woodlark and nightjar. They are also not located within the 1.5 km buffer zones for stone curlew around known breeding sites. As such they will not lead to direct effects on the qualifying features of the SPA.</p> <p>This policy has the potential to lead to likely significant effects on these international sites through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased levels of recreational activity possibly leading to higher levels of disturbance to Breckland SPA Annex I bird species (stone curlew, nightjar and woodlark) and possible degradation of Annex I habitats within Breckland SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC (e.g. through increased levels of trampling and littering). This is due to more people living in the Borough and visiting the countryside close to and/or within these international sites; and,</li> <li>Increased levels of traffic generated air pollution leading affecting sensitive areas features of the Annex I habitats within the Breckland SAC and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC. This is due to a possible increase in the number of cars in the Borough (associated with an increased number of dwellings in the area).</li> </ul> <p>There are no anticipated effects on the international sites through increased water abstraction as the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment produced by St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath Council<sup>6</sup> concluded that there</p>   |

<sup>5</sup> Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council SFRA and Water Cycle Study: Level 1 SFRA and Outline Water Cycle Study (August 2009)



| Policy Number  | Policy Title                                  | Detail of Policy Content  | Will Policy have a Likely Significant Effects on the International Sites? | Justification of finding   |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  |   |   |   | would be no significant effects on international sites from water abstraction or discharge.<br><br>However, given the strategic nature of the Plan the exact location and design of the strategic sites are not known at this stage and furthermore it is not known when these strategic sites would be built. As such it is not possible to undertake an assessment of likely significant effects of this policy with any degree of confidence. For these reasons, the Plan commits to an HRA at the AAP stage (as in accordance with the text in Section 1 of the Plan). The AAP will contain more specific details about the strategic growth of Bury St Edmunds. The HRA of the AAP will have to prove that the proposed allocations sites will not have significant adverse effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA and/or Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC (or that significant impacts can be adequately mitigated or compensated for). If it cannot be proven that there will no significant adverse impacts on these international sites and/or it is not possible to mitigate/compensate for these impacts the Council will not allow the development to be constructed and the allocation site will not be included in the AAP. The Plan therefore seeks to protect the international sites and there are no likely significant effects on these three international sites from this Policy.  |
| <b>Strategy for Haverhill</b>                        |   |   |   |  |
| CS12   | Haverhill Strategic Growth                    | <p>Policy identifies the broad location for future strategic growth along the north-eastern edge of the town (shown on the Key Diagram). At least 2,500 homes are to be provided at this site.</p> <p>The Policy also states that land north-west of Haverhill is allocated with the potential to provide 1,150 homes and other services and facilities.</p> <p>The supporting text states that the Haverhill AAP will provide more information on site boundaries and the mix of uses at each site.</p>                  | No  | <p>This policy will lead to development in Haverhill. However Breckland SPA is located approximately 21.5 km north-east of the town. Breckland SAC is located approximately 26.5 km north-east of the Haverhill and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens is located approximately 42.5 km north-east of the town.</p> <p>The broad locations for future strategic development are located outside of the 1.5 km buffer zone around the SPA for stone curlew and 400 m buffer zone around the SPA for woodlark and nightjar. They are also not located within the 1.5 km buffer zones for stone curlew around known breeding sites. As such they will not lead to direct effects on the qualifying features of the SPA.</p> <p>Furthermore, given these distances (all sites are over 20 km from Haverhill) it is considered highly unlikely that there will be any significant effects on these three international sites from this Policy.</p> <p>Furthermore, a Haverhill AAP, as outlined for Policy CS9 and CS11 above, the proposals for development outlined in Policy CS12 are at a strategic level. The Haverhill AAP will arise from this policy and this will include specific details about the locations of future growth, including the exact location of allocations sites and their proposed land uses. In accordance with the text for Policy CS11 above, an HRA will also be undertaken of this document (ensuring that there will be no likely significant effects on the three international sites).</p> |
| <b>Strategy for Rural Areas</b>                      |   |   |   |  |
| CS13   | Rural Areas                                   | <p>Policy states that the scale of development in Key Service Centres and Infill Villages will reflect the need to maintain the sustainability of local services, the diversification of the economy and provision of housing for local needs. Development outside these three settlement types will be strictly controlled with a priority on enhancing the biodiversity of the countryside.</p> <p>It also states that the Rural Sites Allocations DPD will set detailed uses which are appropriate in rural areas.</p> | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy relates to design and other qualitative criteria for development and will not lead directly to development.</p> <p>When planning applications are determined all the relevant policies in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision making. Therefore, any planning application arising as a result of this policy would also have to take into account the possibility of likely significant effects on the three international resulting from the proposed works (through consideration of Policy CS2 and the text relating to HRA in Section 1 of the Plan). The need for an HRA would be identified as a result. As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p>  |
| <b>Infrastructure, Implementation and Monitoring</b> |   |   |   |  |
| CS14   | Community Infrastructure Capacity and Tariffs | <p>Policy states that all new proposals for development will be required to demonstrate that the necessary on and off site infrastructure capacity required to support the development exists or will exist prior to the development being occupied.</p> <p>The policy lists key infrastructure requirements to deliver the aims of the Core Strategy (e.g. new relief roads in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill, additional school place provision including new school sites and upgrades to waste</p>                     | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy will not itself lead to development as it relates to the design of any new development to be put in place.</p> <p>When planning applications are determined all the relevant policies in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision making. Therefore, any planning application arising as a result of this policy would also have to take into account the possibility of likely significant effects on the three international resulting from the proposed works (through consideration of Policy CS2 and the text relating to HRA in Section 1 of the Plan). The need for an HRA would be identified as a result. As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p>   |

<sup>6</sup> Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council SFRA and Water Cycle Study: Level 1 SFRA and Outline Water Cycle Study (August 2009)

| Policy Number | Policy Title             | Detail of Policy Content  | Will Policy have a Likely Significant Effects on the International Sites? | Justification of finding  |
|---------------|--------------------------|---|---|---|
|               |                          | water works.  |   |   |
| CS15          | Plan, Monitor and Manage | Policy states that compliance with policies and allocations in the LDF will be monitored throughout the plan period and if it appears that policies and allocations are not being met a set of mechanisms will be triggered (including action to bring forward sites for development and action to secure the timely provision of infrastructure) | No  | <p><b>Policy Type 1:</b> This policy will not itself lead to development but will lead ensure that policies within the Core Strategy are being adhered to.</p> <p>When planning applications are determined all the relevant policies in the Plan are taken into account and used as the basis for decision making. Therefore, any planning application arising as a result of the monitoring of the Core Strategy and other LDF documents would also have to take into account the possibility of likely significant effects on the three international resulting from the proposed works (through consideration of Policy CS2 and the text relating to HRA in Section 1 of the Plan). The need for an HRA would be identified as a result. As such, this Policy is considered to have no likely significant effects on Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.</p> |



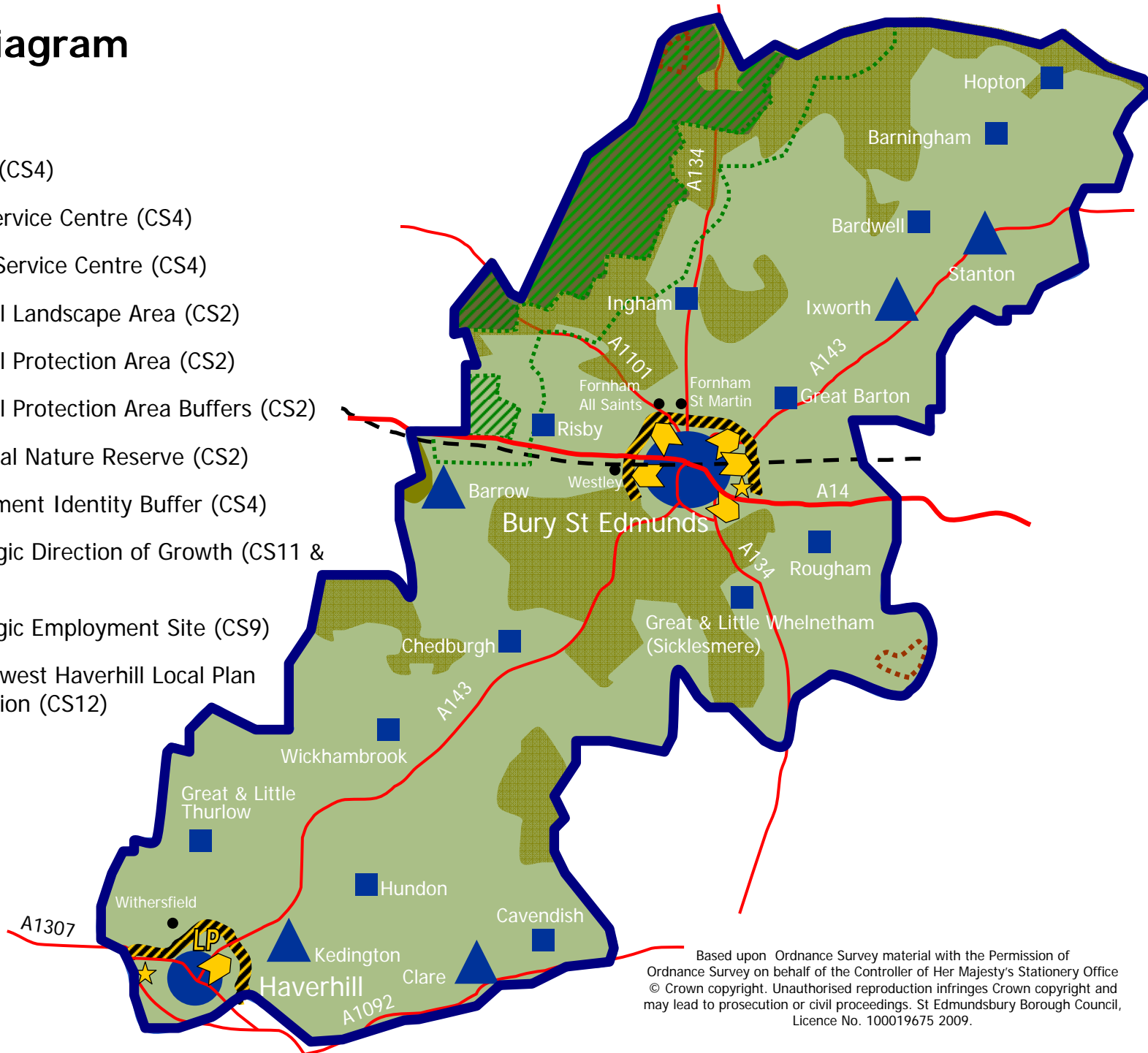
# Appendix B

## Key Diagram

# Key Diagram

Not to scale

-  Town (CS4)
-  Key Service Centre (CS4)
-  Local Service Centre (CS4)
-  Special Landscape Area (CS2)
-  Special Protection Area (CS2)
-  Special Protection Area Buffers (CS2)
-  National Nature Reserve (CS2)
-  Settlement Identity Buffer (CS4)
-  Strategic Direction of Growth (CS11 & CS12)
-  Strategic Employment Site (CS9)
-  North-west Haverhill Local Plan allocation (CS12)



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